

## **Socio–Economic & Religious Life of Ancient Midnapur through the Lens of Terracotta Temple Art**

Abir Kumar Gorai

**Abstract:** *In the recent years, various issues related to the archaeological evidence in Midnapur district received special consideration/attention by the scholarly world. The archaeological and historical researches of this particular district may have provided sufficient information to reconstruct the socio-religious life as well as economic history of ancient Bengal as a whole. Archaeological researches mainly focus on the different cultural phases were witnessed here in this study area from the very beginning, whereas historians are keener to define the role of other aspects; like art & architecture, diversity of culture, political lineages and religious ideologies etc. in social changes. Moreover, the contribution of the rich cultural history of this district demarcating the historiography of ancient Bengal as whole is major discussed issue among the historians. The present paper is a preliminary attempt to reconstruct the socio-religious life along with to understand the day-to-day life of ancient Midnapur through economic perspective as well.*

*The primary aim of this paper is to define the socio-economic and religious life of ancient Midnapur in terms of terracotta temple art, are available in this district and how this is important in its cultural development. The contribution of Midnapur district is so important in the history of Bengal and India as well in every aspect that in terms of culture, art & architecture or the socio-economic system. The present work explored such dimensions of historical phenomena.*

**Keywords:** *Terracotta art, Temple Architecture, Socio-Economic life, Religious life, Folk culture.*

History is a reflection of human life. As a result of the development of human civilization, left its mark in every aspect of life i.e., literature, music, education, philosophy etc. The society is the creation of man and Oligarchies, Monarchies, and Democracies govern the present state in the course of political evolution in the history of social progress. If we imagine people or in a broader aspect society as a tree, then economy will be the root of this tree and culture is its beautiful flower and its fruit will be the civilization (Basu, 1954, p.12). Therefore, we can say that all of these are inter-related. In this article the author has tried to find out the socio-economic system of ancient Midnapur through the terracotta art basically used in the temple architecture found here in this district. But, before we start it is better to make clear that here in this article by Midnapur, we mean to say that the undivided ancient Midnapur.

The contribution of Midnapur district is so important in the history of Bengal and India as well in every aspect that in terms of culture, art & architecture or the socio-economic system. Geographically Midnapur is very significant, the north-western part of which is made of the alluvial plain of the Ganga, the south eastern part of the district is surrounded by the red laterite soil of Bankura and Bihar and the alluvial plain land is stretched over the east, the west and the south. It also borders the northern part of Orissa and a considerable part of the eastern littoral. So, we can see that the district was influenced by the Orissan culture in the west, the tribal culture of the Chhotanagpur hilly region in the North West and the pure Bengali culture at the rest of the district. Therefore, the district of Midnapur today becomes a forum of the mixed cultures. The influence of this mixed cultural process is clearly reflected in the languages, cultures, rituals, archaeological findings and in art and architectures of the concerned area. Mr. H. V. Bayley (Bayley, 1852, p. XII) rightly said in his book 'Memoranda of Midnapore' (1852) that "The people of Midnapore proper are generally composed of an amalgamated race, who can neither be called Bengalis nor Oriyas, but who are a mixture of both. It is not intended to convey by this remark the impression that the mixture observable has been affected so much by intermarriage between the two classes as by the adoption of manners and habits common to both. The people of Midnapore proper are of Bengal and Orissa. Its inhabitants consist of emigrants from both parts, who have by long association with each other lost the salient points of their respective nationalities. But the Bengali emigrants appear evidently to form only a small proportion of the people, from the great prevalence of Oriya family names among all classes of society, as Behara, Giri, Jana, Mahapatra, Mahikup, Mahanti, Panda, Patnaik, etc. the common use also of Khas-Khail and Sawant as family names points to another class viz., Marathas. The term Khas-Khail was applied to soldiers of the Raja's bodyguard in the time of Maratha independence, and Sawant was the family name of a numerous and distinguished class of Marathas. One thing, however, is apparent, viz., that the wealthy landed classes and other gentry of the country are insensibly approximating to the manners of the same class in Bengal." According to L. S. S. O'Malley (O'Malley, 1995, p. 67) "it would be more correct to say that the inhabitants of Midnapore are composed in three classes, viz., pure Bengalis, Bengali-Oriyas and aboriginal tribes."

Historically, this district is also very significant. There are so many evidences of Stone Age and Copper Age civilizations in terms of the settlements, which show its importance and prove that the history of Midnapur goes beyond to the hunter-gatherers. Even in the era of Mahabharata, Midnapur was recorded for its glorious history (Basu, 1898, pp. 690-91). Trade and cultural contact with many countries like China, Singhal, Brahmadesh, Arabia, Greece, and Rome help to overall development of Midnapur district including politically and economically. The Mahavamsa mentioned about the arrival (310 BCE) of Emperor Ashoka in ancient Tamluk and the incident of sending Bodhi tree to Singhala from there, was

historically significant. The Chinese traveller Fa Hien stayed in Tamruk for two years (411 – 412 CE) and during that time he visited 32 Buddhist monasteries and later (629 – 645 CE) when Huan Tsang visited India, he recorded 10 Buddhist monasteries in Tamruk (Hunter, 1908, p. 309).

However, let's move to our concerned topic which is to trace out the socio-economic system and the religious establishment through the art & architecture of temple in Midnapur. Considering the history of temple architecture, Bengal has tried to establish a new school of architecture of an indigenous character, especially from the Pala and Sena periods onwards. The alluvial soil of upper India, deposited by its great rivers, provided elements for the creation of this new type of architecture. It is needless to say that Orissa has a special position of its own in this respect from early medieval age. Midnapur being very near to Orissa, the gate-way to the Deccan from Bengal and vice-versa enjoyed and exhibited a new status in the field of temple art and architecture. It saw the techniques of the south and the north and that of each school of its own. It produced a school of art which was much assimilating in nature of different parts of various places concerned. Some temple ruins of early period are scattered in different parts of the district. As for the architectural remains of the early medieval period, we are in a slightly better position. Our region has few temples and other structural remains which may be dated from C. 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries CE. With such a structural background it is difficult to trace the origin and development of architecture in *Radha*. "In dealing with the architecture of Bengal before AD 1200, one is at the very outset confronted with an utter scarcity of material all through the period." This observation of S.K. Saraswati (Saraswati, 1962, pp.74-107) is also applicable in respect of architectural remains of Midnapur. Paucity of archaeological remains has also made it difficult for us to indicate the development of secular architecture. One may recall Saraswati's observation that "in Bengal, as in the rest of India, there was always a tendency to use more permanent materials for religious edifices, and thus the early monuments that have survived or of which we have got vestiges now, almost exclusively belong to religious establishment of one or other denomination." (Saraswati, 1962, pp.74-107)

Saraswati observes that "the temple of ancient Bengal, which all naturally belonged to the northern style of Indian architecture, may be divided into three or four distinct types according to the form of the roof over the sanctum." (Saraswati, 1976, pp. 89-132) The four distinct types proposed by Saraswati are:

- i. The *bhadra*, *pidha* or tiered type, in which the roof over the sanctum consists of a series of gradually receding tiered stages crowned by the usual finial (*chuda*) including *amalaka*.
- ii. The *rekha* or *sikhara* type, characterized by a high curvilinear tower and the usual crowning elements, viz. *Amalaka* and finial. The *rekha* temple exhibits the *nagara* style known from Indian *Silpasastras*.

iii. The tiered type surmounted by a *stupika*.

iv. The tiered type surmounted by a *sikhara*.

The temples of Midnapur are examples of the first two types, though Midnapur district is not rich in so many remarkable temples like that of Konark, Bhuvaneswara, Puri, Madurai and Chalapuram but it would be also unwise to attach no importance to it. Though not very old the temples of Vargabhima of Tamluk, Sarbamangala of Kesiyari and Garveta, Hatnagar of Egra, Chapalesvara of Karnagarh and that of Kedar may claim their antiquity from three hundred to one thousand years. Throughout the district, several hundreds of temples of different categories belonging to the different ages are found to exist mostly in a scattered way excepting in few places. Apart from its numerical strength the temples of this district bear in its architecture the mark of a 'village housing' character. The rich people with their highest aesthetic sense have left a creation which deserves warm admiration from all and for years to come.

Classically the temple architecture of India is divided into three categories; a) *Nagara*, b) *Vesara*, c) *Dravida*. In *Nagara* style there is a tendency for the formation of the *Sikhara* (Coomaraswamy, 1926, p.116). The shapes of these *Sikharas* should be in the likeness of the five *Vimanas*, the chariots which Brahma had created for the gods with the purpose of carrying them on their celestial ways. This type of temple flourished mainly in northern India. In later age this type of temples came to be known as *Ratna* type (Kramrisch, 1946, p.287). The *Vesara* temples are found in the east and west. They are also to be seen in the south-east and south-west leaving, the south exclusively for the *Dravida* temples (Kramrisch, 1946, p.287). The *Dravida* temples are more complex in nature than any others. These temples have a tapering superstructure in several storeys, and instead of being peaked the roof is ridged. While the *Vesara* types of temples are denoted by a pitched roof having a ridge, sometimes it is formed in the shape of a *linga* temple. Actually, this type has no fixed design of its own. It is the mixture of the other two (*Nagara* and *Dravida*) and it is found in eastern India, mainly in Orissa. The temple architecture of Midnapur has no regular shape of its style. Numerous styles have combined to form a style of its own. Rather it may be said that here an attempt of synthesis has been made of all the existing styles in miniature of their forms (O'Connell, 2011, pp.115-24).

The temple architecture of Midnapur district cannot be categorically divided, but its design may be classified into the following several groups;

- i) Flat roofed Temples.
- ii) *Ratna* Temples.
- iii) *Rekha* Temples.
- iv) *Chala* Temples.

- v) Flat-roofed cum *Ratna* Temples.
- vi) Flat-roofed cum *Rekha* Temples.
- vii) Flat-roofed cum *Chala* Temples.
- viii) Pyramidal type of Temples.
- ix) *Jorhvangla* Temples.

If we minutely analyse the architectural designs of each type, we shall see that the construction of the flat roofed temples is the simplest. It is generally square or rectangular in size with vertical walls on three sides and pillars in the front. The only instance of super-structure of flat-roofed temple is seen at Narhajala. Materials used for this type of temples are brick, sand and cement. *Dalans* are found erected on straight and undecorated simple pillars. Here in this district flat roofed temples are made mainly for the deities *Sitala* and *Kali*. Such temples for *Siva* are also not uncommon.

The *Chala* temple is also simple in construction. It consists of only one Chamber. It is based on a square platform and the vertical temple-walls of these types are erected on a base generally square in size with tower shaped like a cave. It is formed in the shape of square or round shaped huts. The *Charchala* temple may be converted into *Atchala* temple making a super-structure on it. In this super-structural method, it may be converted into *Varachala*, *Atharachala* and so forth. But in all cases, all the *Chalas* rest on building consisting of one chamber only. Generally, the *Chala* temples are small in size. In most cases it is plain but, in few cases, it is found to be decorated. The roof edges of this type of temple may be round or square in shape. Pyramidal roofs are also not rare, though not many in number.

In this district the *Ratna* type of temple has surpassed all others. The *Ratna* design has the same tower structure as the *Charchala* series – a rectangular or square box with curved cornice. Its roof is more or less flat and is surmounted by more towers or pinnacles called *Ratna*. The simplest form has a single central tower known as *Eka-ratna*, to which may be added four more at the corners converting it into *Pancha-ratna*. By thus increasing the number of storeys and corner turrets, the number of *Ratnas* can be multiplied to nine, thirteen, seventeen and twenty-one up to a maximum of twenty-five (*Panchavimsatiratna*) times. A point is to be noted here whether this multiplication of turrets should be considered a Hindu or Muslim feature.

This temple architecture of Midnapur is influenced to a great extent by *Rekha* models. This influence is mainly derived from Orissa which is a neighbouring state as mentioned earlier. This *Rekha* structure of temple is peculiar only to Orissa. They may be of different types like *Pida-deul*, *Varha-deul* and many others. The *Sikhara* is free of horizontal bars; the *Ratha* projections are deep and spaced. There are generally one or several more horizontal bars between the *Varanda* and the base

mouldings and the crowning *Amalaka* is large and flat surmounted by a pot finial or series of Spheres. In some cases, the tower sweeps in from a comparatively lower level developing a rather pointed shape, with no distinction between the *Sikhara* and tower walls. It is either entirely smooth or decorated with spaced vertical ridges from top to bottom or to just above the entrance. The top of the tower is sharply cut-off with relatively small crowning elements usually along with little ornamentation. The *Sikhara* in some cases again is closely ridged with bars, initially relieved with circles but finally no more than straight lines. *Rekha* temples are seen in large numbers in various parts of the district. At Daspur, Ghatal and Panskura areas the *Siva* temples and mostly the *Radha-Krishna* or *Madan-Gopal* or *Radha-Govinda* temples are made in this type. Even the *Ratna-Sikharas* are styled in *Rekha* form.

*Jor-vangla* types of temples are purely the products of Bengal. The only standard example of them in our area is seen at Chandrakona. It is at present in broken state and abandoned by the worshippers. Its constructional design is something new. Here it is made big slab of stones. Two *Eka-vangla* temples are placed side by side, the edge of one touching that of the other. Each building is made of two *Chala* roofs with a slide convex approach at the middle of each. Three sides of the building are well protected with walls made of laterite, generally with no windows and doors.

*Pida-deul* is another very common form of temple in this district. Generally, this type of construction is found in *Siva* temple. It originally belongs to Orissa and it is principally used for the tower of the *Jagamandapa* and rarely for the temple itself. Construction of the temple of *Sarvamangala* of Garhbeta and *Mahamaya* temple of Karnagarh belongs to that category. All such temples resemble a big bell (*ghanta*). In connection with the temple construction of Midnapur, Orissan tradition in the porch is seen in many temples. It is made under a separate roof as large as or larger than the base dimensions of the main shrine, to which it is attached by a passage. This again may be similarly attached to a *Natamandapa* and *Bhogamandapa*. The shrine is generally made in *Rekha* style and the subsidiary buildings are in *Pida* form. This tradition strongly influenced the late medieval temples of Bankura and Midnapur districts, (bordering on Orissa and Bihar), where the *Rekha* temple and *Pida* porch combination is quite common. *Natamandapa* is another part of the temple built essentially in front of it. In that place *Mangala* songs are sung and the devotees assemble there. The *Bhogamandapa* is generally and inconspicuous brick room only occasionally of artistic appeal like that of the *Jhalesvara* temple Kanasol or of *Vargabhimain*Tamluk or *Janakiballava* temple inTilantapara, etc. Super-structural temples are not rare at all in the district. All kinds of temples like *Rekha*, *Pida*, *Ratna*, *Chala*, etc are seen to be erected basically on flat roofed temples. In cases of *Pancharatna*, *Navaratna* etc., multi-stored construction is essential. In the district there are several other types of temples viz., *Rasmancha*, *Dolmancha*, *Jhulanmandir*, *Tulsimancha* – almost belonging to the same pattern.

So far, we have seen a discussion about the structure, shape-size and the nature of the temples in Midnapur, now we will focus on the terracotta art used in temple decoration. During the middle Ages, however Midnapur was under the rule of the Ganga dynasty of Odisha. A review of history proves that the eternal characteristic of governance is along with the expansion of political influence and prestige, the economic, social and cultural influence of the rulers are also influencing the public life. Therefore, we have seen a mix culture of Bengal and Orissa in Midnapur district as we have mentioned earlier in this article. The influence of Orissa was most commonly seen in ancient temple art & architecture and it can be seen even today in many areas such as language and social customs in this district. The Jagannath Temple (1584 CE) of Bahiri and the Mahamaya Temple of Karnagarh are classic examples of this influence. Even though it is a regional territory, Midnapur is related to the kingdoms and religious segment of Bengal, Odisha and India as well. So, if we ignore that relation then we can't realise the complete history of Midnapur. From the early history of Midnapur we have seen that Jain, Buddhist, Hindu and other different religious organization was well established here in this district and after that from the starting with Nanda to Maurya, Sunga, Kushan, Gupta, Shasanka, Harshavardhan, Pala & Sena dynasty, Chalukya, Pathan, Mughal and lastly British were established their rule and therefore, it can be said that Midnapur was witnessed the rich political, cultural and religious historical facts. In the past Midnapur enriched the history of Bengal through its education, society, trade, religion, and civilization. Pre-Dravidian civilization and cultural signs can be seen even today in Midnapur. Actually, to reconstruct the history of Bengal, it is necessary to know the history of the districts of Bengal.

After the 8th-9th century CE, the terracotta art re-emerged in the late 16th or early 17th century (Sanyal, 2012, pp.191-227). The temples made of bricks which are made from river alluvium in Bengal and these temples were filled with the decoration by terracotta art like different types of flowers, leaves, images of gods and goddesses and various social themes (Plate - I) which were began to be widely used in the decoration of temple walls. But the most important thing is that 'secularism' on which they emphasized more among the image of gods and goddesses or different social scenes. It can be assumed that from the fifteenth century onwards a new style of terracotta art was beginning. However, in the very early stage, instead of images different types of leaves, flowers design, geometric line etc. were used. It can be said that it may be considered a reflection of the non-figurative ornamentation of mosques, because the strict discipline of the Muslim rule of that time was very much influenced the temple art & architecture in Bengal. Later, as a result of the devotional movement of Sree Chaitanya, this influence was moves away from the temple art & architecture and after that started using images of God & Goddess (Plate-II) on the temple walls for decoration (Ray, 1999, pp.52-54).

The new dimension added to this revival of 'Terracotta art' was resulted the birth of a new art form, free from all religious orthodoxy. From this period, we can see the presence of complete scenes in temple decoration, apart from some small fragmentary depictions of social life. The plaques bearing to the images of socio-economic life was generally placed on the lower foundation stone (Plate-III) of the temple or placed on the plinth (Ray, 1402 BE, pp. 652-53). Above the entrance or under the cornice or on the front wall of the temple, images of Gods and Goddesses and their stories were displayed. An attempt was made to highlight some different incident of social life through the panel (Plate-IV). Such hunting scenes bearing with the hunter possibly a rich man or zamindar who travels to the jungle in a palanquin along with horse, accompanied by his people and animals-birds etc. used as subject of the plaques for decoration. Among the hunting scenes it is shown that hunting a tiger or deer or any other animal with a gun or some other weapons and sometimes vice versa. Various beautiful scenes of Gods and Goddesses are shown in this way, so that a complete picture can be understood. The posture of the images, their compositional arrangement and clothes in everything can be seen the reflection of common life.

Apart from the collection of terracotta plaques or stone sculptures of mythological gods and goddesses and stories from Ramayana-Mahabharata, various images of social life can also be seen in temple decoration. In the medieval temple art, we have seen that the story of the deities coexisted with the events of human life. On the one hand, the presence of gods and goddesses of different religions together in temple art, such as Vaishnava, Saiva, Shakto, Tantric gods and goddesses along with terracotta Yakshas, Gandharvas and Kinnaras, is an indication of the religious acceptance of that time; similarly, on the other hand, multifaceted incidents of real life can be seen on the temple walls. These include depictions of everyday life pastimes such as travel, hunting, sailing, dancing, singing along with different types of animals' picture, birds, leaves etc. Not only the pictures of the contemporary society were reflected in the temple but also a touching picture of the eternal human life can be seen on the temple wall (Plate-V). A new dimension can therefore be seen in the content and characteristics of medieval temple art. The terracotta plaques found in some places in ancient Bengal during the pre-Muslim period such as Paharpur, Maynamati, Mahasthangarh, Karnasubarna and Chandraketurgarh and it can be understood the character by comparing the terracotta plaques with the terracotta art were found on the temple wall in Midnapur. Another important and commonest motif of terracotta is Mithuna or amorous couples. As Mithuna is a reproductive couple these plaques reflect eternal love and fertility cult. So therefore, it can be said that the present terracotta art was developed through a purely historical development and a result of political, socio-economic changes in the society.

We can say that the evidence of the presence of social figures on the temple wall dates back to the post-Sri Chaitanya period. The same thing can be seen in Midnapur as it is said about the temple of Bishnupur also. *Sankirtan dol*, musician, palanquin ride, figure of dancer (Plate-VI) and several mundane rituals are also depicted in terracotta slabs on temple walls. However, the presence of hunting scenes in temples built in the seventeenth-eighteenth century is more noticeable. Besides hunting scenes, many terracotta plaques of naval scenes (boating scenes) have been also noticed (Plate-VII). Among them, the Harmad warship or the battle of the Portuguese pirates, the boat trip and the various scenes of Sri Krishna's luxurious boat ride are noteworthy. By decorating the walls of the temple with various stories related to Krishna Leela, it can be said that the tradition of Krishna Katha was known in people's lives at that time was influenced the then temple art. Beyond religious theory and philosophy, the most interesting and popular subject in day-to-day life which also had an impact on the society i.e., Krishna Katha or Leela manifested the temple art in Bengal (Ray, 1402BE, pp.111-13).

In the first half of the sixteenth century, Portuguese came to this country for trade we all know that, but later many of them used to loot others in the coastal areas as pirates. Many terracotta plaques were also made on this subject at that time. Therefore, it can be say that the subject of this terracotta art were influenced by the incident happened in day-to-day life. In addition, traders of that time used different types of boats to travel for trade, such as Dhanpati Saudagar, Chand Saudagar, those references we got from the literary evidence are deserve special mention and people were fascinated by the variety of boats they have used at that time. However, later, instead of the stylish boats, we have seen also the presence of many ordinary boats in temple art. The boat scene emerged as a popular theme as temple decoration between the 17th and 19th centuries (Ray, 1999, pp.344-49). Apart from that the images of different people of the contemporary society and scenes of other social events can also be seen on the temple wall as decoration. Images of people from various classes of society, such as warriors, horsemen, (Plate-VIII) traders, dancers, musicians, attendants, saints and monks, have been used to decorate the temples. The presence of full scenes of war processions carved in the temples can be cited as a proof that war was almost prevalent in Bengal at that time. Apart from that the saint-monk motif became very popular in many temples made in eighteenth century CE (Plate-IX). As seen in these plaques, sometimes they are begging, sometimes they are bowing down, sometimes they are preparing food and sometimes they are playing musical instruments. Besides, what were interesting about the terracotta art was the various figures of attendants. Sometimes they are preparing food, sometimes they are carrying food on their heads and sometimes they are serving a rich woman. Along with these, the figure of a giant also took place in the terracotta art. Apart from this, different kinds of animal-bird, flower-leaf designs were also used in temple decoration as mentioned earlier in this article.

Many elements of the history of Bengal during the medieval period are available from numerous temples which are almost built in between the end of the sixteenth century and the nineteenth century. Through the development of religion, art and literature a unique culture was emerged in Bengal in post Sri-Chaitanya period. Even after the Turkish conquest, the Bengali culture of the Pala-Sena period survived through the construction of temples and stone sculptures. In the 12th, 13th and even 14th centuries there are several sculptural artefacts that were worshipped in various temples. Among these sculptures Vishnu, Shiva, Surya, Durga, Astalokpala, Ganesh and several different Devi images are notable. After that, the emergence of Sri Chaitanya and the Gaudiya Vaishnavism introduced by him illuminated the art and literature of Bengal in a new dimension. Therefore, as we can see Vaishnava literature and Mangalkavya were created in one side; other side a new style was introduced in temple architecture. It was mainly after the post Chaitanya period that temple architecture and its decorative art in Bengal took a new and distinct form. This new style of art can be seen in temples built in Burdwan, Bankura, Hooghly, Nadia, 24 Parganas and Midnapur.

When talking about temples not even only in Bengal but anywhere in India; the social, economic and political conditions come to our mind because temple construction was the medium to show of the opulence and social prestige of the builder. It can be said that fortunate people used to build temples, guest houses for travellers or reservoirs with the hope of achieving the permanent fame. The stir that was created in the people's life around the temple has been passed down through various folk tales and stories for a long time. In the research of ancient history, it is often seen that the lack of written material or evidence of a particular place or object makes it difficult to write an accurate history. At this point that what can be most effective in writing the history of any particular place is the archaeological evidences. For example, if we do not have any written documentation or information about the history of any place or dynasty or any particular time period then through the past architectures, sculptures and other archaeological evidences we can reconstruct the history through the socio-economic culture, political views, religious believers and art & architecture of the past. In this case, the temple is a significant example, because the past history can be reconstructed through ancient temples, temple ruins and numerous images of God & Goddess. Because these temples symbolize the economic prosperity, political stability, artistic standards and religious thought of the people at the time when the temples were built. Author has been discussed about such example in this article. However, after the Muslim invasion, the picture started getting changed. From thirteenth century to sixteenth century CE temples were not built like before except in few places of Midnapur, Bankura and Burdwan. A new form has been emerged in temple construction from the seventeenth century CE onwards and from this time to the middle of the 19th century, many temples were built in different parts of Bengal. This temple art was developed mainly by combining the previous ideas of temple art, the own temple

style of Bengal and the influences of the art of the foreigners. The discussion of the past history of the temples of Bengal cannot be complete apart from the political environment, economic system and religious thought that bring the new era of temple building. If we think about this in detail, we can understand that for this socio-political and religious influence the structure and style of the temple has changed time to time.

The development of the temple architecture and temple art in Bengal from the fifteenth century to the fourth decade of the twentieth century, are also present in the temples of Midnapur through of its progress, consequences and deterioration. The terracotta art was flourished with temple art & architecture because the temple was decorated with terracotta plaques and images. At the beginning of the Mughal rule in Bengal in the early seventeenth century, the development of regional culture in Bengal came to a standstill position. Evidence of this can be found anywhere in Bengal in the seventeenth-eighteenth century CE. The only exception was Mallabhum at that time. Hitesh Ranjan Sanyal in his book 'Banglar Mondir' states that Bengal's regional culture was emerged and developed during the period when the connection with the outer world with Bengal was limited. According to Sanyal as a result of Bengal came under the Mughal Empire and the proliferation of Gaudiya Vaishnavism, the Bengal came in contact with the outside world, but the culture of Bengal did not have the ability to accept the elements of any other cultures came from outside. (Sanyal, 2012, pp. 221-27) The quality elements of this culture are found only in the creative cultural process of Mallabhum.

### **References:**

- Basu Jogesh Chandra 1954, *Medinipurer Itihas* (Bengali book), p.12, Kolkata.
- Basu Nagendrnath (1898), *Biswakosh, Jaiminibharat* (41-46 Chapter), pp. 690-91, Calcutta.
- Bayley H.V (1852) *Memoranda of Midnapore*, p. XII, Calcutta.
- Coomaraswamy. Ananda, 1926, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 116, New York.
- Hunter, W.W. 1908, *Imperial Gazetteers of India*, Vol. VI, p.309, Calcutta.
- Kramrisch. S, 1946, *The Hindu Temple*, Vol.II, p.287, Delhi.
- O'Connell, T. J. 2011. 'Revisiting Art, Architecture and Archaeology as Sources for the History of Religion in Bengal', *Journal of Bengal Art*, Vol.16, pp. 115-124, Dhaka.
- O'Malley, L.S.S, 1995, *Bengal District Gazetteers MIDNAPUR*, p.67, Calcutta.

Ray Niharranjan (1402 bengali era) *Bangalir Itihas: Adiporbo (Bengali book)*, pp. 652-53, Kolkata.

Ray Pranab (1999), *Banglar Mondir Sthapoty o BhaskorjyoI (Bengali book)*, pp. 52-54, Kolkata.

Sanyal Hitesh Ranjan (2012), *Banglar Mondir (Bengali book)*, pp. 191-227, Kolkata.

Saraswati, S.K., 1962 (Second Edition). *Early Sculpture of Bengal*. Pp. 74-107, Calcutta.

Saraswati, S.K., 1976. *Architecture of Bengal*, pp. 89-132, Calcutta.