

Among all the early images discovered in Bengal, those of the Sun god numerically, occupy a position second to that of Visnu. This clearly shows that the Sun god had been one of the most popular deities in this part of the country in the Pre-Mohammedan days. Even today, the Sun is one of the five conspicuous deities of the Hindu pantheon. However, it is surprising to notice that the Sun-cult of Early Bengal has not received its due attention as is given to other cults. No individual study of the solar cult in Bengal has been done so far, though a few articles have appeared on some of its different aspects here and there. The materials for the study of the Sun-cult still lie hidden in the original sources as well as scattered in innumerable journals. Therefore, I have been tempted to tread on this almost untrodden field, which is full of possibilities and thought-provoking investigation.

The present study on 'Sun worship and Sun- images in Early Bengal' is the result of quite a few years of an extensive library work and comprehensive field survey that I had painstakingly undertaken. It covers a long period from the pre-Aryan stage of Bengal History to the end of the ancient period i.e. 12th -13th centuries A.D. However, Sun worship in present times at the folk level has also been discussed to show its prevalence among the rustic masses since time immemorial.

The present thesis has been completed under the able guidance and supervision of Dr. Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya, Ex-Jadunath Sarkar Professor of History, University of North Bengal and Dr. Shyamal Ch. Guha Roy, Reader in History, Siliguri College, Darjeeling. It was Dr. Bhattacharya who for the first time highlighted the importance of

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