

PREFACE

Among all the early images discovered in Bengal, those of the Sun god numerically, occupy a position second to that of Viṣṇu alone. This clearly shows that the Sun god had been one of the most popular deities in this part of the country in early centuries. 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. Hence, I have been tempted to tread on this almost untrodden field.

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-Āryan stage of Bengal history to the end of the ancient period i.e. 12th -13th centuries A.D. However, the continuance of the Sun worship in present times at the folk level has also been discussed .

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 this area of research to me, evinced a keen interest in the subject and guided me for almost the entire span of my research before his retirement. I am deeply beholden to both of them for all the guidance and help that they had so kindly given.

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