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Editorial

We are happy to present the 2nd Issue of 2nd Volume of our Journal to the scholars. We have sincerely attempted to maintain our journal's standard by Peer reviewing and discarding all the discrepancies through modern scientific techniques. Our Journal has always preferred to focus on articles that can answer meaningful research questions and draw accurate conclusions.

The present volume offers some very interesting articles, submitted by research scholars and professionals working in different fields. It includes original research works and ideas highlighting lesser-known temple architecture, archaeological sites, Islamic architecture, Durga Puja Festivals of Royal and private families in Cooch Behar.

Sri Balaknath Bhattacharya in his article “Tracing the Continuity of Habitation in Archaeological Sites in W.B. from 6th century A.D. till Modern Period” has attempted to probe some archaeological sites where continuous habitation took place from ancient to modern times. For this study, he has taken help from the copper plate inscriptions of West Bengal. The research ideas of this article are very new and appreciative.

The second article is based on Islamic architecture and entitled “Water Gate of Red Fort- One Truth and Many Ideas”. The author has proposed very scientifically to change the earlier conventional nomenclature and idea of “Water Gate” into the “Water Bastion” This is a very logical interpretation.

In the article “The Royal and old Private Durga Puja of Cooch Behar: A Over View” author has presented the Royal and the Private Durga Pujas of the District of Cooch Behar. It also enumerates various old rituals, customs and traditions which are not known to the outer world. This article has also introduced the architectural aspects of the places of worship. Evidently, more research work are required as suggested by the author.

The article on “A Note on Kasar Devi Temple in Almora- Uttarakhand” deals with both the architectural features of Kasar devi temple and the temple dedicated to Lord Shiva and Bhairava and its environmental surroundings. The study is based on the field trip of the author.



The article “The Historical Importance of Dashghara Temple and its Archaeological Evidences: A Case Study” has presented the temple of Dashghara with a wonderful analysis of architectural and terracotta figurines and plaques. It has also probed the historical importance of the temple through archaeological evidence.

The volume also includes reviews of one newly published book namely Embroidered Narratives of Pahari Embroidery: Design Directory of Traditional Motif written by Dr Rohini Arora. This book has been reviewed by Dr. Anamika Pathak, Former Curator, National Museum, New Delhi.

Prof. Durga Basu (Chief Editor)

Ms. Asmita Basu (Associate Editor)





“Watergate” of Delhi’s Red Fort: One Truth and Many Tales

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Abstract

Delhi’s Red Fort was built in 1639 by Shah Jahan, the eminent Mughal Emperor. Over several years, by successive rulers and then during British rule, the site has undergone so many changes that except for a few isolated east-side pavilions, nothing else survives. Red Fort, because of its architecture, has always been place of attraction at the hands of historians, and they all have described it in detail. However, there is very limited and contradictory information available about the small yet magnificent Asad Burj Water Bastion that exists silently in the east corner of Red Fort. Even Mohammad Waris, the first one to give a minute description of Red Fort, do not describe this side of the fort in detail. Many authors mention the water bastion as a ‘Water Gate’, sounding like an exit gate, which, in my conclusion, never was (a true gate).

Key Words: Shahjahan, Muhammad Waris, Water Gate, Red fort, Asad Burj

Introduction

Delhi’s Red Fort, was built in 1639 as a massive walled palace fort by Shah Jahan, the eminent Mughal Emperor. The fort because of its architecture, has always been place of attraction at the hands of scholars, historians, travellers etc., and they all have described it in detail. However it



was Muhammad Waris, who gave a detailed account of the construction as well as the individual structures within the fort in his book entitled 'Padshahnama of Muhammad Waris'. He was appointed by Shah Jahan to document his third decade of reign, and in his time the actual construction of the fort took place. Unfortunately this book written in Persian language remained unpublished for a long time, however now we have the books translated in English as well as Hindi language by different authors (Dwivedi 2016). Asad Burj Water bastion or 'Water Gate', unlike other structures, has not undergone much changes, and yet, there are many tales linked to it. Many authors mention water bastion as a 'Water Gate', sounding like an exit gate, which never was (a true gate).

Observations and Discussion

Today, the Asad Burj Water Bastion exists in silent dignity at south east corner of Red Fort in Delhi (Figure 1). Entry to this side of fort has always been restricted, initially because royal women had their residences adjacent to it, and today for security reasons. Even now the visitors are only able to view Asad Burj and water gate next to it (Figure 2), from the Delhi Chalo Park on eastern side of fort, that is, have only outside view (Figure 3).

Mohammad Waris, who gave a minute description of Red Fort, did not describe this burj or this side of fort in detail. The only somewhat detailed account I came across is in book by Gordon Sanderson and Maulvi Shuaib (2000).

Through a gateway located along inner side of south east wall of Red fort (Figure 4), few yards east of Delhi gate, a broad and long eastwards steps leads down to the underground rectangular water tank which is just short of foot of Asad Burj (Figure 5 and Figure 6). In a 'Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan' by 'Archaeological Survey of India' (ASI) and 'Cultural Resource Conservation Initiative' (CRCI) (2019), this magnificent water tank is called as "Asad Burj Baoli" while Mohammad Waris in his book Padshahnama, describes it as a "ditch" into which the water after crossing the several buildings on eastern side of Red Fort fall.¹ The "baoli" or "water tank", now filled with murky green water, opens through a southeast gate towards moat. However this inner gate built by Emperor Shahjahan, was later protected by external, roughly triangular, courtyard, the two walls of which are also having a gate (Figure 7). This triangular barbican was built by Emperor Aurangzeb, along with those of Lahore gate and Delhi Gate. The south west facing outer gate of the courtyard is closed up with stones; it seems this was never opened at any time. It is the east facing outer gate, south of Asad Burj, which is actually named as "Water Gate". It once faced Yamuna River, now faces towards 'Delhi Chalo Park' or 'Ring Road' The tall bushes at one end of Delhi Chalo Park are hiding the external view of this "historical" gate and, no doubt, many stories behind it. After carefully crossing the bushes



along the wall, one can peep inside through gaps in the gate. This small beautiful ‘Water gate’ is simple but looks magnificent. There are many interesting yet contrasting stories linked to it.

Out of two other river facing gates of Red Fort, one under ‘Musamman Burj’ is called as “Khizri gate” after Khwaja Khizr, saint of water. Few authors have mentioned this Khizri gate as water gate too. The other forts like Agra Fort in Agra, and Lahore Fort in Pakistan too have Khizri gate or water gate, and it seems this similar name has created confusion among the historians and authors. Gordon Sanderson and Maulvi Shuaib in their book mentions south east gate as water bastion. Stephen P. Blake (1991) in his book shows this as ‘gate’ in map, however do not describe it in text. Another river facing small gate, now covered with stones, is few yards southwards from Khizri gate and has no name.

Mohammad Waris’s Padshahnama, the primary source of information for last 10 years of Shahjahan rule, had remained non translated and unpublished for very long time. It clearly says that while Emperor Shahajahan had entered Lal Quila (Red Fort) for the first time through Khizri gate, other river facing small gate (with no name) was meant for grandees (princes and other nobles). Mohammad Waris do not recognize any water gate, rather he says that there is a ditch at south east corner of the fort. Many authors, on the contrary, write that Shah Jahan, the first Mughal emperor, and Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Mughal Emperor, used south east ‘Water gate’ for entry and exit respectively. Rana Safvi (2019) in her book (Shahjahanabad: The Living City of Old Delhi, 2019) while mentioning it as ‘Badar Roo Darwaza’ writes that this wicket gate was exclusively for Princess and Prince. Few other authors/historians believe that last Mughal King Bahadur Zafar II had escaped to Humayun Tomb through Khizri gate.

Author H Singh (2010) in his thesis (Recovering Delhi’s Red Fort: presence of past in the present) writes that “water gate” was connected with Delhi Gate by a route (Rastah Bakht Burj) and was used for transporting goods brought by boats. There is also a legend that Asad Burj was called ‘Haathi gate’ as the elephants would go down the stairs to drink water. However references to validate this statement are lacking.

Few authors and bloggers mention ‘water gate’ as one of original six gates of Red fort. But this is not true. Mohammad Waris has clearly mentioned locations of original six gates, which still exist in various conditions, and water gate is not counted in (Dwivedi, 2016)

To conclude, going by most authentic description, ‘Water gate’ was never a true gate but in fact a water bastion (Asad Burj Water Bastion). As of today, for security reasons, this water gate is closed, however there is long standing proposal to open the door of this historical water discharge “Water Gate” towards Delhi Chalo Park, converting into a true entry/exit gate.



Fig 1: Google Earth 3D view of Red Fort. Asad Burj (yellored arrow) and water gate (red arrow) are located at south east corner, few yards eastwards of Delhi Gate (). Double arrow shows the cardinal directions.



Figure 2: Google earth 3D view of south east corner of Red fort. Barican enclosing triangular outer courtyard (OC).



Figure 3: Left hand picture is water colour drawing (year 1823) of the Red Fort in Delhi, seen across the Jumna (Yamuna) river (Courtesy British Library). Right hand picture is Delhi Chalo park side view of water gate as seen now. Water gate (arrow) is covered by bushes.



Figure 4: Unstitched Panoramic images: Through a magnificent gate (G) (right hand photo), eastwards steps leads to the bottom of Asad Burj (AB) (left photo). There is separate series of steps (ST) that climb up to terrace of Burj

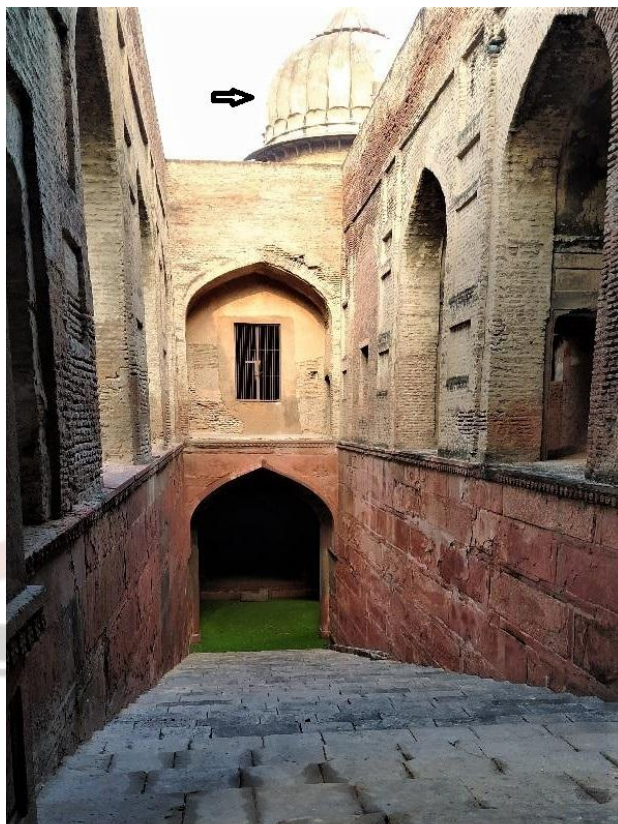


Figure 5: Series of steps leads to underground water tank (inner chamber), now filled with murky green water. Asad Burj (arrow) is seen here.



Figure 6. Terrace view of Asad Burj



Figure 7: Two stitched photos showing Inside view from terrace of Asad Burj: Barbican enclosing external courtyard (EC) having two outer and one inner gate. Water Gate (WG) facing Delhi Chalo Park and Ring Road; Inner Gate (IG) towards inner Water tank; South West (SW) facing outer gate with no name

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The Royal and old Private Durga Pujas of Cooch Behar: A Brief Overview

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Abstract

Whenever there is a bounty of sunlight and temperature favourable for survival, nature has unfolded the secrets of its diverse creation. Similarly, years of spiritual and religious beliefs, patronisation, socio-cultural association, concurring traditions etc. has helped to render the aspects of autumnal Durga Puja versatile. It is indeed a task challenging enough to document the Durga Pujas being held at Bengal and outside. Yet, it is further difficult to record the different aspects of the Puja prevailing throughout. The Private Durga Pujas organised at Cooch Behar does not stand apart from this view either. Our article here is an overview of the Royal and old private Pujas of Cooch Behar, to which are assigned customs and traditions of antiquity. Some of the important socio-economical and other aspects of the Pujas have also been discussed in brief. Reference has also been included on the architectural pattern or typology of the *Thakur Dalan* or *Durga Dalans* and *Durga Mandaps* where these Pujas were/are held.

Key Words: Durga Puja, Cooch Behar, Royal , Private



Introduction

There is a long standing contradiction regarding the oldest Durga Puja in Bengal. Of the two earliest Pujas traceable so far, the Pujas of Cooch Behar and Tahirpur, Rajshahi, now at Bangladesh, both date back to the 16th century ranks the foremost. However, the latter Puja is now lost. On the other hand, the oldest Durga Puja being celebrated in Cooch Behar is the *Baro Devi Bari* Puja, of the Cooch Behar Royal dynasty. Presently it is being organised under the Debutter Trust Board of Cooch Behar District. This Puja dates back to the reign of Maharaja Nara Narayan (1533-1587 C.E.). It was probably started in between 1562-1564 C.E. Sarat Chandra Ghoshal (1942 C.E.), in his translation of Khan Chowdhuri Amanatulla Ahmed's work (1936 C.E.) following the *Rajopakhan* written by Moonshi Joynath Ghose, [1823-1834 C.E. – 1845-1846 C.E. (1230-1240 B.S. – 1252 B.S.)], has mentioned —

“...Sukladhvaja (Chilarai) the brother of the king (Nara Narayan) became overweening in his pride and had conceived the evil desire of occupying the throne. Once he went to the royal court with the intention of killing the king, but reaching the royal presence he saw that the goddess Durga herself was protecting the king with her ten arms. At this supernatural sight, Sukladhvaja was filled with fear and shame and openly asked forgiveness from his brother. Different feelings filled the mind of the king. He thought Sukladhvaja more fortunate than himself and began to live in solitude and to fast, because he had not seen the goddess. On the third night, she appeared to him in a dream. The king promulgated the worship of the goddess he had seen in his dream, and this continues today.”ⁱ

Ghoshal, from the same source clearly states — *“...Maharaja Naranarayana founded the worship of Durga with ten arms. To the present time the worship of Durga continues in Devibari a part of the capital town of Cooch Behar”*.ⁱⁱ



Fig.-1: Idol of Durga at *Baro Devi Bari*: —left: image taken in between 1944-1948 C.E. and right: the same captured in 2022 C.E. (courtesy: late Rama Sarkar Chattopadhyay, New Alipur, Kolkata and Shree Mriganka Chakraborty, Cooch Behar, respectively).

There are some distinguishing iconographic features of the *Baro Devi* idol of Cooch Behar which makes it quite remarkable. The ten-armed image of the goddess has a red complexion. Generally, the right leg of the goddess rests upon the back of a lion but, here it is placed upon the shell of a tortoise, possibly representing Vishnu and her left leg is placed on the back of a severed buffalo. Here Asura is deep green in complexion with three-eyes, possibly denoting Chandra Sekhara, who is considered a form of Shiva. We find in the *Kalika Purana* (60/155), *Chandra Sekhara*, said to goddess Chandika,—‘O Jaganmayi Devi. I have taken the form of a buffalo. You had slain me earlier and you shall slay me afterwards also.’ⁱⁱⁱ In addition to the lion, which is here white in colour and is biting the Asura on his right arm, a tiger is seen biting the left arm on the other side. Both of their morphological forms are also unusual. Another striking feature of the idol and worship at *Baro Devi Bari* is, the images of Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartik and Ganesha are



neither constructed nor worshipped with it. Instead, *Jaya* and *Vijaya* are present to the right and left side of the idol respectively. It is generally considered by the scholars that Durga is a 'Kumari' (damsel), hence, she is also worshipped as Kumari during the 'Kumari Puja' (though, absent here). Laksmi and Saraswati, as daughters and Kartik and Ganesha as sons of Durga are believed to be latter additions.^{iv} Hence, the idol of *Baro Devi* provides an inkling of its remote origin. The older photographs of the idol suggest there have been some notable alterations in size, orientation and physiognomy of the idol. Previously, the face of the goddess had a rounded outline, she is seen smiling, she had thick eyebrow and a developed chin, her crown was semi-circular like that of a tiara, the sword on her upper right arm was like that of an early Indian short-sword almost like those seen in some of the stone idols of medieval period and far different from the present 'Kharga' (lit. like that of a falchion) she is now seen to hold; the Asura use to face the goddess, which was quite appropriate, the position of the lion was a little backward compared to the present and its neck was a lot shorter, the top of the ornamental 'chala' or 'chalchitra' or top-piece behind the idol was round and heavily decorated etc. Overall, the idol was more proportionate and evinced symmetry, which has underwent conspicuous decline. This change does not seem to have occurred abruptly, certainly it is gradual. Possibly, the inadvertence of the artisans appears to be responsible for this. [Figure-1] Noteworthy, that the use of 'chala' in the idol does not find a mention in the *Shastra* or authoritative texts.^v Possibly, it is an equivalent of the 'halo' found in some stone idols or sculptures of the Hindu, Buddhist and other pantheons and also serves as a decoration. Whatever so, from some of the deviations of the form of *Baro Devi*, from the form mentioned in the 'Pauranik Dhyana' of goddess Chandi, scholars have surmised that the idol belonged to some primitive cult which has been transformed into Durga.^{vi} Alluded from the observation of Sukumari Bhattacharji (1978 C.E.) we find —

"Durga ...was an insignificant goddess in the beginning, but she steadily grew in stature until finally she absorbed all her rivals in her personality and became the supreme mother goddess. This was a slow but sure process and it has its parallels in history of other goddesses in other parts of the world.

"...The process of Durga's growth in stature was long and steady. One by one she absorbed the main traits of regional mother-goddesses, household deities who were worshipped for different things by different tribes. Some were fierce and awe-inspiring, others were mild, benign and motherly, yet others were embodiments of lofty ideas—all these were fused into one composite supreme goddess—Durga.



“...Durga absorbed trait after trait of local, tutelary and household mother-goddesses, her cult embraced newer regions and different tribes till it became one of the major formative forces in Indian religion—for the Sakta and Tantric cults are direct offshoots of the universal popularity of the Durga cults as also the sublimation of the Siva and Ghora (benign and malign) aspects of her personality on the philosophical plane.”^{vii}

The sacrificial offerings of the *Baro Devi* Puja follow the system presented in the *Kalika Purana* in general^{viii} and sacrifices of various types, including pigeon, goat, buffalo, pig etc. are offered. It is known that Maharaja Narendra Narayan (1847-1863 C.E.) once sacrificed a tiger (‘vyaghra’) on the *Baro Devi* Puja himself.^{ix} Previously, there use to be tortoise sacrifice, but, it was discontinued after the Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 was introduced. It is said that once human sacrifice was performed during the Puja. The tradition is now continued in the form of sacrificing a human effigy made out of powdered rice, on which the human blood is offered. The person who offers his blood is called the ‘Kamsenait’. This ritual is carried out during the ‘Nishi-Puja’ (nocturnal worship) and ‘Gupta-Puja’ (secret worship) when other than the Priest, ‘DwarBakshi’, and the Kamsenait no one is allowed to be present.^x There are several other riveting rituals and customs associated with this Puja, which requires space for a separate article.



Fig.-2: *Kathamiya* Durga Idol at *Thakurbari* (1944-1948 C.E.), (courtesy: late Rama Sarkar Chattopadhyay, New Alipur, Kolkata).



Fig.-3: Idol of Durga worshipped at the 'DakshinerBhita' Mustofi family, Dinhata, 2022 C.E.,
(courtesy: Shree Sitangsu Sekhar Mustafi)



Fig.-4: Close-up view of the Idol of Durga with red complexion at the DakshinerBhitaMustofi family, Dinhata, 2019 C.E., (courtesy: Shree Sitangsu Sekhar Mustafi).



Fig.-5: Scene of a confectionary shop supposedly taken at the Gobrachhara Mela, c.1928-1929; note the variety of sweets, the hanging petromax lamp and British-Indian News Papers (courtesy: late Shreesh Chandra Mustafi, Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy Road, Kolkata; developed from negative by: Shree Bikash Bose, 22/D, Aswini Dutta Road, Triangular Park, Kolkata; source: preserved at the Authors personal photo-archive).



Fig.-6: *Thakur Dalan, Shree Shree Madan Mohan Thakurbari, Cooch Behar, 04th November, 2022 C.E.*; note the two lateral parabolic scalloped arches, they are quite uncommon in the *Thakur Dalan* typology (image: Authur).

Two other Pujas founded by the Royal family are known, the Puja at *Shree Shree Madan Mohana Thakurbari*, which was possibly started in about 1890-1891 C.E., when the Thakurbari was transferred from the palace to its present site and is still extant and the other performed at the Rajmata or Queen Mother's palace, now obsolete.^{xi} The idol of the former Puja is common with most of the other 'ekchala' idols as seen in Bengal. In addition, *Jaya* and *Vijaya* are also present here. The idol is known as the *Kathamiya*, literality meaning 'made on a frame' and the Puja as *Kathamiya* Puja. [Fig.-2] Besides, Cooch Behar town, there are several other Pujas owing their origin from the Royal era which are still performed in different temples of the District. Of these,



the Pujas of Kamateshwari temple, at Gosanimari, Siddeshwari temple, at Siddeshwari, Ghurneshwari temple, at Ghurneshwari are some. These Pujas were maintained by the State once. Now they are maintained by the Debutter Trust Board.

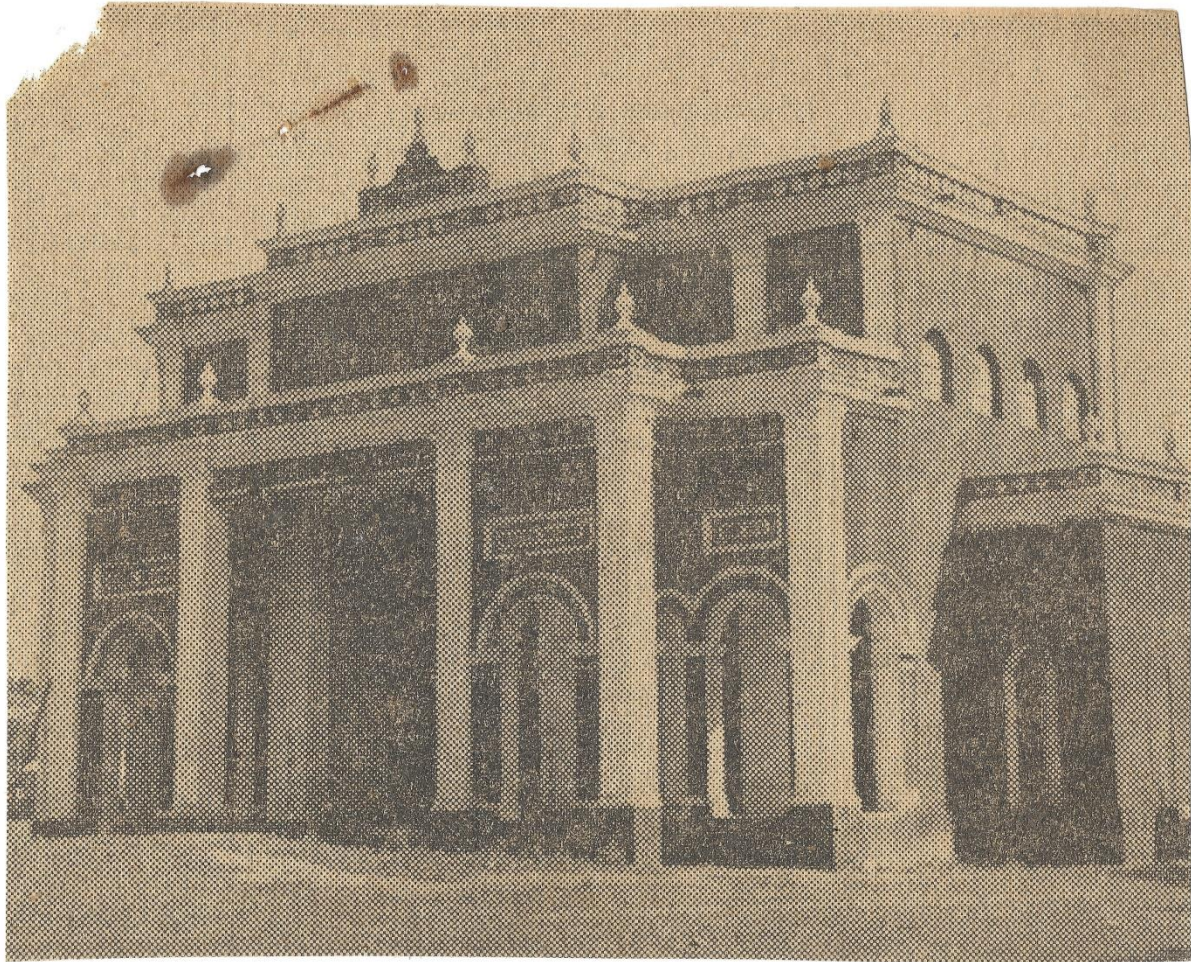


Fig.-7: The *Thakur Dalan* of *Baro Devi Bari*, Cooch Behar, c.1948-1949; note the verandas on the front lateral sides, they have been sealed long ago (courtesy: Shree Tapan Kumar Sen, Cooch Behar).



Fig.-8: Above: *Thakur Dalan* of ‘UttarerBhita’ Mustofi family at Gobrachhara village, Dinhat, 15th May, 2016; below: the same showing a panel with terracotta plaques and one of two paired lions (both destroyed in 2016 C.E.) seen jumping over the part of the ornate scalloped arch (images: Authur).



Fig.-9: The Indo-saracenic style *Thakur Dalan* at Bhattacharyaya Zamindar Bari (demolished in 2020 C.E.), Cooch Behar town, 26th September, 2018 C.E. (image: Authur).

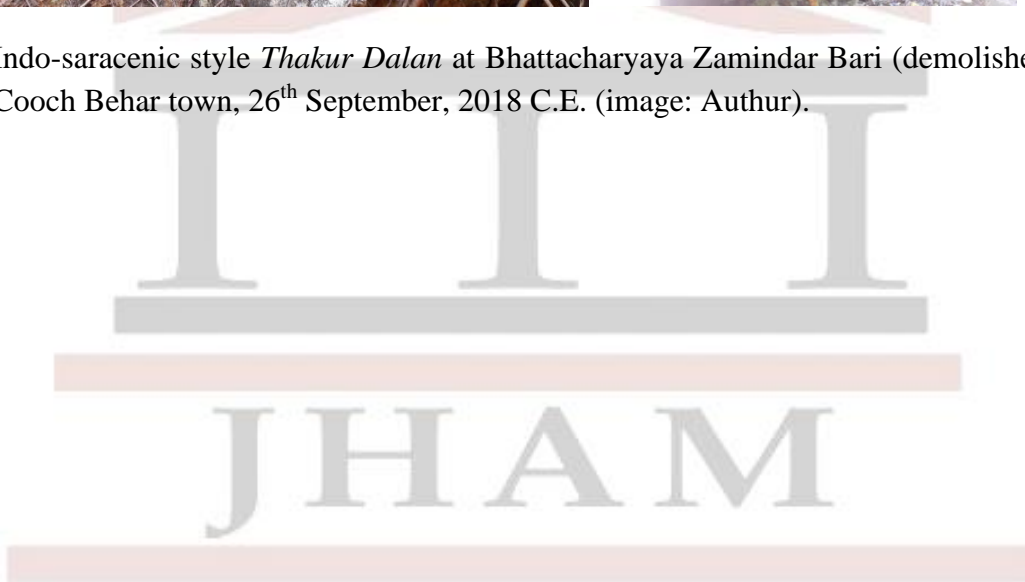




Fig.-10: *Durga Mandap* at the house of Govinda Prasad Roy, 1992 C.E.; this tin-roofed *pucca* building represents the typical rain-frequented, earthquake-prone ‘Cooch Behar typology’ (courtesy: Shree Ramashish Roy, Delhi).

Beyond the Royal horizon, there were some other old Pujas in Cooch Behar. However, most of them are now lost with time. The oldest of these was that of the Mustofi Zamindar family of Gobrachhara village, Dinjata. Founded in 1665 C.E., this Puja bifurcated possibly in the 1920s. The actual Puja at Gobrachhara became the Puja of the UttarerBhitaMustofi family, while a new Puja was started at Dinjata Town by the DakshinerBhitaMustofi family after they migrated from Gobrachhara. The former, most probably the largest of all private Pujas within Cooch Behar, is now lost, but, the latter survives. [Fig.-3] However, from the year 2016 C.E. there has been an attempt by the inhabitants of Gobrachhara to revive the old Puja. It has also received keen interest and support from some of the present members of Mustofi family.



If we would move on to the other old Pujas and classify them accordingly to the locations they were then celebrated within Cooch Behar, we find that in Cooch Behar town, there were at least fifteen Pujas, namely that of — 1. Prasanna Kumar Deva Bakshi, Patakura; 2. Katamari Estate or of Roy Chaudhury Sushil Kumar Chakraborty; 3. Nalini Kanta Talukdar, Biswa Singh Road by-lane; 4. Gangadhar Bhattacharya, Keshab Road; 5. Govinda Prasad Roy, Jitendra Narayan Road; 6. ‘Ananda Bhavan’ or of Dr. Dineshananda Chakraborty, Raj Rajendra Narayan Road; 7. Rup Chandra Mukherjee and AbhayaCharan Banerjee, Biswa Singha Road (North); 8. Dinesh Chandra Guha and Akshay Chandra Guha, Biswa Singha Road; 9. Chandra Mohan Guha Chaudhury, Hazra Para; 10. Ramani Mohan Chakraborty, Patakura; 11. Sharat Chandra Biswas, Jitendra Narayan Road by-lane; 12. Padma Nath Das, Kalikadas Road, Patakura; 13. Sukul Bari, Nara Narayan Road; 14. Bakshi Bari, Hitendra Narayan Road^{xii} and 15. RadhikanandaBhattacharyaya, Jitendra Narayan Road by-lane. None of the Pujas mentioned above are now extant; the first six Pujas, especially, the first two were held in exceptional grandeur. The ‘Daker Saj’ of the Deva Bakshi house received fame. The Puja of Padma Nath Das, was known for his great devotion.^{xiii} The fourteenth in number was an old Puja which though originally from Naodanga, Rangpur, Bangladesh, was shifted to Cooch Behar from 1946 C.E. and was celebrated affluently.^{xiv}



Fig.-11: The Pagoda style *Durga Mandap* of ‘Ananda Bhavan’, 26th September, 2018 C.E.; supposedly it was a green-house-like structure, the beautiful glass panes are now gone (image: Author).



In the houses of some of the Brahmins of Khagrabari and Takagachh, villages both adjacent to Cooch Behar town, the goddess was and is still now being worshipped every year. But, in most of the cases the goddess is worshipped either in the form of a metal idol or 'ghot puja' is performed. However, luckily many of the old idols have survived. Name of some these houses as quoted by some BrajeshwariBarma (1986 C.E.) are — Rajendra Nath Chakraborty, Bhumindra Nath Chakraborty, Charukesh Chakraborty, Devendrananda Chakraborty, Durga Nath Chakraborty, BhavashankerSmritiratna (should be 'Shrutiratna'), Manindra Nath Chakraborty, Pramodendra Nath Chakraborty, Keshav Nandan Bhattacharya and others. Some of these Pujas are more than a century old.^{xv} Though, some are now extinct.

An old Puja is also known from the MathabhangaSub-division. It was performed at the Pramanik Bari, in Shikarpur village. Here the goddess was also worshipped in form of a metal idol. Once, there used to be large celebrations.^{xvi} This Puja probably continues till now.

Of the private Pujas, in spite that of the Mustofis at Dinhata town, two other Pujas are also known, one which was held at the house of the JotedarShreesh Chandra Chatterjee at Babu Para and the other at the house of the Overseer Hem Chandra Bosu, at Boarding Para. Considering the position of both the Chatterjee and Bosu families, it can be posited that both the Pujas were celebrated with opulence. Both of them have now disappeared, the latter possibly earlier than the former. Another Puja once celebrated at Dinhata Sub-division deserves special mention. It was the Puja of Lahiri Zamindars of Bamanhat village. It was the largest Puja held in this part ofDinhata and was discontinued from 1962-1963 C.E. There was also an idol of Durga in the family which was regularly worshipped in their household temple. But, during the Puja an earthen idol of the goddess was made in their *Durga Mandap*. The Durga idol mentioned herein was stolen, but, fortunately, it was recovered.

In Mekhliganj Sub-division, four Pujas are known from Mekhliganj town. One was at the Datta Bari at Purba Para and three others at the Guha Bari, Nandi Bari and Chakraborty Bari at Uttar Para. Of these only the last one is extant.

Tufanganj Sub-division probably houses the second oldest private Puja of Cooch Behar which is celebrated at the village ofJaigirChilakhana. Kumar Kandarpa Narayan or Kumar Kunda Narayan, a descendant of the Cooch Behar Royal dynasty, who was made 'Suba' during the reign of Maharaja Rup Narayan (1704-1714 C.E.) is said to have founded this Puja probably on or about 1704 C.E. and is still being performed by the members of the family. It is said that a



gold idol of the goddess was worshipped herein. Unfortunately, the idol was stolen sometime in the first half of 1940s. However, later on a new octo-alloy image of the goddess was brought from Benares and till date it is being worshipped in the family. Only one old Puja is known from Tufanganj town. It is that of the Acharjee Bari, at Lamba Para. It has completed about 110 years this year; therefore, it was started on 1912 C.E.

Beside these Pujas, there were also several others performed at some of the villages in Cooch Behar. The comparatively rich houses residing at the villages were called 'Dhani Baris' (pl.). There Pujas can also be called 'DhaniBarir Puja' (sing.) thereof.^{xvii} The antiquity of the above mentioned Pujas, as being the 'oldest' or 'new' etc. has been deduced from the references so far available, either in a written or verbal form. Therefore, there are chances that age of some the other Pujas were/are older than those mentioned, but, due to the paucity of information it has not been possible to trace their dates of origin.

The notable feature of the idols of some of these old private Pujas is that the complexion of goddess was red. It was the same in case of the Katamari Estate Puja and that of the Deva Bakshi house. The idol of the Mustofis still continues to be so today. According to Jogesh Chandra Roy Vidyanidhi (1951 C.E.), the different religious texts constitute mainly of two opinions on the complexion of the goddess. Either, her complexion is blue, like that of the *Atasi* flower, i.e., the flower of *Tisi* or Common Flax or Linseed (*Linum usitatissimum*, Family: Linaceae), since, by *Atasi* in Sanskrit, it has been referred to the *Tisi* plant and not the *Atasi* or *Shunn* in Bengali, which is the Sunn hemp (*Crotalaria juncea*, Family: Fabaceae) with bright yellow flowers. Or, the goddess has a reddish-yellow complexion like that of 'molten gold'. Roy Vidyanidhi, is of the opinion that, the reddish-yellow colour, which among other texts is also in accordance with the *Kalika Purana* ('*tapta-kanchana-varnava*' or 'like molten gold') is now followed in Bengal.^{xviii} But, the red complexion found in Cooch Behar does not seem to find any mention in the texts. [Fig.-4] The face and neck of the lion at the Mustofi house idol biting the right hand of Asura is like that of a horse or supposedly was like that of the same. However, it appears to be more porcine than equine at present. Perhaps, it is another example of the incaution of the artisan. There is also a leonine tiger with hair biting the left hand of Asura. The presence of both lion and tiger indicates the influence of the *Baro Devi Bari* on the idol [see Fig.-2].

Of the rituals and customs associated with these private Pujas, the *hasti-baran* ceremony (greeting the Elephant), display of toy figures made from the *Shola* plant (*Aeschynomene aspera*; Family: Fabaceae) by artisans of Golokganj, Assam; secret ritual of freeing a *Koi* fish pair



(*Anabas testudineus*, Family: Anabantidae) etc. once performed at the Mustofi house at Gobrachhara are of interest. On *Navami* or the fourth day of Puja, 'Kando', a folk play common in Northern Bengal was held at the Lahiri Bari, at Bamanhat. It is beyond doubt that only the name, brief descriptions and some of the distinguishing features of the most popular and grand old Pujas have been cumulated in this write-up and there is many more awaiting to be garnered.

Kshetra Mohan Brahma (1930 C.E.), has given Cooch Behar the appellation of 'Hatta-MelarDesh' or the land of 'huts' (a place of commerce) and fairs.^{xix} Thus, it is obvious that in an important festival like the Durga Puja, a fair would be imperative. It is not clear when the fair associated with the Puja at *Baro Devi Bari* was first arranged, but, its existence can be traced from documents nearly a century old. The fair is being held possibly in a regular manner except for the year 1923-1924 C.E., when owing to the outbreak of cholera in an epidemic form in Cooch Behar it was cancelled along with the historical 'Ras Mela' of Cooch Behar.^{xx} The importance of the fair can be realised from a remark made by Hemendra Lal Khastgir, Revenue Officer of the former Cooch Behar State in his Report (1928 C.E.) — "*In the Sudder Sub-division (Cooch Behar division) there were three fairs of importance, namely, the Debibari Mela and Rash Mela of Cooch Behar town and the Gadadhar Mela in Taluk Ambari at the confluence of the Kaljani and Gadadhar rivers.*"^{xxi} The fair, though, in a much reduced form continues till today. A fair out of private enterprise was also organised in association with the Puja of the Lahiris of Bamanhat. The fair sustained for four days from *Saptami* to *Dashami*. Though, not directly related with the Puja, but, possibly sometime in between the Durga and Kali Puja celebrations, probably to celebrate the festive season a fair was also arranged by the Mustofis at Gobrachhara. [Fig.-5] A day of the fair, without any previous declaration, was gifted in munificence as a 'free purchase day' by the Mustofi family to the general public attending the fair. It is quite intriguing, that the annals of these private fairs, though, once quite popular, does not seem to appear anywhere on the Government records. In some of the houses, folk-plays, theatre and music also formed an indispensable part of the Puja celebrations.

The *Thakur Dalan* or *Durga Dalan* of Thakurbari at Cooch Behar was completed in the financial year of 1890-1891 C.E.^{xxii} It is an example of typology of built heritage, i.e., the *Thakur Dalan* and is the second oldest *Thakur Dalan* in Cooch Behar District. [Fig.-6] Completed in the financial year of 1916-1917 C.E.,^{xxiii} the *Thalur Dalan* of Baro Devi Bari alike the iconography of Baro Devi and her worship is also unique. It has elements of the European Classical Revival. [Fig.-7] The oldest and perhaps the most beautiful *Thakur Dalan* extant in Cooch Behar is that of the Mustofis at Gobrachhara. It was constructed most probably in the early-mid nineteenth



century. The roof of this structure has collapsed long ago. It is an old edifice with almost the same typology like that of the *Thakur Dalan* at Thakurbari, i.e., *Thakur Dalan* type. In addition, it comprises of some terracotta and intricate ornamental work. [Fig.-8] The only private *Thakur Dalan* in the town was that of the Bhattacharyaya family at Keshab Road. It was in the indo-saracenic style and erected most possibly in the 1920s. [Fig.9] Unfortunately, it has been recently demolished (2020 C.E.). The *Durga Mandap* of Govinda Prasad Roy's house was also large; it was constructed in the utilitarian style of architecture followed by the early engineers of the East India Company, most probably in the early twentieth century. This *Durga Mandap* was pulled down in about 1994 C.E. [Fig.-10] The *Durga Mandap* of 'Ananda Bhavan' or Dr. Dineshananda Chakraborty's house, which was also constructed possibly on the same period as that of the last mentioned structure and still survives, attracts considerable interest. The small building has a hexa-gonal outline and is in the Pagoda style of architecture. [Fig.-11] DebashisBosu (2018C.E.) observed that, of the *Thakur Dalans* he had seen, most of them had their facades towards the south.¹ It is interesting that, if we compare this data with the *Durga Dalans* or *Mandaps* of Cooch Behar the present author has surveyed till now, the findings are congruent.

The Pujas of the Royal house of Cooch Behar, though, much reduced in grandeur, continues till today under the Debutter Trust Board as already noticed. The eventful days of the 1940s and early 1950s, featuring the Second World War, partition of Bengal, the independence of India, merger of Cooch Behar State with the Indian dominion, transformation of Cooch Behar into a District of West Bengal, the abolition of Zamindaries etc. imparted great socio-economical stress on many of the families where private Pujas were celebrated. Thus, from the late 1940s the private Pujas started to dwindle and almost in the close of 1950s most of them had disappeared. However, some of them continued in the form of 'ghot puja', but, only for a short period of time. The prevalence of so many Pujas at Cooch Behar testifies the socio-economic condition of the then Cooch Behar. The presence of so many metal idols offers a distinctive trend also. Since, most of the old Pujas are now lost, it is quite difficult to document the details. Absence of written evidence further escalates the difficulty. The present article is only a brief overview of the Royal and old Private Pujas of Cooch Behar. Hence, it is verily lacking in reasoning, statistical,

¹Bosu, Debashis, 'AbaluptaThakurdalan', *Harappa (Likhan-Chitran)*, Ed: Saikat Mukherjee, Periodical Magazine, 2nd Year, 1st Issue, Printed by: Saikat Mukherjee, Lens Computer, Ranaghat, Nadia; Published by: Saikat Mukherjee, 30, Bhattacharyaya Para, Ranaghat, Nadia: 741 201; Regd. No. WBBEN/2017/74309, October, 2018, p. 33.



comparative, analytical etc. data. To conclude, the findings are themselves inconclusive with the object of triggering interest into the subject for further research.

Courtesy: Dr. Nripendra Nath Paul, Shree Krishnaprasad Chattopadhyay, Smt. Aparna Chattopadhyaya, Shree Kunal Nandi, Smt. Mousumi Banerjee, Smt. Jhumka Guha, Kumar Mridul Narayan, Shree Tamal Mustafi, Shree Rajarshi Biswas, Shree Mayukh Banerjee, Shree Sagnik Chaudhuri, Shree Subham Sarkar, Shree Nilay Deb, Shree Suman Dey, Kumari Barnana Chakrabarti, North Bengal State Library and Cooch Behar Archive.

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ⁱⁱ*Ibid.*, p. 162.

ⁱⁱⁱRoy Vidyanidhi, Jogesh Chandra, *Puja-Parban*, Printed by: Shree Prabhatchandra Roy, Shree Gauranga Press, 5, Chintamani Das Lane, Kolikata: 3.1; Published by: Shree Pulin Bihari Sen, Visva-Bharati, 6/3, Dwarakanath Thakur Lane, Kolikata; Published on: Ashwin, 1358 B.S. (1951 C.E.), p. 115.

^{iv}Bhattacharji, Sukumari, *The Indian Theogony, (A Comparative Study Of Indian Mythology From The Vedas To The Puranas)*, Printed by: Rakesh Bagai, Rakesh Press, Naraina Industrial Area, New Delhi: 110 028; Published by: Sripati Ghosh, FIRMA KLM Private Limited, 257 B, B.B. Ganguly Street, Calcutta: 700 012; Corrected Indian Edition, 1978, pp. 163-164, p. 183, p. 200, p. 203.

^vGhosh, Pratapachandra, *Durga Puja: With Notes And Illustrations*, Calcutta: Printed At The "Hindu Patriot" Press, No. 108, Varanasi Ghosha's Street, 1871, Appendix, p. x, para 4.

^{vi}Pal, Dr. Nripendra Nath, 'DharmiyaAlokeUttarabanga', *Cooch Behar Samachar*, Ed: Shankar Roy, 19th Year, Sharadiya Issue, Printed and Published by: Shambhu Chandra Roy, Cooch Behar Samachar Press, Rupsi Colony, Cooch Behar; Govt. Regd. No. R.N. 8904/65, Postal Regd. No. WB/COB 07, 6th October, 1983 C.E.; also see — Roy, Dr. Sachnidra Nath, *Sahitya SadhanayaRajanyaShasita Koch Bihar*, Printed by: Lager Print-Compu Print, Benghchatra Road, Cooch Behar: 736 101; Published by: Supreme Publishers, 10A, Bankim Chatterjee Street, Kolkata: 700 073, First Edition, October, 1999, pp. 11-12.

^{vii}Bhattacharji, *op. cit.*, p. 172, p. 174 and p. 176.

^{viii}Blaquiere, W.C., 'Rudhiradhyaya Or Sanguinary Chapter; Translated From The CalicaPuran', *Asiatik Researches &c.*, Vol.-V, London: Printed by T. Maiden, Sherbourn-Lane; Fourth Edition, 1807, pp. 371-391.

^{ix}DeenDoyal Chaudhuri, *Nripendra-Smriti Or A Short Sketch &c. &c.*, Published by: Durgadoyal Chaudhuri, Bengal Book Club, 14, Ram Mohan Datta Road, Bhawanipur, Kolikata, Kolikata: Printed by: Mahesh Chandra Bhattacharyya, from Bharatmihir Yantra, 25 Ray Bagan Street, 1915, p. 7.



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^{xi} Pal, Dr. Nripendra Nath, 'DurgapujarHazraparaEbang Cooch Behar', *Smaranika: 50thDurgotsav-Tarundal, Hazrapara, Cooch Behar*, Published by: Tarundal Club, Hazrapara, Cooch Behar: 736 101; 1400 B.S. (1993 C.E).

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^{xiii}Paul, Rzisshikalpa, 'Raj-amole Cooch Behar ShaharerParibarik Durga-pujoPrabartan, Dorgutsav O Durga Mandap-er Itihas', *Sharadchhanda*, Ed: Shubhashis Chaudhury, Periodical (Annual), 13th Year, Printed by: Charu Press, 103, Dhandevi Khanna Road, Kolkata: 54; Published by: Shiv-yajna Road Boys Club, Cooch Behar; 1425 B.S., 2018 C.E., pp. 127-146.

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^{xvii}Paul, Rzisshikalpa, 'Raj-amole Cooch Behar ShaharerParibarik Durga-pujoPrabartan, Dorgutsav O Durga Mandap-er Itihas', *op. cit.*

^{xviii}Roy Vidyanidhi, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-119.

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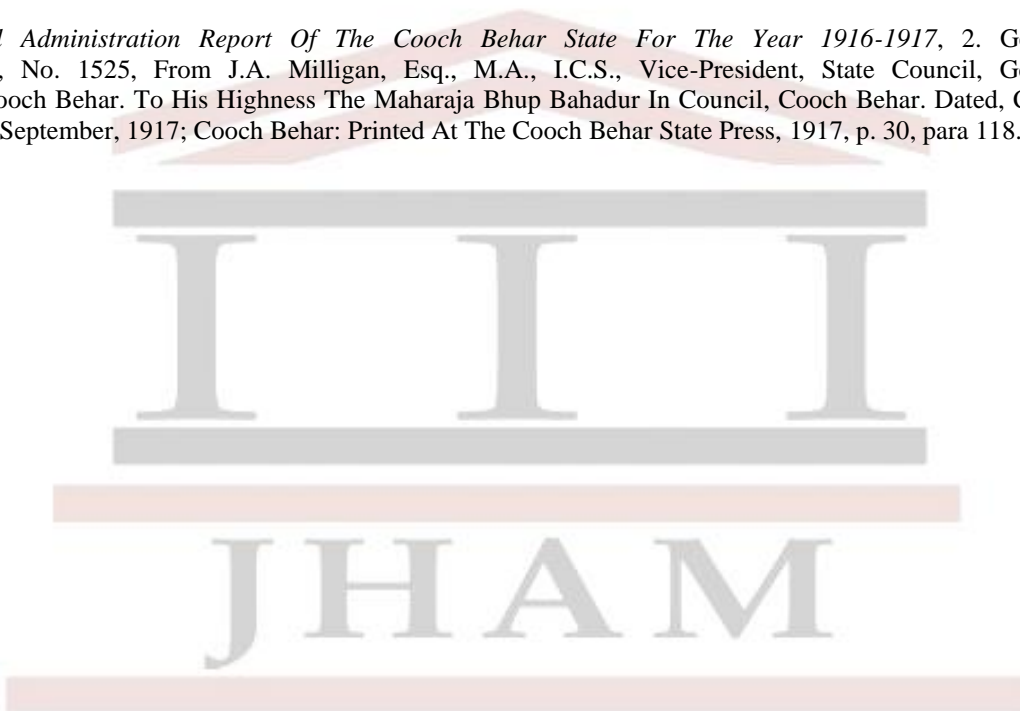
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^{xxii}*The Annual Administration Report Of The Cooch Behar State For The Year 1890-1891*, 2. General Administration, From Lieutenant-Colonel A. Evans-Gordon, Superintendent of the Cooch Behar State, Cooch Behar, To His Highness The Maharajah In Council, Cooch Behar. Dated, Cooch Behar, the ? September, 1891; Cooch Behar: Printed At The Cooch Behar State Press, 1891, p. 19, para 136.

^{xxiii}*The Annual Administration Report Of The Cooch Behar State For The Year 1916-1917*, 2. General Administration, No. 1525, From J.A. Milligan, Esq., M.A., I.C.S., Vice-President, State Council, General Department, Cooch Behar. To His Highness The Maharaja Bhup Bahadur In Council, Cooch Behar. Dated, Cooch Behar, the 15th September, 1917; Cooch Behar: Printed At The Cooch Behar State Press, 1917, p. 30, para 118.





The Historical Importance of Dashghara Temple and its Archaeological Evidences: A Case Study

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Abstract

In Hooghly district of West Bengal Dashghara is a small village and the temple of Radha-Gopinath Jiu located there is the family temple of Biswas family of Dashghara. Now Archaeological Survey of India marked the temple as heritage site. The history of this temple and the history of Biswas family are deeply connected with the history of this area. In this paper I want to reveal the popular culture and historical evidences from 15th century which is deeply rooted with this royally benefited Biswas family. Along with the history of the area some mythical beliefs are also there, which people believe through ages. This village with 10 residential families named Dashghara is situated about 36 miles from Kolkata near Dhaniyakhali Police Station area. Within 8 kilometre there is Tarakeswar- the age old famous Shiva temple. Once, Dashghara was the capital of the historical Baraduyari Kingdom. The time of the inauguration of the temple was not detected exactly but in this article I have tried to detect the time from when the worship of Radharani and Gopinath Jiu was started in this temple. The Terracotta artefacts and designs of this temple are unique and significant to identify historical background of this place. The main aim of this work is to detect the historical importance of this temple with the help of archaeological evidences.

Key Words: Historical importance, Archaeological evidences, Popular culture and historical evidences.



Introduction

The Radha Gopinath Jiu temple of the Biswas family, Dashghara is an important place of interest to the local people as well as to the tourists and Archaeological Survey of West Bengal. It is a terracotta temple with five Ratnas or five pinnacles. The terracotta plaques are mainly based on the two Indian epic Ramayana and Mahabharata. There are many temples surrounding the *Raj Bari* or the palace of Zamindar family but only this temple is ornamented with beautiful terracotta sculptures.



Fig 1:Front side of the temple with three 'Ratna's on the top.

Photo Courtesy: Mr. Soumya Basu, maternal descendant of the Biswas of Dashghara

The Origin of this Temple: The Biswas family of Dashghara is Vaishnav through their age old heredity and their family god is Radha Gopinath Jiu. The temple is very small; the height of the temple is around 30 feet. The idol of Lord Krishna is made of black stone (Koshtipathar) and the idol of Radharani is made of Ashtadhwatu (Alloy of eight metals). There is a small plate on the front gate of the temple which indicates that this temple was established in Shakabda 1651 (1729 – 30 AD). But it is a matter of research that whether the temple was established on that period or not. The terracotta block which indicates the date also indicates the name of the age old



forefather of Biswas family Sri Sadananda Deb. He lived during the years 1135 to 1156. According to the 'kuluji' or family tree of Biswas family Sri Sadananda Deb was the son of King Mahashibagupta Karnadeb (c.1100 – c.1118), the last king of moon family of Orissa. Mahashibagupta was defeated by Choṛganga Anantabarman Deb in c.1118 and Sadananda was sent by the Ganga King to Dashghara as District head. He had built his huge palace on the bank of the river Bimala which is now known as Kana River. As per Orissa system of land marking of that time, this palace was built on 10 unit of land (10 unit= 4 bigha) and one unit was called as 'Nahar'. Therefore this palace was known as 'Dash or 10 Naharā Palace'. In later period this palace was occupied by the Pal Chowdhury family of Mahānōd and then for its twelve main doors it became famous as Bāraduyarī. Sadananda Deb was defeated by the Pal King and had hidden himself in the village named Kachua on the bank of river Meghna in East Bengal. Therefore it is clear that the name engraved on the terracotta nameplate outside the temple gate is the name of the first ancestor of this family who built the palace of Dashghara. It is not clear that whether this temple and the palace were built on the same time or not as the date showing on the name plate is c.1729.

The present Biswas family of Dashghara is staying there from the era of Jagamohan Biswas (c.1568 – c.1601). The elder brother of his father was Kamalakanta Deb Biswas (c.1498 – c.1573). Kamalakanta was the twelfth generation of Sadananda Deb. He was first baptized as Vaishnav directly from Jagadish Pandit who was directly instructed by Mahaprabhu Sri Chaitanyadev. Kamalakanta Deb Biswas visited Mahaprabhu in Shakabda 1435. After baptism he spent his life as sage and helper of Adwityacharya. Jagamohan Biswas was sent to Dashghara by Subedar or mid-level junior commissioned officer Sayad Khan. Muslim Subedar defeated Ramnarayan Pal the last king of Pal Chowdhury family and appointed Jagamohan as the new king (between the years 1587-1598). They became 'Biswas' from 'Deb' at the time of Garur Narayan Deb (c.1318 - c.1403) who was 8th generation of Sadananda Deb and appointed as "Khas Biswas" of Ilius Shah. Generation after generation they spread out the area of their zamindari estate. Their Jamindari or land lordship was extended towards western side through Birbhum, Mallabhum, Bankura, Chakla etc. In c.1707 the main idol of Lord Radha Gopinath Jiu was brought in this temple by the fourth generation of Jagamohan Biswas but it was not mentioned in the family tree that in which date the deity was installed in the temple. If we presume that the main idol was installed in Dashghara temple in c.1729 – 30 then it indicates the time period of Anandiram Deb Biswas, the fourth generation from Jagamohan Biswas. In that



case the date c.1729 can be the date of re-establishment of idol in the temple. Before that there might be any another idol worshipped in the temple.

About Dashghara: Dashghara is the name of a *mouza*. In that *mouza* there were ten villages; Srikrishnapur, Jaṛgram, Dighara, Aaglapur, Srirampur, Ichapur, Gopinagar, Gangeshnagar, Paṛammo and Nalthoba. These villages are existing in the present days also and the name Dashghara is loosely applied to a number of neighbouring villages. In the present Dashghara village we could not find out any trace of ancient B̄raduyar̄ palace but we could find out a huge land covered with jungle where it is rumored that the palace existed. When people cleaned the jungle area for preparing the land for agriculture they had found out ruins of the ancient palace.

From the time of Anandiram Deb Biswas the Durgapuja festival has been celebrated in the Biswas family. Even now every year they make the full idol of Goddess Durga in their own Durga Dalan. Shyam Sundar Deb Biswas, the son of Anandiram Deb Biswas was the treasurer of Nawab Aliwardi Khan. During his period the inner house was newly built up. After second generation ie, at the time of Gangakishor Biswas (c.1792 – c.1882) the entire Jamindar Building comprising of Durga Dalan, Nat Mandir, Kachari or office building, Nahabatkhana or Music Room etc was built. Therefore it was not stated anywhere that at the time of Anandiram Deb Biswas the terracotta temple of Radha Gobinda Jiu was built but from the year c.1757 Radha Gobinda Jiu was established as their family god in their own house. Before Radha Gobinda Jiu they worshipped the other gods and goddesses brought from Orissa. Now also with Radha Gobinda Jiu the old family god Narasimha Deb, Raghunath Shila, Sudarshan Chakra and Biraja Devi or Katyayani Ghat, Someswar with Ban Lingam made of Ashtadhatu (eight kinds of metal) are regularly worshipped with proper rituals. The Durga Puja ritual they practice every year is based on Utkalika or Orissa style. Previously it was practiced by worshipping their own goddess Biraja Devi and they practiced sacrifice also. After the establishment of Radha Gobinda Jiu or after baptized as Vaishnav in c.1516 the ritual of sacrifice was banned in this family. So, it cannot be established that ‘B̄raduyar̄’ and ‘Dashnahara’ is same or the temple was established in c.1729 or not.

About the Temple: The terracotta temple of Dashghara is a Pancha Ratna (five towers) temple. There were beautifully carved terracotta motifs and designs all over the four outside walls of the temple. At present terracotta motifs and designs of one wall are completely damaged. We can find the beautiful motifs from Ramayana and Mahabharata in rest of three walls. The motifs have largely been incorporated here from Ramayana. Many historians and IAS officers like Sri Amiya



Kumar Bandyopadhyay, Dr. Hiteshranjan Sanyal and Devid McCutchan and other temple specialists presume that Raghunath Jiu was the original family god of Biswas Family.

The age of the temple can be determined by the terracotta inscription grafted with cement on the outside door of the temple. Language is Bengali and the date is counted with Shaka era indicate that the temple was built on that era. From 18th century onwards the dedicated terracotta nameplates were generally written in Bengali and the dates were mentioned in Shaka Era. Under the Muslim Government it was rule to write the date in Shaka Era. [Santra, Tarapada.1998 & Britannica, 2008]

I can quote from the book Brick Temples of Bengal by David McCutcheon that “At Aatpur (Radha-Gobinda Temple) and Dhasa (Gopinatha Temple) the wall decoration repeats many of the elements of the triple-arched porches. Corner Elements, Projecting and recessing vertical plaques are divided by horizontal molding; above, triangular-shaped panels are positioned beneath the corners of the curved cornice. The plaques are carved with cult deities and accessory figures – especially musicians, dancers, ascetics, warriors, demons, hunters and women with children....Occasionally these figures are replaced by foliate patters (Akui, Amragiri Damodara temple, Darhatta Rajarejeshvara temple, Dasghara Gopinatha temple, Jhikira Damodara temple). The triangular-shaped panels are usually decorated with peacocks and other birds (Aatpur, Bhalia, Dasghara, Halisahar, Khedali, Srirampur) or lotus flowers (Gobindapur Shridhara temple). Exceptional are the vertical corner bands, set at an angle of 45degree (so as to be visible from two sides), at Asanda, Aatpur, Dasghara and Kenduli. These are carved with a frieze of superimposed riders and hunters, fighting animals and fantastic beasts. (Some of the royal riders at Dasghara are twentieth-century replacements). Vishnu or Garuda appears above this frieze at Asanda and Dasghara.” [Michell, George (Ed.).1983, Page 99 – 100]



Fig 2: Panel curved with accessory figure; Dashghara, Radha Gopinath Jiu Temple.
Photo Courtesy: Mr. Soumya Basu, maternal descendant of the Biswas of Dashghara

He said about wall panels that, “Ramayana and Krishnalila scenes are depicted on wall panels, frequently in a related series.....Panels are also curved with a host of accessory figures [Fig 2] – female attendants [Fig 5], sometimes women with children or women worshipping the linga, musicians [Fig 5], dancers, ascetics, erotic couples, male guardian figures with weapons and animal fighting. There are also images of Krishna and other deities, demons, nagas, hybrid creatures and birds. The raised panels with birds and lotus ornament at Natyanandapur (Jora-Shiva temple) are experimental, as are the lotus medallions at Dasghara.” [Michell, George (Ed.).1983, page 100]



Fig 3:Panel from Mahabharata;Dashghara, Radha Gopinath Jiu Temple.
Photo Courtesy: Mr. Soumya Basu, maternal descendant of the Biswas of Dashghara



Fig 4: Panel with Krishna and other deities, demons, nagas, hybrid creatures and birds; Dashghara, Radha Gopinath Jiu Temple.

Photo Courtesy: Mr. Soumya Basu, maternal descendant of the Biswas of Dashghara



Fig 5 [left]: Vertical Panels with figures like lady with offerings and musician playing violin;

Fig 6 [right]: Base of the arch pillar decorated with panels from Ramayana; in middle Rama with wife Sita and Lakshmana and in both sides the male and female attendants; Dasghara, Radha Gopinath Jiu Temple. Photo Courtesy: Mr. Soumya Basu, maternal descendant of the Biswas of Dasghara

Sometimes we can find one type of figures in one line. As example you can see in the first row if the two panels are decorated with Krishna Lila or Ramayana, the next panel would be hunting scene or rowing boat. In the bottom line you can find the long line of duck in a pond. On the cornices of Dashghara and Kenduli terracotta temples especially you can see the royal procession scene or hunting scene with the panels [Fig 7] and the hanging panel with lotus bud. These curvature works are very fine and you can find remarkable bas relief motifs. The frame of the entrance gate is also beautifully decorated. Sometimes some extra part of frame work can be found around the door. Here the main panels are on Ramayana and Mahabharata. In Dashghara we can find the horizontal zig-zag decorated moldings, where the main motif is 'makar'.



Fig 7: horizontal decorated moldings, hunting scene with the panels; Dasghara, Radha Gopinath Jiu Temple. Photo Courtesy: Mr. Soumya Basu, maternal descendant of the Biswas of Dasghara



In Dashghara temple there is no column. Here we can find beautifully curved arches with two rows [Fig 8]. This was the general trend of architecture of that period. We can find the local vegetables with fine and bold bas relief motifs on these arches. Here and in Jhikira temple we can find the climbers with leaves and branches on the arch. These motifs are very delicate and fine.



Fig 8: Beautifully curved arches with two rows; Dashghara temple. Photo: Soumya Basu

On these arches there are panels with the battle scene from Ramayana. On the middle of the arch we can find fighting scene of Rama and Ravana; the panels are distributed serially to the outer part of the arch. Rama and Ravana are generally portrayed as riding on a loudly crying horse pulled Rath or chariot. Then we can find the scene of fighting between monkey soldiers and soldiers of Ravana. Generally we can find the scenes from Ramayana are; horse riding soldiers [Fig 2], demons and rakkhasa soldiers, monkey soldiers, the kidnapping scene of Sita, the rescuing scene of Jatayu, fighting of Jatayu with Ravana, the march of soldiers towards the battle field of Lanka, the attempted building of a bridge over the sea by the monkey soldiers etc. Except those scenes we can find panels of various gods and goddesses in Dashghara temple and the temple of Valia and Kenduli; such as, Vishnu in Kenduli temple, Kali as fighting with Demons and monsters or giants in Aatpur Temple etc. The motifs can be found side by side in



panels with decorative relief work of leafs and branches and carvings. Here we can find a description on Dashghara temple, “occasionally three foliate panels appear (Dasghara south side, Kankrakuli, Malancha, panels). Flanking the panels are split-palmette motifs decorated with crisscross petals or scroll work. Leaves sometimes sprout from the curved profile of the palmette (Amragiri, Jhikira, Kenduli, khedail), and monkeys or birds appear at the top (Akui, Aatpur, Dasghara). [Michell, George (Ed.).1983, page 102]

Architectural Style: From the style of architecture also Dashghara Gopinath Jiu temple is as rich in elements as the other famous temples of Hooghly District which originated in 18th century. Stylistic features of art and architecture on the figurines, application of colour, decoration and in overall perfection the temples are all unique. The sitting and standing position of the figurines are very determined in posture and perfectly curved. Only in few cases of fighting scenes from Ramayana and Mahabharata we can find some old fashioned stiff works; like some features of the figurines from the temples of Amragiri, Bahiragarh and Jhikira look like they were made in the last part of 16th century or first part of 17th century. The Corner bas relief motifs of Dashghara temple is not matching with the contemporary architecture. The horse riding fighter figures, valorous fighting scene within a round plate or panel – all are very aggressive architecture of older age than 18th century.

Iconography of war scene between Rama and Ravana, fighting of monkey soldiers, replica of some mythic story from Mahabharata [Fig 3], war scene all are made of terracotta. These relief motifs of terracotta temple of Bengal are very famous and repeatedly used in various temples of same period. Ramayana motifs were taken from Krittibasi Ramayana and Mahabharata motifs from ‘Shakuntala’ of poet Kalidas; or from first half of Hindi Mahabharata by Rajendra Das [Panch Ved Mahabharata, MP3, 2014]. In 18th century these poetic works were famous and as folktale or folk song the Dohars or singers wandered in villages singing these mythical poetic ballads.



Fig 9: Devotees of Maheshwar or Shaibapanel



Fig 10: Three headed God (may be Lord Shiva) with two female attendants with one ascetic in middle attached in one block; Dasghara, Radha Gopinath Jiu Temple; Photo by Soumya Basu



Fig 11: Rama and Sita are begging farewell from Dasharatha



Fig 12: Lord Krishna with two attendants from Mahabharata before starting for forest exile; panel from Ramayana Dashghara Radha Gopinath Jiu Temple. Photo by: Soumya Basu.

Evidences from Ramayana and Mahabharata in other work of Art of 18th century in Bengal: In the other sources where we can find the facts and evidences from Ramayana and Mahabharata, we can easily locate the same design of ornaments and dress materials. On that period these two epics were very famous among the general mass due to the available transcription and translation of epic in local languages. In villages people had spread their favourite stories by oral traditions. As example, we can find the various motifs in Baluchari saree which is a local handloom of Baluchar near Murshidabad district. Other than that in European furniture, ornaments, wooden crafts of door and window all the craftsmen followed this style of designing. We could find the incidents from the two epics in the wood panels over furniture including doors and windows, boats and textile in entire Bengal. In terracotta art also this style was highly appreciated. There were some other motifs which were highly effective in seventeenth or sixteenth century in Bengal like the Indo-Portuguese embroidery and some other textiles, but were not followed in terracotta art of Dashghara but in some other terracotta temples.

Therefore, it can be said that though Dashghara Gopinath Jiu temple was built in respect of the architecture of 18th -19th century but there were some effects from earlier period too. From this it can be assume that may be this temple was built in 16th century but renovated in 18th century, and for that, we can find the name of Sadananda Deb as first builder of this temple. This temple could be dedicated to the temple trust also and then all the property generally dedicated in the



name of the first generation ancestor of that family. On that way also Sadananda Deb was the owner of that property.

Evidences against the year of construction of the Gopinath Jiu temple, Dashghara: The Shyamarai Temple of Vishnupur was the first Pancha Ratna Temple of Bengal as officially known and it is constructed in the year 1643. Therefore, as a Pancha Ratna Temple Gopinath Jiu temple of Dashghara was built in later period. It has one big top in the middle and the four smaller tops on the four corners of the roof of the temple. This Persian architecture was first used in India at the time of building Taj Mahal in the year 1638. This style of architecture was practiced in Bengal in later period. [Halder, Sibabrata and Halder Manju. 2011]



Fig 13: Dasghra temple with its main top or Ratna; Photo by, Soumya Basu.



In that case, if the present temple with PanchaRatna or five towers was built in the year 1729-30, then it can be presumed that before this structure the older temple was here with the idol of the family god of Biswas or Deb Biswas family. So, we can find many of the panels in this temple from older style of art. Therefore, the name of the forefather (who believed as first generation of this family, who had started to live here); Sadananda Deb was inscribed on the main entrance gate as the first constructor of this temple.

Conservation of the Temple by Owner's Patronization: We find the effects of different ages on the terracotta panels of this temple by centuries, as it was renovated many times by the descendants of the family. If we look to the general historical background of the family, then we can trace out that in 1937-38 there was a huge renovation held in this temple. Some potters from Kumartuli, Kolkata under the supervision of Tarapada Pal (potter of Kumartuli) suggested a grand idea to the owners that they can make the genuine replica of the panels of the Gopinath Jiu temple. They were brought there to make the Durga Idol for Dura Puja. Tarapada was their family potter. For more than 40 years he was appointed to build the traditional idol of Goddess Durga for their family. The owners acknowledged his suggestion and gave him the permission to build the replica of that panels which were about to damaged out totally. He tried first for the southern side and western side wall of the temple.

No Archaeological Survey officer or scholar was there on that period. Dr. Amiya Kumar Bandyopadhyay commented in his book that, completely inexperienced to restore this type of temple architecture, the attempt by a general potter to restore and preserve the ancient motifs, terracotta panels of old temple is really appreciable. He mentioned that this attempt shows his efficiency of work towards his employers as well as confidence and courage to finish this type of attempt. He appreciated the open mindedness of the owner's also. At that time when most of the temple of the same period had began to be damaged naturally and no attempt or a little attempt was taken by the owners to preserve them, then this attempt was taken by the temple owner of Dashghara. In any temple of Bengal there is doubt that this type of restoration was carried out by any temple owner.

Tarapada Pal created and replaced around 50 damaged tiles, which is a record. Sri Pal was the potter graded 'Chaurashi thaak'. *Thaak* means school. Before a number of centuries Bengal terracotta temples were made by the potters who belonged to Bardhaman Thaak or School of Bardhaman, Ashtakul Thaak or School of Eight clans, Chaurashithaak or School number eighty four (84) etc. They had own traditions or sometimes any individual specialization. But Tarapada



Pal was not the direct follower of this kind of school, because he was from far later generation. He was the descendant of any Chaurashithaak potter of Nadia district. He tactfully implemented his traditional knowledge with his four efficient helpers. He had never done this type of work earlier in his life. Dr. Amiya Kumar Bandyopadhyay said that when Tarapada babu was explaining his day to day work he told him that the puppets of Dashghara temple were made by his own hand. He used only the simple equipments which are generally used to make the Durga Idol. He made some face moulds for two or three big figures only. He invented the idea of making those moulds either with cement or plaster of Paris. After taking out from the mould he created the fine designs on those face structure with bamboo sticks.

Tarapada babu didn't know the actual process of heating or burning the raw mud structure of the idols. The ancient system of low heating the raw clay idols through a long time by using the wood of Indian pulm or ber was not known by him or by any general idol maker. He heard about that process but never implemented it. He burnt the clay tiles and idols in the general burner used in the village to make the roof tiles of the village houses. It is called 'poyan'. He burnt those idols for a long time than the house tiles. But he never succeeded in the first attempt. He tried again and again by spoiling many newly made idol and tiles and after a long experimentation he finally succeeded. The inspiration he got from the members of Biswas family was unique. The then Head of the family Sri Bireswar Biswas inspired him a lot. So, a heartfelt congratulation for this new innovative work and tireless effort to restore the family heritage goes to both the owner and the idol maker. [Bandyopadhyay, Amiya Kumar, Bengali Year 1380, Pg. 109-110]

There is a distinct feature that can be found in the style of the new and the old idols of Dashghara Temple. Tarapada Pal was efficient and daring no doubt to his brand new skill but it was not possible for him or any potter or idol maker to follow accurately the tradition of the past. At that time when the temple was built in 16th century the artifacts were prepared by the artists by processing different experiments. But they failed to build a new school of artist. Old schools were also could not continue due to lack of interest within the new generation. Encouraging the effort by the landlords of Dashghara temple Sri Bandyopadhyay wrote an article in the journal 'Desh', 1965 with the title 'Dashgharar Mandir: Ekti Abedan' that, he does not know any effort where any terracotta temple was renovated by this type of process of conservation.

In another article he lamented that our heritage is now in the way of destruction. There is no hope of conservation. In this situation the renovation of Baluchar Sharee and this temple is a new horizon. The styles have to be followed by new generation and the designs have to be continued



by the assimilation of different schools. Here the main problem of discontinuation of carrying any tradition is the lack of patronization. Traditional teachers are not available and present artisans are not educated enough. For the first problem he himself sorted out a suggestion, that from the Government level and from the Industrialists we can expect the patronization for preservation and conservation of our heritage. Secondly the new artists who will develop their skill for preservation can create a new school to carry on this type of architecture. There are few examples in India where the ruin of the ancient temples can be preserved by replacing new decorated tiles and Dashghara Radha Gopinath Jiu Temple is one of them.

Conclusion: Now the Dashghara Radha Gopinath Jiu Temple is under conservation by Archaeological Survey of India. The temple is protected with modern equipments. Though the daily worship is going on by the family priest, some parts are locked by the preservation committee. The present generation of the head of the family does not agree to leave the temple completely to Archaeological Survey of India. The personal conservation they created in one time is a big excuse to hold the ownership of the temple. They demand that they can also preserve their own heritage.

In the time of Durga Puja, Dol Yatra, Ras Utsab or in any small festival season this family whole heartedly enjoy with their new generations in their traditional house, adjacent to the temple of Radha Gopinath Jiu. All rituals and traditional heredity is still maintained by the family persons. Many people from neighboring villages and districts come to visit the temple and the family too. In Dol Yatra Utsab the day before Holy festival we can find here the rituals of Kirtan song of the priests taking the idol of Radha Gopinath Jiu in their lap. All people can touch Him with respect and affection.

In the same temple the original family God of Deb Biswas family is still worshipped with proper ritualistic approach. This old Zamindar or land lord family is well treated by their villagers. Here we can find the community culture which is derived from our folk culture. In most panels we can locate the assimilative nature of culture between animal and human or trees and human. In all religion we can find these adaptations. The presence of Brahma-Vishnu-Mashwara in one block of the temple, Shiva with Nandi in Vishnu temple, Brahma and other goddesses and general people with royal characters, all the features we can find in the terracotta panels of Dashghara temple are symbols of assimilative nature of culture which are depicted in this temple. From the 16th -18th century till now this temple is portraying or conveying us the messages of assimilation. So, we can find that Devi Durga is worshipped daily with Lord Gopinath Jiu in this



temple. All the main deities are here in one temple. So, according to Indian temple structure motifs from all span of life are here to introduce the speed and diversity of life; our epics show here the goals of life, the wide outlook and inspiration of life. This is the non-duality inseparability and the main character of assimilative nature of Indian culture and its continuity.

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Tracing the Continuity of Habitation in Archeological Sites in West Bengal from 6th Century AD till Modern Period

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Abstract

Archeological sites are those places where past human activities have been observed. It has been observed that in most of the cases those past habitations were abandoned in the certain subsequent period due to multifarious reasons leaving various pieces of evidence of the presence of human settlements. But it has also been observed that there is no dearth of sites where till date there are continuous human habitations for more than thousand a years. In the article, there has been an earnest attempt to locate those habitations taking into account of the evidence we have had from different copper plate inscriptions found in West Bengal as well as searching out the reasons thereof.

Key Words: Archeological Sites, Copper Plate Inscription, Urbanisation, Early Urban Centres of Bengal and its Decay, Continuity of Habitation, Present Settlements in Relation to Earlier Ones

Introduction

Archeological sites are those places where past human activities have been observed. From the point of view of habitation archaeological sites may be of the following types:

1. The sites where there is continuous habitation from an early point of time which is evidenced from consecutive layers of archeological cultures corresponding to consecutive historical period till date.



2. The sites where there was continuous habitation from an early point of time but abandoned later. As for example Mogolmari site. Habitation started here from 6th century AD and continued upto 12th century AD thereafter the site was abandoned.
3. The sites where there are evidences of habitation in a particular pre historic or historic period and were abandoned later on. But subsequently again human activity started in the same site.
4. The archaeological sites where human activity is found for a single cultural period.

Objective of the study

- a) To identify present locations of the places mentioned in copperplates found in West Bengal
- b) To study the continuity of habitations in those particular places till date from prehistoric/historic period.

Null Hypothesis

In view of above in the context of West Bengal the **Null Hypothesis** is :

“There are no archeological sites in West Bengal which is continuously inhabited till date”

Methodology to be followed:

1. Comparative study of the names and positions of the villages and other places like forest, river etc mentioned in the copper plate inscriptions found in West Bengal with present disposition of those villages.
2. Consulting different research articles published in this regard.
3. Finding out the present location of the villages through present day postal and revenue record.
4. Consulting Google Map to find out present day location of the villages.
5. Physical verification of the villages mentioned in 2/3 Copperplates.



Before going to detailed discussion about the inscriptions of copperplates it will be relevant here to discuss about the withering away of the urban centers developed in early Bengal .

Urbanization of Early Bengal

Though the process of urbanization in Bengal came later than northern and western India, from various travelogues written by foreign travelers like Fa Hien (399-413AD), HiuenTsang (629AD-643AD) , writings of Roman Historians Ptolemy and Periplus and from various archaeological evidences it is known that from 300BC to 200AD during Maurya ,Sunga and Kushana period 9 (nine) important *nagaras* (urban centres) weredeveloped in Bengal. Those are Tamralipti, Chandraketurah, Mongolkot,Mahasthangarh, Bangarh, Kotasur, Pokhorno , Saptagram and Karnasubarna(Ray ,1987)

In Ptolemy's history and 1st Century B.C. Periplus we have another city named as Gange over River Ganga as capital of Gangahridi . Many historians opine that Chandraketurah and Gange were same but opposite view is also there (Chakraborty, 2007)

It has been observed that these cities were gradually abandoned and withered away due to various reasons.

Before explaining the factors associated with withering away of these affluent cities once vibrant with rich inhabitants, luxuriously built buildings, large number of *sangharams*, thousands of Buddhist bhikkhus chanting Buddhists *mantras*, big merchants sailing to Sinhal, Java, Sumatra, Subarnadwip with large well decorated vessels full of merchandises , we shall discuss as to why these urban centers were created.

Urbanisation is a process of development of a particular area where the life and life style of the inhabitants are different from those of rural area. V. Gordon Childehas listed monumental building, large settlements with dense population, non-food producing classes (including rulers, artisans and merchants) and the cultivation of art, science and writing as the basic traits of the urban revolution which took place in the Bronze Age. According to him, craft specialists as well as role of surplus (food grain production) in hinterland) which supported non-food producing classes were important to enliven a city(Childe, 1950)He also consideredstrong and effective administration whose political power cannot be ignored was necessary for collection of the surplus agricultural produce from the hinterland and for distribution of the surplus amongst the urban people. (Chakraborty,1991)Amalananda Ghosh supported the view strongly and also



opined that also for initiating surplus agricultural production a strong centralized political power was *sin qua non*.(Chakraborty,1991)

Now we can summarize traits of urban inhabitants and urban centres. The people are not associated with agriculture or any food producing activities. They are associated with administration, education, trades and commerce, large scale production of merchandise for trading and export, professional artisans for producing specialized artifacts for internal and external trade. The urban centres have paved road network, brick built buildings, large temples and shrines, entertainment centers, shops and establishments, art and craft centre, guest houses and inns, educational centres etc. Besides, since people from different countries and cultures come to the urban centre for various purposes like trade, education, religious activities, entertainments etc the urban area cannot preserve its own distinct culture of the particular geographic area to which it belongs. A mixed culture is created there absorbing tenets of various other cultures. brought by people coming from other countries other cultures.

Now we can discuss about the characteristics of the specific location where a urban centre might be established . The requisite characteristics might be:

1. Where there were enough surpluses in agricultural produce in the hinterland to feed the urban people as well as for trading and export,
2. Presence of sufficient no of artisans, who produced excess and specialized artifacts for trading or export.
3. Located on a busy commercial road connecting distant business centers.
4. Located on the bank of sea or a large river to facilitate large scale transportation of merchandise to other places, other countries.
5. Strategic places for establishment of capital by rulers considering i) safety and security of the king and his family, ii) ease of administration of the kingdom, iii) nearness to main revenue centre iv) minimum fear of natural calamity like flood etc
6. Development of early prehistoric settlements into urban centers due to availability of above facilities.



7. Sometimes ancient ritual places in course of time are turned into a large and famous shrines and to serve the innumerable devotees used to come there urban facilities are provided thus forming an urban centre
8. Presence of strong centralized political power in relation to the location which will channelize the surplus food production to cities as well as to distribute the same to the inhabitants. Besides the strong political power was required to formulate and implement rule of law to facilitate trading activities.

Early Historic urban centres of Bengal

It has been observed that the early historic towns had more or less similar facilities which enabled those centers to be evolved as urban centers. E.g

Tamralipta, Gange, Karnasuvarna were port cities located on the Banks of Ganga, with a very rich hinterland producing various exportable surplus (Rice, muslin, silk, cotton, sugar, beetle nut etc). These two ports through Sea Routes were connected to Sinhala (Shri Lanka) and from there upto Gujrat in west coast of India and to Malay, Jabadwip (Java), Sumatra, (Indonesia) Subarnadwip (Burma) in south east Asia.

Tamralipta was connected to entire India through two traderoutes. One was as travelled by Megasthenis in 4th century BCE during Chandragupta Maurya, Tamralipta – Karnasuvarna – Kajangal – Champa – Pataliputra. Famous Chinese travellers Fa Hien in fifth century AD, travelled through this route. and another was Tamralipta – Bodhgaya – Ayodhya as mentioned by Yit Sing a Chinese traveler in seventh century. (Ray, 2009)

Bangarh and Mahasthan in Pundrabardhan (North Bengal) were connected with entire India through the trade route Pundrabardhan – Mithila – Champa – Bodhgaya – Varanasi – Ayodhya and from Ayodhya upto Sindhu – Sourashtra – Gujrat port (Ray, 2009). Another trade route to south India Pundrabardhan – Mithila – Champa – Karnasuvarna – Tamralipta – Odra – Kongod – Kalinga. Still there was third trade passing through Patliputra – Champa – Kajangal – Pundrabardhan – Kamrup – Brahma (Myanmar) ultimately reached to South China (Ray, 2009).

Mangalkot, a prehistoric chalcolithic settlement developed into urban centre in Mauryan period due to its conversion as a trading centre. It was also a port city located on the river of Ajay connected to River Ganges which was not very far away. Mangalkot had also very rich



hinterland to support the trading activities. We have ample information regarding trade of Mangalkot in our Mangalkavyas.

Withering away of early Bengal urban centers

But within upto eighth/ ninth century AD all these *Nagaras* withered away. The reasons include the following

1. Sharma has tried to attribute the cause of decline of urban centers to decline of long-distance trade (Dutta, 2016). Declining of trade especially overseas trade. Two epoch making incidents happened in world history during this period –a) fall of Roman Empire b) emergence of Islam. Both the factors became instrumental in declination of trade in India. First due to fall of Roman Empire the demand of Indian merchandise was reduced to a large extent and secondly due to emergence of Islam the Arab merchants became very powerful and the Indian merchants lost the entire overseas trade to them.
1. Onset of feudalism after Gupta rule. From a trading nation India along with Bengal turned into a country dependent on agriculture only. Possession of land for conducting agriculture became more important than trading activities ‘Sharma argues that de-urbanization gave space to agrarian expansion as a result of which merchants transformed into landed beneficiaries. He gives references of numerous land grants of the period which speaks loud of land donations to monasteries by the state, even sometimes towns were donated to monasteries. Donation of lands and dispersal of townsmen to the countryside gave boost to a feudalistic model of state structure’ (Dutta, 2016). After Gupta's large empire was broken into parts. Feudal lords become kings of very small kingdoms. Trade withered away. Economy was completely dependent on agriculture and could not support large urban centers.



Urban centers of post Gupta period

In subsequent Pal- Sena Period (800 to 1200AD) and beyond some urban centres namely Harikel, Bijoygarh, Bikrampur, Pattikhera were developed in eastern side of Padma by some local rulers like Chandras, Burmans Debs , Khargasetc. But Palas and Senas never established their capitals but victory sites(Jayaskandhabar) from where they ruled their kingdom. There is mention of a city of 'Ramabati' –capital of Rampal of Pal dynasty , in Sandhyakar Nandi's "Ramcharit". Similarly Lakshanabati was established by Lakshmansena. These post Gupta cities were not based on trading activities but were political and administrative centers and were *Jayaskandhabars*(victory sites) rather than full fledged cities. These were also withered away and abandoned due to change of historical disposition and want of political patronage.

In view of above fate of *nagaras* of early and medieval Bengal we will now discuss about the settlements mentioned in inscriptions of copperplates found in West Bengal.

What are the copperplate inscriptions?

Indian [copper plate](#) inscriptions (*tamarashasana*), usually record grants of land or/and list royal lineages carrying the royal seal. Originally inscriptions were recorded on palm leaves, but when the records became legal documents such as title-deeds they were etched on a cave or temple wall, or more commonly, on copper plates which were then kept in a safe place such as within the walls or foundation of a temple, or hidden in stone caches in fields. These records were probably in use from the first millennium.

The Sohagaura copper-plate inscription, inscribed in the [Brahmi script](#), and possibly from the 3rd century BCE [Maurya Empire](#), is a precursor to the later copper-plate inscriptions. However, it is actually written on a small plaque of [bronze](#) (a copper alloy).The [Taxila](#) and the Kalawan copper-plate inscriptions (c. 1st century CE or earlier) are among the earliest known instances of copper plates being used for writing in the Indian subcontinent. However, these are not proper [charters](#), unlike the later copper-plate inscriptions.



The oldest known copper-plate charter from the Indian subcontinent is the Patagandigudem inscription of the 3rd century [Ikshvaku](#) king EhuvalaChamtamula. The oldest known copper-plate charter from northern India is probably the Kalachala grant of Ishvararata, dated to the late fourth century. The oldest known copperplate from Bengal is Damodarpur Copperplate (443 AD)

Most copper plate inscriptions record title-deeds of land grants made to Brahmanas, temples and Buddhist Sanghas. Copper plates also recorded title deeds of sale of lands. The inscriptions followed a standard formula of identifying the royal donor and his lineage, followed by lengthy honorifics of his history, heroic deeds, and his extraordinary personal traits. After this would follow the details of the grant, including the occasion, the recipient, and the penalties involved if the provisions were disregarded or violated. (Indian copper plate inscriptions, 2022)

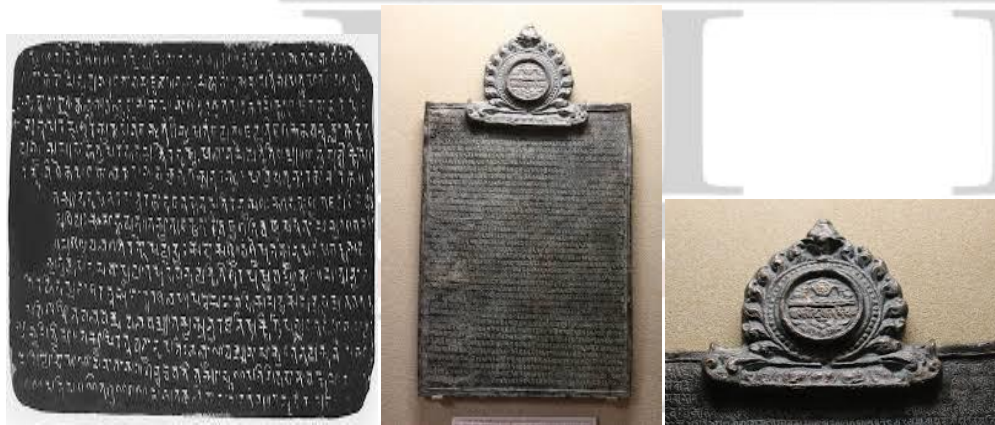


Image 1,2 – inscriptions on copper plate ;image 3 -Royal seal on copper plate

What is the significance of inscriptions of copperplates?

The significance of copper plate inscriptions is far-reaching to the historians and archaeologists and it is a treasure trove to reconstruct the past. The inscription not only recorded the land grant or land sale and registered it with royal seal, it reveals in relation to the extant time period

1. The script, language prevalent, stage of evolution of the language.



2. The royal lineage
3. The administrative areas of different contemporary rulers
4. The duties of the rulers to their subjects
5. The Administrative division of the kingdom
6. The socio economic condition of the society
7. The classification of society in terms of 'varna' arrangement
8. The hierarchy of the society
9. The bureaucracy
10. The religious disposition of the society
11. The classification of land e.g. *vastu* ,cultivated land , uncultivated land , barren land, waste land , marshy land etc
12. Existence of common property like community grazing land.
13. The prices of land
14. The units of measurement of land
15. Productivity of the land
16. Women's right to own land (Asrafpur copperplate)
17. The coinage system
18. The tax system and tax rate
19. Punitive measures for violating conditions stipulated in grant
20. The procedure of grant/sale of land
21. Ownership of the king on the land



22. Extensive geographical information about the land granted /sold. It recorded the names along with the village where the land is located, of all the villages / settlements / rivers/ water bodies/ forests/fertile or barren fields existed in all four sides of the land including direction. These were made to correctly pinpoint the boundary and location of the land to avoid future dispute.

Practically the discovery of copper plate inscriptions has provided a wealth of information to historians to reconstruct the history especially social and economic history

Details of copper plates unearthed in West Bengal

Till date 19 copper plate inscriptions have been unearthed in west Bengal from 17 sites (Sanyal, 2010). These are :

1. Mallasarul plate of the time of Gopchandra (First half of sixth century
2. Antla (Plate 1) of the time of Sasanka (first half of seventh century)
3. Antla (Plate 2) of the time of Sasanka (First half of seventh century)
4. Panchrol (Egra) plate at the time of Sasanka (First half of seventh century)
5. Maliadanga (Mallia) Plate at the time of Jaynaga (Second half of seventh century)
6. Karnasubarna plate at the time of Dharmapala (Early ninth century)
7. Tulabhita plate (jagjibanpur) at the time of Mahendrapala (Middle of ninth century)
8. Bangarh Plate at the time of Mahipala (late Tenth Century)
9. Jajilpara plate at the time of Gopala (III) (Sixth regnal year – Middle of 11th AD)
10. Sibbati (Rajibpur) plate no 1 of the time of Madanpala (Middle 12th Century)
11. Sibbati (Rajibpur) plate no 2 of the time of Madanpala (Middle 12th Century)
12. Barrackpur plate at the time of Vijaysena (Middle of twelfth century)
13. Naihati Plate at the time of Ballasena (early later half of 12th century)
14. Gobindapur Plate at the time of Lakshmansena (second later half of 12th century- 1179 AD)
15. Tarpandighi plate at the time of Lakshmansena (Second Regnal Year – 1180 AD)

16. DighirpurBakultala(Sundarban) plate at the time of Lakshmansena(Second Regnal Year)
17. Anuliaplate at the time of Lakshmansena(Third regnal year)
18. Shaktipurplate at the time of Lakshmansena(4th regnal year)
19. Rakshaskhali plate at the time of Dommonpala-12th century

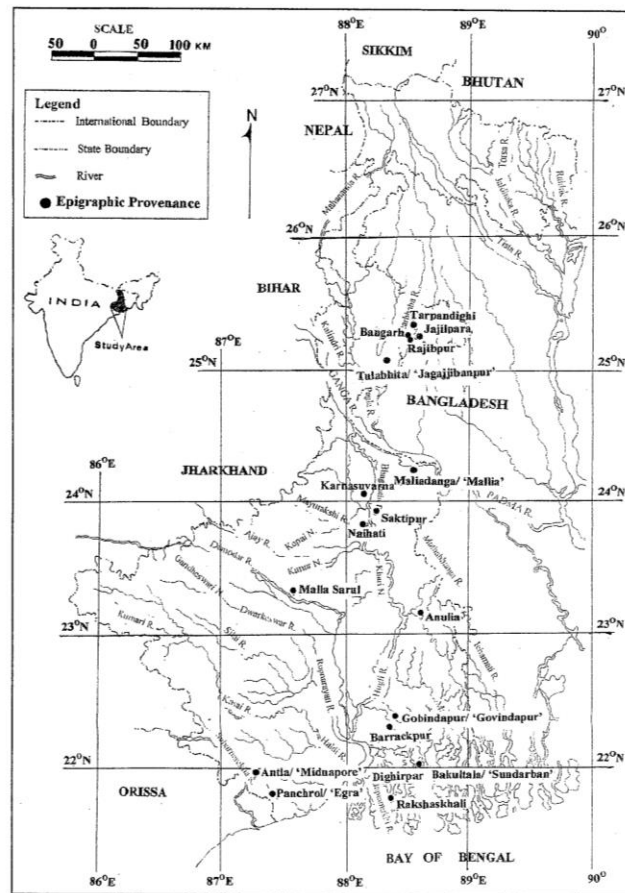


Image 4: Provenance of Copper Plates in West Bengal



The settlements mentioned in Different copperplates

Now we will examine the settlements mentioned in different copperplates and compare those settlements with present day disposition. Since it will be very much laborious to take all the copperplates, we will consider 4(four) representative copperplates which, we think, will serve our purpose to prove or disprove the null hypothesis.

Naihati Copperplate (Sanyal,2010)

NaihatiPlate was discovered in a village of same name the borderland of the districts of Murshidabad and Bardhaman .The inscription is dated in the 11th regnal year of Ballalsena, corresponding to second half of 12th century CE . It records the grant of a village called Valihitta in the Uttar Rarha Mandala within the Svalpadaksinabithi of Varddhamanabhukti.

It gives a complicated but detailed account of the villages and other places located around it, which in the transliteration of historian RakhaldasBanerjee are as follows:

“The village *Valihitta* is situated to the north of river *Singatia* , which lay to the north of *SasanaKhandayilla*, to the northwest of the river*Singatia* , which lay to the north of*SasanaNadicha*, to the west of river*Singatia*, which lay to the west of*Sasana of Amvayilla*, to the south of the southern boundary wall (*simali*) of*Kudumvama* , *to the south of the boundary wall(simali) on the west of Kudumvama which runs to the west (Paschim gati)*, to the west of the southern cattle track (*Gopath*) on the south of the *Auhagaddia*, to the south of the boundary wall which issues from the northern cattle track of *Auhagaddia*runs to the west and reaches to the southern boundary wall of the*Surakonagaddia*, to the east of the eastern boundary wall of*Naddina*, *to the east of half of the cattle track to the east of the Sasana of jalsothi*and to the east of half of the cattle track to the east of the *Sasana of Moladandi*(which runs) up to the river of*Singatia*” (Banerji,1982b:158)

The boundary specification clearly shows nine other village settlements besides cattle track and a river apart from the granted village, which are *Khandayilla,Nadicha,Amvayilla ,Kudumvama,Auhagaddia,Surakonagaddia,Naddina,jalsothi and Moladandi*.



Of these Tarak Chandra Ray identified Five of the villages including the granted village with their present day names and locations.

The location of the villages as found out by Mr Ray is :Balutia is 6 miles to the west of Naihati (the finding place of the copperplate), to its north is Jalsuti, to its south is Kharulia, to the east and south of which is Ambalgram, to its west is Murundi. As regard to river Singatia Mr Ray observed that presently there is a canal to the south and east of Balutia, That might be river Singatia but not called by that name.

Further two villages *Surakonagaddia*, *Naddina*, have been identified by Dr Rajat Sanyal. These villages are now a days called as *Sonarundi* in North west of *Balutia* and *Naudinga* Field in adjacent north of *Balutia* respectively. *Naudinga* field has no settlement today but it is converted to an agricultural land. The village *Naddina* is hidden in the name *Naudinga* only. The revised map depicting modern names of villages mentioned in Naihati copperplate is as below:

In tabulated form the old and present settlements and land marks will be represented as below:

Name in Copperplate	Modern Name	Location	Identified by	PIN Code
Vallihita	Balutia, P.S Ketugram II Dist East Bardhaman	6 miles north west of Naihati, the provenance of the plate	Tarak Chandra Ray	713123
Khandayilla	Kharulia P.S Ketugram II Dist East Bardhaman	Adjacent south west of Balutia	Tarak Chandra Ray	713123
Moladandi	Murundi P.S Ketugram II Dist East	Adjacent west of Balutia	Tarak Chandra Ray	713123



	Bardhaman			
Ambayilla	Ambalgram P.S Ketugram II Dist East Bardhaman	Adjacent south west of Kharulia	Tarak Chandra Ray	713140
Jalsothi	Jalsuti PS Bharatpur II Dist Murshidabad	Adjacent north west of Balutia	Tarak Chandra Ray	742401
<i>Naddina</i>	<i>Naudinga</i>	Settlement does not exist now- converted to paddy field	Dr Rajat Sanyal	
<i>Surakonagaddia</i>	<i>Sonarundi</i> PS Bharatpur II Dist Murshidabad	North West of Murandi and west of Jalsuti. Adjacent North East of Balutia	Dr Rajat Sanyal	742401
Singatia river	*Kandor (without any name)	Adjacent south of Balutia	Dr Rajat Sanyal	

- Kandor – general name of a small stream

Mallasarul Copperplate (Sanyal,2010)

Mallasarul Copperplate was discovered in the village Mallasarul in PS Galsi district Bardhaman . It is dated to the first half of sixth century , was issued from the *Adikarana vakkattaka vithi* by Vijaysena in the 33rd regnal year of his overlord Gopchandra . It records grant of land in the *Vettragarrta Gram in Vakkattaka Vithi in Bardhaman vukti*. The granted rural locality is bounded on the East and south by *Godha Gram* , on the North by *Vattavallaka agrahara* and in the west in part by *Amragarttika*. Besides a number of rural localities of different categories and their



landholdings representatives, figuring in the court at *Vakkattaka* are mentioned in the inscription. The names of eleven rural localities apart from *Vettragarroto grama* are *Godha grama*, *Ardhakaraka agrahara*, *Koddavira agrahara*, *Kapistha Vataka agrahara*, besides *Nivarta vataka*, *Salmali vataka*, *Madhu vataka*, *Amragorrtika*, *Khandajyotika* and *Vindhyapuri*.

Identification of the places by N G Majumdar.

Most of the localities are in the neighbourhood of *Vettragarrota* Gram within *Vakkataka Vithi*, a part of which was granted to the done. *Vettragarrota* itself can not be located with certainty but *Godhagram* can be identical with *Gohogram* on *Damodar* to the south east of *Mallasarul* where the plate was found. *Amragorrtika* may be modern *Ambahula* (also called *Simasimi*) to the south of *Mallasarul*. *Khandajyotika* may perhaps be *Khandajuli* between *Mallasarul* and *Gohogram* while *salmoli* may be *Mallasarul* itself. The name of the *Vithi Vakkattaka* may survive in *Bakta*, a place immediately to the east of *Gohogram*.

Subsequently intensive exploration recently identified five other localities within the region. Thus *Kodavira* shall be identified with *Kaitara*, *Kapistha* is undoubtedly *Kashpur*, *Nirvrata* May be identical with modern *Navakhanda*, *Vindhyapuri* is modern *Bandutia* and *Ardhakaraka Agrahara* is *Adra*. Thus three settlements viz; *Madhu Vataka*, *Vataballaka Vataka* and the *Vettragarroto grama* from where the land was donated are remained unidentified.

Table of Names of copperplate vis a vis identified new names

Name in Copperplate	Modern Name	Location	Identified by	PIN Code
Salmali	Mallasarul	P.S Galsi II, DistBardhaman	N G Majumdar	713428
Godhagram	Gohogram	P.S Galsi II, DistBardhaman	N G Majumdar	713428
Amragorrtika	Ambahula(Simasimi)	P.S Galsi II, DistBardhaman	N G Majumdar	713428



Vetragarrta	Purangaon	P.S Galsi II, DistBardhaman		713428
Vakkattaka	Bakta	P.S Galsi II, DistBardhaman	N G Majumdar	713428
Khandajyotika	Khandajuli	P.S Galsi II, DistBardhaman	N G Majumdar	713428
Kodavira	Kaitara	P.S Galsi II, DistBardhaman		713428
Kapistha	Kashpur	P.S Galsi II, DistBardhaman		713428
Nirvrata	Navakhanda	P.S Galsi II, DistBardhaman		713403
Vindhyapuri	Bandutia	P.S Galsi II, DistBardhaman		713428
Ardhakaraka	Adra	P.S Galsi II, DistBardhaman		713428

So far location is concerned all of the settlements are in P.S Galsi Dist Bradhaman on the Eastern side of River Damodar and located within an equilateral triangle –Gohagram (Godhagram) , Bandutia(Vindhyapuri) and Navakhanda being three corners and Mallasarul (Salmali) is almost central position. On the left arm of the triangle ,on the river Damodar , between Gohagram and Navakhanda(Nirvrata)there are Kashpur (Kapistha), Puran Gaon (Vetragarrta) and Ambahula – Simasimi (Amragarrtika). In the right arm, off river Damodar, between Gohagram and Bandutia (Vindhyapuri) there are Kaitara (Kodavira) and Adra (Ardhakaraka). Khandajuli (Khandajyotika) is in the lower middle of the triangle .Bakta(Vakkattaka) is slightly of the lower left arm of the triangle.



The modern names of the settlements against names mentioned in the copperplate may be pictorially represented below

Shaktipur Copperplate (Sanyal,2010)

Shaktipur Copperplate was discovered in the village Shaktipur in Sadar Subdivision of district Murshidabad.

The copperplate was issued in 4th regnal year of Laxmansen registering donation of land in parts of *NimaPataka, VarahaKona, Vallihita, Bijharpura and Damaravadapatakas in Kumarpurachaturaka in Madhugirimandala attached to Kumbhinagara in DakshinVithi in Uttar Rarha in KankagramBhukti* having boundaries delineated as below:

The Land comprising *Varahakona, Vallihita, Raghavhatta and part of Nima* was in contiguous locality and were bounded in the east by the extensive lands of *Malikunda along with Aparajoli*; in the south by *Bhagadikhandakshetra*; in the west by the cow track of *Achhama* and in the north by *Mor river*. Two *patakas of Bijharpur and Damaravada* which were off from the above lands, were again contiguous. They were bounded by the east by *Chakliyajoli*; on the south by *Vipravaddjoli*; on the west by *langlajoli* and on the north by cow track of *Parajana*.

The names of settlement and present identified names and locations are tabulated below

Name in Copperplate	Modern Name	Location	Identified by	PIN Code
KankagramBhukti	Kankjol	Beyond the northern limit of the district of Murshidabad	D.C.Ganguly	
Madhugirimandal	Mahuagadi	22 miles to the south west of kankjol An isolated hill in	D.C.Ganguly	



		Santalpargana		
Kumbhir Nagara	Kumhira	P.S Rampurhat, Birbhum	D.C.Ganguly	
Kumarapura	Kumarpur	P.S Mayureswar 3.5 miles north of Mor(Mayurakshi) river	D.C. Ganguly	731234
Barahakona	Barkunda(Bhurkuna)	P.S Suri ½ mile north of Mor , 1.5 miles off Sainthia railway station	N K Bhattashali	731102
Nima	Nima, P S Mayureswar II , Dist Birbhum	P.S Mayureshwar	N K Bhattashali	731234
Valihitta	BalutiP S MayureswarII ,Dist Birbhum	P.S Mayureshwar , 4 miles north east from Sainthia R/S, 5.5 miles from Kumarpur	N K Bhattashali	731234
Vijaharapura	Baharpur	P/S Labpur, Birbhum	N K Bhattashali	
Acchhama	Ammo	½ mile north of Sainthia	N K Bhattashali	
Parajana	Pailijona	Both sides of River Mor in P.S Labpur and P.S Mayureshwar, 5 miles north west of Baharpur.	N K Bhattashali	



Notes

1. The villages *Nima, Baluti and Barkunda* presently are in the north of Mor river while in the inscription it was stated in the south of Mor river. This shows how the restless Mor river has changed its course over time. A small dried up rivulet passing through the north of Nima and Baluti, called Kana is most probably the ancient course of Mor during Sena Period.
2. These identifications has some dispute. Some scholars indicate another set of villages *Nima, Baluti and Barkona in P.S Burwan of Subdivision of Kandi Dist Murshidabad*, located in North of Mor river may be the proper identification of the villages mentioned in the copperplate. However further investigation is necessary. This has also been mentioned by Nihar Ranjan Ray in his magnum opus “ *Bangalir Itihas Adiparva*’ (Ray,2009) (nr 288)
3. ‘Kankagram Bhukti’ – In the opinion of some scholars Kankagram Bhukti is the present day ‘Kagram’ in the western bank of Ganga about 10 km from Katwa (East Bardhaman) in the district of Murshidabad

The settlements mentioned in the copper plate and present probable names and locations as identified as per our observation (of course this is not final and requires further research and validation by the scholars) are tabulated below

Name in Copperplate	Modern Name	Location	PIN Code	Remarks
Kankagram Bhukti	Kagram	PS Bharatpur II, Murshidabad South east border of district Murshidabad on the western bank of Ganges near	742401	Kagram the erstwhile Kankagram bhukti is in Uttar Rarh as known in early medieval period comprising of the



		Katwa		Kandi subdivision of Murshidabad, Birbhum and north of Katwa subdivision of Burdwan. (Ray,2009)(nr119)
Madhugirimandal	Mahurakandi	About 25km west of Kagram	742132	About 3 km north of Mor (Mayurakshi river)
Kumbhir Nagara	Kumrui	P.S Kandi Dist Murshidabad	742202	About 5 km Northwest of Nima
Barahakona	Barkona	Barkona ,Panchthupi , PS BurwanDist Murshidabad	742161	
Valihitta	Balut (Mahadev Bati)	PS- Kandi Dist Murshidabad	742172	
Nima	Nima	PS- BurwanDist Murshidabad	742161	Contiguous patakas about 1-4 km distance from Mayurakshi river
Raghavhatta	Raghunathpur /Rajhat	PS- BurwanDist Murshidabad	742161	
Aparajoli	Aparajolikhil			A small rivulet between Maliandi and Nima-Raghunathpur patakas



Malikunda	Maliandi	PS- BurwanDist Murshidabad	742161	In the east of Nima and Raghunathour
Langlajoli*	Langalhatabeel	P S LabpurDist Birbhum	731303	West of Chakta
Chakliyajoli*	Chakta (East of Langalhata	P S KetugramDist East Bardhaman	713129	East of Langalhatabeel**
Biprabaddhajoli*	Brahmandihi (South of Langalhata and Chakta)	P S NanurDist Birbhum	731302	South of Langalhatabeel**

Notes

1. The contiguous patakas Damrabaddha and Vijaharapura existed in between Langlajoli and Chakliyajoli are not presently traceable . It is to be researched out as to whether these patakas changed its names or submerged by the Langalhatabeel and the inhabitants left the villages.
2. *'Joli' signifies water, water body or a low land where water is accumulated .
3. **Beel signifies large natural but not so deep water body formed due to depression of earth or abandoned river course .
4. Bhagadikhandakshetra as mentioned in the plate as in south of Nima ,Raghavhatta Balihitta and Barahkonamay either be i) present day 'Bharawan' village which is in the south of the patakas stated above ,or ii) a large area where the dead livestock and dead animals of the surrounding villages and patakas were thrown away to be eaten up by vultures and other wild animals . This area in vernacular Bengali language is called 'Bhagad'. From the word 'Bhagad' the area might be assigned the name as 'Bhagadikhandakshetra'.



5. KumarpuraChaturaka– one Kumarpur is there (PS MayureswarDist Birbhum) but it is about 10 km NW of Mahurakandi (Madhugirimondal) and about 5 km north of Mayurakshi river . Moreover the place has been identified as KumarpuraChaturaka by D C Ganguly in relation to another set of patakas as mentioned before.
6. Cow tracks of Achhama and Parajona require further research for their present day identification.

Maliadanga Copperplate (Sanyal,2010)

The Provenance of the plate is Maliadanga, P.S SagardighiDist Murshidabad. The carter was issued from Karnasuvarna by King Jaynagain seventh century AD and recorded the grant of a village called Vappaghosavata grama in Audumbarikabishaya . A number of rural localities and other natural landmarks were mentioned in the grant portion of the inscription for delineating the boundary of the granted village. The boundary as mentioned in the plate are as follows:

On the west of the granted villageVappaghosavata ,the boundary of the grant belonging to the Brahmanas of *Kutkuta* gram ; on the north the river bed (*Ganginika*) ; on the east the same river bed; issuing thence and running along the western boundary of *Amalapautikagrama*,the boundary is the*Sharshapayanaka*, *it is limited by the same boundary as far as Bhatta UnmilanasSvamin's grant; from the south thereof (the boundary) turning along further by the same boundary to the north, proceeds as far as the boundary of Bharani Svamin's grant ,thence in a straight line enters the pond ofVakhataSumalika on the boundary of BhattaUnmilan's grant; and goes as far as the same boundary of Brahmanas of Kutkuta gram.*

The names of localities and natural landmarks and present day identification by Dr Rajat sanyal are as follows

<i>Names in Plate</i>	<i>Present Day Names</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Identified by</i>	<i>PIN Code</i>
<i>Bappaghosavata</i>	<i>Bhabki</i>	<i>P.S RampurhatDist Birbhum</i>	<i>Dr Rajat Sanyal</i>	<i>731202</i>



<i>Amalapautika</i>	<i>Ambha</i>	<i>P.S RampurhatDist Birbhum</i>	<i>Dr Rajat Sanyal</i>	<i>731202</i>
<i>Kutkuta grama</i>	<i>Kutigrama</i>	<i>P.S RampurhatDist Birbhum</i>	<i>Dr Rajat Sanyal</i>	<i>731224</i>
<i>Ganginika</i>	<i>A moribund channel in north of above settlements</i>	<i>North of Bhabki</i>	<i>Dr Rajat Sanyal</i>	
<i>Sarshapyanika</i>	<i>Sarshap canal</i>	<i>West of Bhabki</i>	<i>Dr Rajat Sanyal</i>	
<i>VakhataSumalika</i>	<i>A large pond</i>	<i>A large pond is there in nearby Mahendrapur which may be identified with vakhataSumalika</i>	<i>Dr Rajat Sanyal</i>	

The comparative map of old settlements as identified for Maliadanga Copperplate

Observation

From above discussion it has been observed that

1. Most of the settlements still exist today in deformed names, changed names which is evident from i) field observations ii) supporting documents iii) analysis of linguistic evolution of the names due to elapse of time ,and iv) today's postal records of the settlements
2. Sometimes settlements have lost its character. (egNaddina in Naihati Plate. It has turned into a paddy field)



3. Sometimes locations of settlements in relation to existing river flow have been changed. E.g. Nima, Vallihita and Barahakona of Shaktipur plate was to the south of river Mor. Now these are in the north of the river. This is due to change of course of the river.
4. Sometimes the settlement has been relocated. Eg. Jalshothi of Naihatiplate. It was southwest of the granted village Vallihita as per inscription, but at present it is located North west of Balutia (Vallihita). This is again may be due to change of the river course Singatia.
5. Some settlements are still untraceable. Eg. Madhu Vataka, Vataballaka Vataka of Mallasarul plate, Nadicha of Naihati Plate are still to be traced.
6. Disputes are also there regarding identification of settlements. Eg. Shaktipur Plate. The group of villages mentioned in inscription viz Nima, Vallihita, Varahakona have been identified in two places – one in the district of Birbhum P.S. Mayureswar, and another in the district of Murshidabad Kandi Subdivision P.S. Burwan. Scholars are of different opinion in conclusively proving the actual location of settlements.

Conclusion

From the intensive examination of the present day locations of the settlements mentioned in all 4 (four) representative copperplate inscriptions it has been proved that our null hypothesis that **“There are no archeological sites in West Bengal which is continuously inhabited till date”** is not valid. The villages unlike cities and nagaras of West Bengal are continuously inhabited for centuries after centuries more or less in the same place. The reason behind is that the economic production relation of the villages has remained same for centuries. The social system of villages - firstly living on agriculture, following same simple technology of cultivating lands - bullockplowing, hoeing and harvesting by using simple instruments, depending on rain water for irrigation and secondly rural artisans like blacksmiths, potters, carpenters, weavers goldsmiths and service providers like priests, barbers, washermen etc fulfilling the entire need of the villages and villagers continued for centuries after centuries. Nihar Ranjan Ray in his magnum opus “Bangalir Itihas – Adiparba” stated that- “From 4th /5th Century AD to 18th century AD the village society of Bengal remained more or less same. It has two main reasons. Firstly during these long period the production system (agricultural or small rural industrial) did not change. Secondly the land allotment and land ownership system remained same. Consequently the stratification and hierarchy of the agriculture depended society remained unchanged.”



Villages with its production system and system of division of labour remained self contained. They were never dependent upon any outside economic or social factors for its survival. Even the villages were least bothered about the changes in ruling disposition. King comes and king goes –rural life goes on and on like still water in a quiet pond. Sometimes natural disaster or aggression and plundering by soldiers of any king disturbed the rural life but that was temporary phenomenon. As the waves generated after throwing stones in the pond and after some time the water of the pond becomes still again, the rural life becomes normal again after temporary disturbances .As a result the villages survived centuries after centuries with its self contained socio economic system.

But this did not happen to cities and nagaras of Bengal. Cities and Nagaras were dependent on trades, royal patronage or religious patronage for its survival. Consequently when these factors withered away for historic reasons cities and nagaras also withered away. Hence our null hypothesis that “*there are no archeological sites in West Bengal which is continuously inhabited till date*” is disproved.

Of course lots of changes have taken place in rural life during later half of twentieth century which is still continuing and will continue. The life of villages has become dynamic rather than static as past centuries. The economic production relations are very rapidly changing. Village and villagers are not completely dependent upon agriculture. Social hierarchy, social stratification and division of labour on which the stability of villages were anchored are falling apart. Unlike previous centuries communication and transportation system has increased. People emigrate to other places for livelihood or other factors. Industrialization and urbanization are taking place very rapidly. Some villages are grown up as towns or some villages become part of a neighboring town. But these changes do not go against our conclusion that the villages in West Bengal unlike historical cities and towns have been existing continuously for centuries in the same place until havoc changes occurred in the natural phenomena like change of course of the adjoining river or fall victim of modern day developmental programmes like large dam constructions submerging the villages etc.

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Courtesy: The Map has been reproduced from the article of Dr Rajat Sanyal



A Note on Kasar Devi Temple in Almora , Uttarakhand

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Abstract

Kasar Devi, a place in Almora, Uttarakhand sits high at an altitude of 2,116 metres above sea-level. This second-century temple, adorned on a hill-rock, 8km from Almora, overlooking the town of Almora, the snowy heights beyond, is a famous Hindu shrine, dedicated to the goddess – Kasar Devi, the local deity. In 1890s, Vivekananda came to this temple for meditation. Kasar Devi Temple is a popular pilgrimage destination in the vicinity of Almora. Oriental and Occidental-irrespective of all devotees visit the temple, a serene and enchanting spot and seek spirituality and enjoy its quiet atmosphere and spellbinding view of the surrounding Himalayas including Almora Valley.

Key Words: Almora Kasar Devi Temple, Uttarakhand

Introduction

Kasar Devi Temple, a place in Almora, Uttarakhand - surrounded by Himalayan Forest - verdant pine and deodar forests, is an ancient shrine dedicated to Goddess Parvati - Durga Avatar - an avatar of the Goddess Shakti. Creation of the world itself depends on the existence of a woman, who is consequently created for the purpose. Yes, there are unique powers in the temple of Goddess Durga. About 10 kilometres from Almora town, this temple of Mata has a special significance.



Kasar Devi Temple, located on the Bageshwar Highway in Almora in the village called “Kasar”, is situated on the top of the Kashyapa Hill. “Goddess Katyayani”, one of the eight forms of Goddess Durga, is worshipped here. Thousands of believers come every year to seek blessings from the Devi. The temple structure dates back to the 2nd century CE. The part of the mountains within the temple is still present in the lion form.

Durga is highly eulogized by the sages, as a source of strength to the world. She is regarded as a protector of the weak people who could not succumb to the power of enemy.

According to our Puranas, both man and woman were originated from the Ardhanarishwara [Skanda Purana] form of Shiva, woman from the Nari (woman) half. It suggests the divine origin of the women. Skanda Purana assigns to women a position of honour and dignity both in the family and in the society [Skanda Purana]

According to the Puranas (most probably Bhagavat Purana) from Hindu literature, to kill Shumbha and Nishumbha, Devi Parvati in the form of Kaushiki appeared and killed them. An inscription on a stone boulder says that the temple was constructed by a King named Rudrak. A temple by a name of Rudreshwar was also constructed as another inscription of 6th-7th century records. The place is known for its serenity and attracts devotees from across the globe.

The rock at the back of the temple with inscriptions in Brahmi script will attract any archaeology enthusiast. India is home to 33 million goddesses, where religion resides in the particles, but the debate between religion and science is also old. It is rarely seen when science goes ahead and bowed in front of religion, but this miracle happened in Almora, Uttarakhand. Science went ahead and bowed his head in front of Durga.

The entire area is surrounded by a unique aura of Mysticism and Spiritualism which are always unique identity of India. Historically, India is known for rich tradition, spiritualism and mysticism. One can experience both spirituality and solitude in abundance even in Kasar Devi. The earth is surrounded by rings which are filled with high energy protons. The solar wind has its impact on the energy belt of Kasar Devi. It is probably the only temple in India that also has a meditation room.



Kasar Devi, the holy abode came into prominence when the great spiritual leader Swami Vivekananda visited this place in 1890. In the same year he walked from Nainital to Almora. In Hindu religious thought, all forces can be turned to spiritual development. The special thing is that Swami Vivekananda, founder of Ramakrishna Monastery and Ramakrishna Mission, really absorbed in this place, made [Lectures from Colombo to Almora] visits to Almora after the demise of his Guru Sri Ramakrishna, travelled throughout India and taught Vedanta. It is said that he spent several days meditating in a cave on a hill close to the Kasar Devi Temple.

Vivekananda is said to have performed the most severe forms of meditation in a solitary cave of this mountain. Kasar Devi became famous after his visit. This Temple is not only an action oriented but it is also the priority of the flush, meditation and peace. He mentioned the healing powers of the beauty elaborately after which it became recognized and popular with people all around the world. The meditational and religious practices that were performed by him have been elaborately mentioned. Devotees, who have visited here, claim that the place has magical powers to calm people. Their inner alternative ego finds solace here. They feel here a deep sense of serenity, uplifting energy and ease. Clearly with the beautiful Himalayan view, this place can be made better as meditation centre which should make its own position in the world. And what do the devotees learn here? Renunciation! The only one eternal theme the Himalayas always teach to humanity: Sarvavastubhayan vitambhoobinrinamvairagyamevabhayam [Lectures from Colombo to Almora]

“Everything in this life is fraught with fear. It is renunciation alone that makes one fearless - Swami ji realized in the land of renunciation : “.....if these Himalayas are taken away from the history of religious India, there will be very little left behind.” It is said that at Kakrihat on Koshi river about 22 km from Almora, Vivekananda had realized a special knowledge, rather, it was his experience which he described : “.....hereunder this banyan tree one of the greatest problems of my life has been solved.” And what was that realization? That experience? It was his “wonderful vision about the oneness of the microcosm and the macrocosm.” [VIVEKANANDA A Biography in Pictures]



It is also notable that in 1916, Swami Shivananda and Swami Turiyananda, the two Brother-monks of Swami Vivekananda, established a centre on the Bright End Corner in Almora, which is today known as Ramakrishna Kutir.

The deep sense of serenity, the tranquility that the devotees experience at Kasar Devi temple complex which has been visited by many personalities of the counter-culture like Vivekananda who performed most severe forms of spiritual practice in a solitary cave of this mountain, Alfred Sorensen (Sunyata Baba) Lama Anagarika Govinda, Bob Dylan, George Harrison, Cat Stevens, Western Buddhist Robert Thurman and the writer D. H. Lawrence were among Famous Personalities who spent two summers here. Notable classical dance maestro Uday Shankar, too, practised here in Almora with his troupe. In 1938, compelled by his love for Kumaon, Uday Shankar set up his dance academy, The Uday Shankar Indian Cultural Centre in the neighbouring Simtola hill. During his extended stay here from 1936 to 1942, he experimented and invented a unique dance form, a blend of Indian classical and the famous local ballet - Kumaoni Ramlila [thebetterindia.com].

There is a serene spot to visit with great views of the Himalaya Mountain, surrounded by thick green forest consisting of thick Cedar, Oak, Pine and Rhododendron trees. The calmness exuberant at Kasar Devi is only superseded by the imposing panoramic view of the valleys, rivers and hamlets that surround the village/area. The enormous geomagnetic field here seems to have caused special rejuvenation for people who have meditated here. It is believed that due to geomagnetic field in the region, it is a more peaceful and tranquil environment.

Also known as Crank's Ridge on the Hippie Hill, the area around the Kasar Devi Temple has always melting pot of art, spiritualism and poetry. Crank's Ridge or Hippie Hill around the temple was made legendary in the 1960s by American psychologist and writer Timothy Leary who wrote much of his psychedelic experience here [Almora Kasar Devi Temple].

Just before the Kasar Devi Gate, a pink-painted snake-like crack in a big rock by the road is noticed. Many local myths are associated with it. Two stone lions greet you at the entrance to the main temple. A cave-like rock houses the shrine of Kasar Devi. The sanctum sanctorum of the goddess is found inside a cave amidst the huge



rocks. Kasar Devi temple, once, a small stone structure in the Nagara style is now, at present, a combination of Hindu and Buddhist structure. Devotees need to pass a stone slab path which takes to the main temple. The main temple has a huge tower with a conical dome on its top. This is a circular structure having a porch with pillared verandah on the outer side.

The Temple consists of two different groups of temples—one dedicated to the Devi and the other to Shivji and Bhairava. The main temple has a monolithic flame which keeps on burning for 24 hours over the years. The main shrine of the Devi is inside a cave-like formation. The main Deity is placed in the centre of the temple structure. Inside the cave is an Akhand Jyoti (an everlasting flame that has never died down) which has been kept aflame for 24 hours for many years. It has also a Dhuni (Havan Kund present inside the temple) where a wood log burns for 24 hours. It is believed that this ash of Dhuni is very powerful. The devotees believe that this ash can help cure many illness, including mental health issues.

Kasar Devi, away from all the hustle and bustle of a city, is not just for the religious affairs but also for the spellbinding views of the Himalayan Peaks and the valleys it offers. Breath-taking views of sunset and sunrise can be witnessed from this place. It is an ideal place to do Yoga and Meditation. The atmosphere here is so calm and serene and surrounded by lush greenery and snow-covered mountains make it one of the best places for spiritual awakening. A small hike-up to the edge of the hill near Sri Sarada Math will give people the unmatched views of the entire valley and the snow-capped mountains.

The American clinical psychologist Timothy Leary [Timothy Leary] who was fired from Harvard University for promoting the usage of psilocybin, a form of psychedelic drug to graduate students, visited Kasar Devi as he firmly believed that the hilltop had some form of special cosmic energy. Energy has been known to be the key reason behind the medicinal powers of Kasar Devi.

The majestic air that seeps into the valley has also been visited by one of the greatest minds of the West, Ernst Lothar Hoffmann, later known as Lama Anagarika Govinda. He was a Buddhist Monk and an annotator of Buddhist inscription. He



and his wife Li Gotami, an Indian poet and writer stayed at Evanz-Wentz's house in Kasar Devi for a brief period. Walter Evantz-Wentz, an American anthropologist, a preacher of Tibetan Buddhism, also stayed in Kasar Devi for some time.

Conclusion: Kasar Devi Fair, a large fair, held at the Kasar Devi Temple on the occasion of Kartik Purnima in the Hindu Calendar, corresponds to November and December every year.

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A concept of management system in a Museum

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Abstract

Museum management is an action of ensuing the running of the museum's administration and all activities which are directly attached to the field of museum work. The purpose of this study is to identify the proper management of museum, functions importance, the extent to which they meet the needs and services of museum. It is the fact that technology is becoming not only a tool for staff to control and manage the museum but to make museum's collections available to museum users.

Key Words: Management, Museum, system collection, functions

Introduction

The term 'museum management' was used to define various museum activity. In this way museum management encompasses tasks relating to financial and legal responsibilities and staff management as well as general planning of museum activities. The rise of professionalism in museums sector can be explained by development in the wider management and business sector. Museum is a nonprofit making institution, so museums have to adopt professional management practices from the business sector and also museums need to consider marketing strategies that will play an effective role in the twenty first century environment. The sector has had to market them as a profit making professional management organization like business sector.

It is very difficult to give a precise definition of the term management. Different scholars have different interpretations about management. An economist considers management as a resource



like land, labour, capital and organization. The bureaucrats consider management as a system of authority to achieve business goals. A sociologist considers managers as a part of the class elite in the society. Lastly a museologist considers that management is an important function of a museum. In a museum every work depends on the management system. An institution can be viewed as a system, and management can also be defined as human action, including design to facilitate the production of useful outcomes from the system.

The verb manage comes from the Italian maneggiare (to handle especially tools) which has been derived from the two Latin words manus (hand) and agree (to act). The French word for management has influenced the development of meaning of the English word management in the 17th & 18th centuries.

Management is the process of reaching organizational goals by working with and through people & other organizational resources. Four basic management functions that make up the management process are described in the following sections (Barlett, Ghoshal, 1994):

- 1) Planning - It involves choosing tasks that must be performed to attain organizational goals, outlining how the tasks must be performed, and indicating when they should be performed.
- 2) Organizing - It is to create a mechanism to put plans into action. People within the organization are given work assignments that contribute to the company's goals.
- 3) Influencing - It is referred to as motivating, leading or directing.
- 4) Controlling - It is an ongoing process. First to collect information and compare present performance to pre-established performance norms and also determine the next action plan. Thus action is controlled by the manager.

If we keep in mind the role of the museum today we realize that decision making is a basic factor for bringing to fruition the final goals, the aims and the 'mission. This is so because in contemporary societies the museum is not just the building which houses collections. It is a complex cultural organization which securely conserves and preserves material and cultural objects. As contemporary museology shows, museum management should fulfill five roles. (Edison, 2004)

- 1) The museum's mission should be inspired.
- 2) It should specify the limits of its jurisdiction that is its institutional brief.
- 3) It should lead towards the museum's final goals.
- 4) It should supervise the achievement of the museum's aims.
- 5) It should evaluate the realization of the museum's functions.



The overall plan must be comprehensible to the museum's public, to its supporters, local communities and state bodies. Only in this way mutual trust and understanding between all those involved with the museum will be achieved.

Very often the state, which is responsible for the series of museums within its territory, establishes a Museum Council, which gives its opinion on issues introduced for discussion. It is made up of directors of state and other museums, academics, artists and administrator and so on. The final and essential decision, however always rests with the responsible government minister.

A key role of museum management is assisting the organization, regardless of its size or complexity, in achieving consistent results so the institutional mission can be articulated and fulfilled. One of the most important aspects is to create a cohesive and effective team. This type of team requires leadership, vision and a commitment to the value of team effort. The most powerful function of a manager is that of inspiring others to be a part of the team. Effective museum management is a responsibility that embraces all the recourses and activities of the museum, and involves all the staff. Without proper management a museum cannot provide the appropriate care and use for collection, nor can it maintain and support an effective exhibition and educational program.

The modern museum must be an informative, professional, systematic, enjoyable, and socially active institution, and arguably traditional methods and practices of management are becoming increasingly obsolete. Key aspects of good management are ((Edison, 2004) :

- 1) Selecting the right personnel for the job,
- 2) Determining the work to be done,
- 3) Deciding the way the work is to be accomplished,
- 4) Managing the relationship between the persons doing the work and the other elements of the museum.

These activities may be accomplished either directly or indirectly, depending on the size & scope of the museum, but they are however, fundamental to the management process.

The management process for a museum is often challenging but always rewarding for those persons committed to serving the interests of the public, protecting the common wealth of the people, and promoting goodwill and understanding. Good management is about institutional sustainability, professional ethics, respect, loyalty, honesty and dedication. Museum directors and all other professional and administrative staff with managerial responsibilities must perform



their duties with integrity and in accordance with the most stringent ethical principles as well as the highest standards of objectivity.

An important matter for management is to document the structure under which the museum is authorized, governed, and supported. Most museums have a management structure that includes at least three components - administration, creation and operations. All elements of the museum may be the responsibilities of one person, or they may accommodate many people. Administration is the process of managing non profit organization so that it remains stable and continues to grow. (Konstantion, 2005). In general, administration refers to the broader management function including the associated finance and personnel. Administration broadly speaking engages in a common set of functions to meet the organization goals. Management structure of a museum needs to promote a spirit of team work, open internal communication and a generally accepted sense of purpose.

There are a number of ethical issues that relate to the museum's policy, management and particularly its use of money and other resources, last but not the least is its collection. Every museum should have a financial management policy that among other things defines who has the authority to expend institutional funds, the nature of materials or objects that can be purchased and the method of budgetary oversight. A museum's public responsibility revolves about the ethical correctness of its activities including the care and use of collections as well as proper institutional management.

Among whole management system collection management also plays a vital role to develop a museum. Collection management is the term applied to the various legal, ethical, technical and practical methods by which museum collections, are assembled, organized researched, interpreted and preserved collection management focuses on the care of collections with concern for their long term physical well being and safety. The term collection management is also used to describe the specific activities undertaken in the management process.

Collection management involves the development, storage and preservation of collection and cultural heritage. Cultural heritage collections require a great deal of care and protection in order to ensure their safety from external loss or damage but they also require in depth documentation to assist in tracking the life of the object within the holding institution. (Konstantios, Konstatios, Tsombanoglou, 2005)



Collection management systems are software programs designed to aid in the archiving and cataloging of objects in a collection. There are several factors to consider in selecting a collection management system including the size of the collection, its anticipated growth over time and the availability of IT resources and staffing. Every collection management system is unique; there are several features that are considered like - cataloging, acquisitions, de-accessions, loans, condition and conservation reports, security, copyright, multimedia. The primary focus of collection management is to document the standards and practices necessary to develop, care for and make available for use, the collection object within a collector or institution's care.

Museum management is merely making bureaucratic demands on the time of museum professionals who could be providing the collection or the public with valuable services instead of attending another meeting, filling out a form or writing another report. Too often, management work becomes stereotype without inspiration or leadership. An absence of leadership in turn affects both staff & public, if exhibitions lack creativity, education is unfocused or the collection is presented without vision.

The purpose of management in museums is to facilitate decisions that lead to the achievement of the museum's mission, the fulfillment of its mandate and the realization of its goals and objectives for all of its functions.

In order to facilitate the achievement of mission mandate, goals and objectives, museum management must play not just one but five roles (Narayan, Nath, 1993) -

- 1) To inspire with a sense of the museum's mission;
- 2) To communicate the museums mandate;
- 3) To lead toward the museum's goals;
- 4) To control the attainment of objectives;
- 5) To evaluate the fulfillment of museum functions in outcomes.

Museums have developed marketing strategies as a response to the dynamic challenge of increasing competition. They have entered the field paying attention to the growing emphasis on quality, value, customer satisfaction & retention, acting locally to a more global way of thinking. (Johnson, 2004) The management of a museum's marketing focuses on identifying its potential markets as well as in communicating with them.

Thus every museum can be identified as an organization which has to design and implement its strategy, in order to achieve its final goals. It is the museum personnel who carries out the



museum's functions and activities in all sectors, the ultimate goal being the application of all the museum's aims. Basically we have the administration of two essential sectors. The sector is associated with the collections and the public programmes.

In the past management was not considered as an important part of development. In 19th century museum management became a separate field of study. Trends in management system thus refer to coordination of management functions in a particular direction. (Sandell, Janes, 2007)

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Book Review

Embroidered Narratives of Pahari Embroidery: Design Directory of Traditional Motifs
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The book title, '**Embroidered Narratives of Pahari Embroidery: Design Directory of Traditional Motifs**' written by Dr Rohini Arora is a fresh insight to understand the intricate embroidery work of the Pahari region, which is not restricted to the present boundaries of Himachal Pradesh. This book is a landmark work in many ways; looking at the subject from a stitches point of view, analysing it with old specimens and presenting it with good line drawing work, innovative way of presentation. The design directory, good size of the book, and excellent quality of printing make the reading of a book enjoyable. Dr Arora has divided the research into four main chapters; 'Pahari Embroidery-Introduction', 'Double-faced embroidery', 'Single-faced embroidery' and the 'Design directory. With a good understanding of stitches, raw materials, and technical character of embroidery practised on a variety of utilitarian objects Dr Arora studied the old specimens from museum collections, besides archival literary works and filed work with artisans.

In the first chapter -the author has introduced Pahari Embroidery with clarity and the difference between Pahari embroidery and Chamba rumal. The latter is just one type of embroidery practised in the Pahari region embroidery work, which is practised in various centres; Chamba, Kangra, Basholi, Nurpur, Jammu, Haripur, Guler, Bilaspur, Salyali, Mandi, Kullu, Hoshiarpur etc. In most of the region, embroidery is practised on rumal (coverlet), costumes, hand fans, prayer bags, chaupar spreads and many more things. In the next chapter author had discussed 'double face



embroidery'. How these embroideries were practised especially on Chamba rumal and hand fans. While discussing the variety of stitches author mentioned the local terms also, which is helpful for both amateur and experts both kind of people. Folk and Classical are two types of embroidery explained with line drawing and with a picture of old specimens. Embroidery on any object depends on the right kind of selection of base fabric, embroidery threads, line drawing, subject, composition, and execution of stitches. The single-faced embroidery done on the choli has been studied in a similar method as double-faced embroidery. All types of stitches (filling, outline, finishing) etc. have been explained with good line drawing along with old specimens. The charts for showing group, subject, and classification communicate to the reader well. In the elaborate fourth chapter of the Design directory, Dr Arora has come up with the innovative method of using good, colourful line drawings for motifs (nature, human, floral, trees, deities, demon miscellaneous etc.) done in folk and classical style both, borders, composition, various subjects etc. This design directory has been developed so that the younger generation should not have any problem getting the original, good line work and should get motivated to work upon the most delicate, exclusive handiwork of the region.

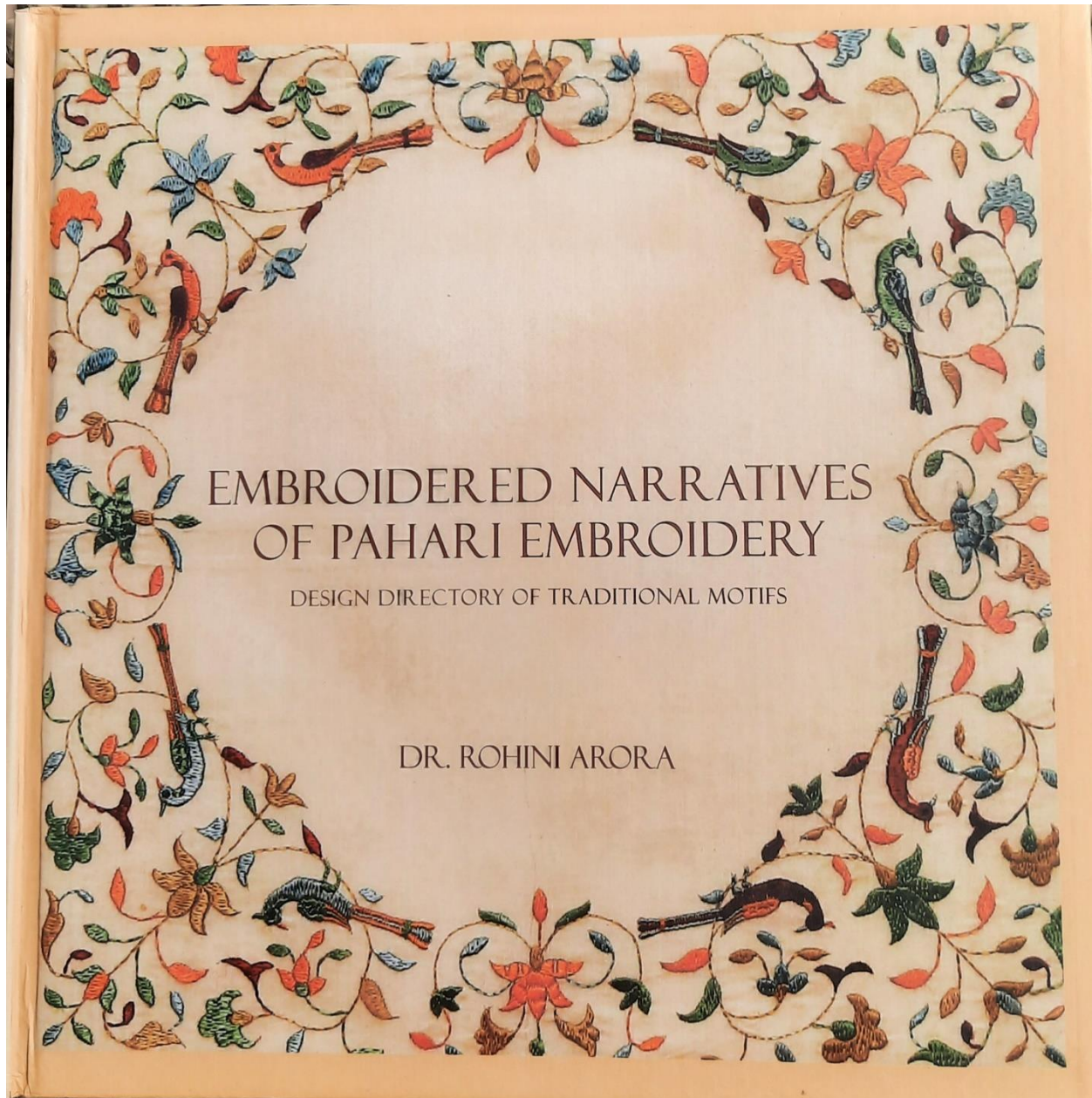
In the end, there is an open canvas to paint is the way for artists who wish to do it either by brush or needle. The remarkable photography is done on these delicate fine muslin coverlets and has been published with the same passion, which gives the correct version of the raised effect of embroidery. Must read the book with a new way to understand the subject of Pahari embroidery.



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