CHAPTER VI

SCULPTURAL REMAINS OF THE EARLY MEDIEVAL
MURSHIDABAD

Both sculptures and architectural remains are vital sources for the reconstruction of the early medieval paradigm so far as the study area is concerned. These sculptural remains are not only crucial for the ascertaining the iconoplastic art tradition but they are also indicators of the socio cultural and socio religion background and other aspects of the settlement matrix. A large number of sculptural remains of both stone have been recorded from the study area and these are associated with different religious ideologies such as Buddhist, Brahmanical and the Jain. Majority of the sculptures are Buddhist and Brahmanical and a few Jaina icon have also been recorded. The archaeological contexts of the most of the sculpture are not clear. Except for some which have been recorded in abandoned temple complex or found from excavation and even from ancient habitational mound. A significant number of sculptural remains from Murshidabad are now in different museums and private collections.

The sculptural heritage of Murshidabad is an issue that requires a thorough investigation. It is unfortunate that, since the publication of S.R. Das on the *Archaeological discoveries from the district of Murshidabad: West Bengal* (DAS 1971 there is hardly any comprehensive endeavor in which one could find a detailed documentation of sites and their retrieved artefacts. Before entering into the section on sculptures, it will be worthwhile to discuss about the previous research dealing with the said issue.
So far as the earlier works are concerned, F. R. Layard in the year 1852 visited this district and published an article entitled “The Ancient City of Kansonapuri now called Rungamutty” in the journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (LAYARD 1853). On the other hand Beveridge also mentioned about the site Karṇaśuvarṇa (BEVERIDGE 1893). The works of R. D. Banerji (BANERJI 1934), R. C. Majumdar (MAJUMDER 1971), Susan L. Huntington (HUNTINGTON 1984) have referred to a considerable number of sculptural remains found from this area. Their repertoire of sculptures has been generally assigned to the Pala-Sena idiom. In his ‘Eastern Indian School of Medieval Sculptures’, Banerji had commented upon several important images including an icon of Lokeśvara-Viṣṇu (BANERJI 1934: 94) and a group of Shaḍaksharī and Tārā images, all found from the banks of the large lake (mentioned earlier) at Sagardighi (BANERJI 1934: 133). S.R. Das, on the other hand, had undertaken an overall study of the archaeological sites and reported the retrieved database/findings in his book Archaeological discoveries from the district of Murshidabad: West Bengal (DAS 1971) Bijoy Kumar Bandopadhaya, in his book Paschimbanger Purasampad: Murshidabad (in Bengali) (BANDOPADHYAY 1982), discusses the archaeology of the district of Murshidabad in details.


Brahmanical

Viṣṇu

We are well aware of a series of researches on the image worship of Viṣṇu (RAO 1914, VIDYAVINOD 1920, BHATTASALI 2008) J. N. Banerjea states: “One of the most important of the Brahmanical cults that came into being some centuries before the beginning of Christian era centred round Viṣṇu, but this god was not identical with the Vedic Viṣṇu. In the Epics and Puranic age Viṣṇu is regarded as the most influential member of the later Brahmanical triad, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva – the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer……..Numerous are the iconographic texts which describe the images of Viṣṇu and his various aspects, one of the earliest among them being the five couplets in Bṛhatśamhitā (BANERJEA 1974: 385-386).

Several researches have highlighted that the Vaisnava faith apparently consolidated its position in northern and western Bengal during the post-Gupta period. The sculptures found from Murshidabad are mostly dated between ninth century and thirteen century CE. The images of Viṣṇu, discovered from the district of Murshidabad, are iconographically significant, as they show various forms, attributes and mount of the god in addition to his incarnations.
Present Data Base

1. Jaladipur (SAMSERGUNJ PS):

The present village Jaladipur is located 1 km east of Basudebpur Railway station of Azimgunj - Farakka section of eastern railway, under Samsergunj Police station. A Viṣṇu icon (Plate - XVI.A) measuring (53x24x6 cm) has been found during the renovation of a local pond. This black basalt image is kept inside a modern temple known as Kārttikeya temple, located in front of the find spot of the image and is worshipped by the villagers. The main deity in samapādasthānaka posture stands on a lotus placed above a pañcaratha pedestal. The pedestal contains a figure of a devotee in kneeling posture and Garuḍa in añjalimudrā along with abstract floral motifs. The back-slab of the main deity is deeply cut in the section from the armpit to the toe along the figure of the main deity, thereby enhancing the three-dimensional effect of the image. This cutting of the back-slab along the contour of the main deity is an early medieval feature noticeable on significant number of Brahmanical and Buddhist icons. The main deity has four hands and the lower left hand is broken. The upper two hands hold gadā (mace) and cakra (wheel). The lower right hand rested on a full blown lotus holds a lotus bud and the broken left hand is also kept in the same manner. According to Caturviṃśatimūrtis this image belongs to Trivikrama form of Viṣṇu. The deity is flanked by his two usual attendant deities Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī. Both the deities are standing on lotus pedestals and are in tribhaṅga posture. Two other attendant figures flank Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī on both edges of the back-slab. The back-slab is well decorated with gajaśārdūla, Vidyādharas, Kīrtimukha and makaramukha (MONDAL 2016: 154-155).
similar type of well preserved Trivikrama form of Viṣṇu image has been found from the village of Gobardhandanga and is now kept in the State Archaeological Museum, Kolkata (SENGUPTA AND SAHA 2014: 20). The village, Gobardhanadanga lies close to the village of Jaladipur. Both the sites are located along the Bhagirathi.

2. Kapasdanga (BELDANGA PS):

The village Kapasdanga is located 5 kms east of Beldanga Railway Station. An image of Viṣṇu has been recently found from a courtyard while digging a well at a depth of three meters from the surface. The find spot is very close to the marshy land which is actually an old river channel of Bhagirathi. The present image (140x78x14 cm) is carved of a poor quality of black basalt/slate (Plate- XVI.B). The main deity is standing on a pedestal in samapādasthānaka posture. The pedestal is almost plain, only a devotee is depicted on the right side. The main deity holds a gadā with his upper right hand and a cakra with his upper left hand. The lower left hand holds a śaṅkha which is placed on a lotus medallion. The back-slab is inadequately carved especially in comparison with the image from Manigram (described below) and a circular halo is present behind the head of the main deity. The deity wears a dhoti and a vanamālā, upavīta, necklace mukuṭa ear ornaments, armlets koṭibandhana and others. Two garland bearers are depicted on the stele. The rounded stela is carved in very low relief. Two attendant deities are depicted on both sides of the main deity sharing a common pedestal with the principal figure. The deity of the right side is standing in tribhaṅga posture. She holds a flywhisk in her right hand and the left hand rests on her thigh. She is adorned with the usual garments and ornaments. A lotus stem is carved between
the main deity and one of her attendants. This lotus is extended up to the lower right hand. The attendant of the right side is broken except her face and right hand. She probably holds a vīṇā (?). Another image of Viṣṇu broken in two parts has been documented at Duttapara of the Begunbari village (Plate – XVI.C). The village Begunbari is located between Kapasdanga and Beldanga (MONDAL 2016: 155-156). Similar types of Viṣṇu images have been found from the vicinity of Mahābodhi Temple of Bodh Gayā, Bihar and are now housed in the Bodh Gayā Museum. This specimen has been assigned to 9th century CE by Huntington (HUNTINGTON 1984: 97).

3. Jalasuti (BHARTPUR PS):

The name of the village Jalasuti has been mentioned in the Naihati copper-plate of Vallālasena (BANERJI, 1982: 156-63, MAJUMDAR 2003: 68-80, SANYAL 2010: 118-20). At present in this village there are three Viṣṇu images along with the other sculptural fragments (BANDOPADHYAYA 1982: 92-93). A broken piece of āmalaka and other architectural members indicate the presence of an ancient temple. Among the Viṣṇu images two are of Śrīdhara form (Plate - XVI.D). The upper part of the first image is broken and artistically it is important. Whereas the second one is an intact specimen (Plate - XVII.A). Iconographic features of both the images are almost the same. Both the images hold their wheel (cakra) in their raised right hands; the mace in the left hands, with conch in the lower left hands and the lotus in the lower right hands. These broken Śrīdhara images have more pronounced three-dimensional effect and of course have narrower stele. Both the images wear garlands (vanamālā), a sacred thread (upavīta) and
usual jewelleries. The scarf across their chest and short dhoti are indicated by wavy lines. There are the usual side carvings. The depictions of the lotus stems can be recorded especially on both sides of the main deities. The main deities are flanked by Sarasvatī on the left side and Lakṣmī on the right side and are themselves attended by Cakrapuruṣa and Śaṅkhapuruṣa on the left and right sides respectively. Both the figures are standing on a double petalled lotus pedestal in tribhaṅga postures. The attendant deities, Sarasvatī is holding a vīṇā and Lakṣmī holds a cauri. Devotees are depicted on both sides of the lotus scrolls carved on the pedestal. The broken stele is decorated by the low relieved figures. A tiny elephant, a men riding horse, a face of crocodile or makaramukha and above this a musician playing vīṇā are depicted on the back-slab. The former image can be dated to the 11th century CE. A similar image has been reported by Huntington (HUNTINGTON 1984: 174) from Arial, Dacca District of Bangladesh (MONDAL 2016: 156-157).

4. Bindubasinitala (BELDANGA PS):

The village Bindubasinitala is located 15 kms north-east of Beldanga. There are some sculptural remains with two images of Viṣṇu (Plate - XVII.B, XVII.C) kept in a modern temple complex. The first figure of Trivikrama form of Viṣṇu stands in samapādasthānaka posture on a full blown lotus resting on a pañcaratha pedestal. The pedestal is intricately carved with floriated designs not only on the central ratha but also on the lateral recesses. Garuḍa, the vāhana of the deity is centrally placed on the pedestal. The accompanying inscription on the pedestal probably refers to a donor. The back slab is elaborately carved and the entire composition is florally congested. The usual depictions of Lakṣmī
and Sarasvatī are present. Two attendant figures are depicted on the extreme left and right sides. These two figures are of Cakrapuruṣa and Śaṅkhapuruṣa as attested by cakra (wheel) and śaṅkha (conch) above the heads of these figures and right hand of them are in abhayamudrā postures. The apex of the stela is counterpoised by a not so elaborately carved kīrtimukha. The entire composition is reminiscent of the numerous Viṣṇu icons made during the Pala-Sena period. The middle zone of the composition depicts the usual vyala images flanking both sides of the main deity. Both the lower and left hands of the deity are placed against full-blown lotuses (MONDAL 2016: 157).

5. Jalbandha (SAGARDIGHI PS):

The site Jalbandha is located 15 kms south of Raghunathgunj. The present settlement is located on an extensive mound. At the centre of the village there is a modern temple which is basically constructed over the structural remains of the mound. The latter has yielded bricks of different sizes, stone architectural appendages, sculptural fragments and potsherds of different wares. A Trivikrama form of Viṣṇu from this village was discovered which is now in the collection of the State Archaeological Museum. Some Viṣṇu images which originally hailed from this village are kept in the AMIA, Kolkata. Eight different fragments of Viṣṇu and a Garuḍavāhana Viṣṇu images have been found from this village and are now kept in the State Archaeological Museum, Kolkata (Sengupta and Saha 2015: 52, 56, 60, 63, 88, 91). An intact Trivikrama form of Viṣṇu datable to C. 11th century CE measuring 35cmx18.3 cm has been found from this village. (SENGUPTA AND SAHA 2014: 12). During the course of recent field trip, we documented two fragments
(lower portion) of Viṣṇu (Plate - XVII.D) images from this village besides other sculptural remains. The first image is broken from the waist level. The god is standing on a lotus pedestal which is placed on a well decorated pañcaratha pedestal. The pedestal is decorated with devotee, naibedya and lotus scrolls. Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī, two of his attendants are standing on separate lotus pedestals. Another two attendants (probably Śaṅkhapuruṣa and Cakrapuruṣa) are also present on both sides of Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī. They are standing on separate lotus pedestals. The second broken image of Viṣṇu is broken from the ankle level. The pedestal is decorated with Garuḍa, floral design and devotee. The goddess Lakṣmī is attending in tribhaṅga posture on the right side of the deity. The goddess is further accompanied by a male figure (MONDAL 2016: 157-158).

6. Manigram (SAGARDIGHI PS):

The present village Manigram is located about 1.5 kms east of the Manigram railway station and 10 kms from Sagardighi. The recently discovered Viṣṇu (185x70x15 cm) image is one of the best specimens so far as the district is concerned. The present image has been found very recently from a courtyard of a household while digging for construction works (Plate - XVIII.A). It is almost a life-size image. The image is now in a modern temple nearby the find spot. The main image is standing on a full-blown lotus which is placed on an elaborate sapTārātha pedestal in samapādasthānaka posture. The god has four hands. The upper right and left hands hold a wheel and a mace respectively. Like the earlier image, the back-slab is deeply cut to create a three dimensional effect. The back slab is richly decorated with the Kīrtimukha at the top. The figures of garland bearers or Vidyādharas and musicians are depicted on either
side of the nimbus. The mythical animals are beautifully carved on both sides of the main deity. An elliptical and double moulded halo is visible behind the head of the principal figure. The main deity is attended by Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī and these goddess are further accompanied by two figures probably Gadādevī and Śaṅkhapuruṣa. The positions of these figures are unusual and they are between the main deity and Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī. What is strikingly noticeable in this image is the centrally placed foliated motif of vanamālā. A broken image of Garuḍavāhana Viṣṇu, covered with vermilion, is now worshipped by the villagers. The image has Islamic calligraphy on its back. Some fragments of Viṣṇu are kept under a tree at Sasthitala of the village. What is interesting is that the central figure of the image is rather small in comparison to the back slab (MONDAL 2016: 158-159).

Another Sridhara form of Viṣṇu, datable to c. 10th Century CE, has been found from the village of Manigram. The uniqueness of the image is the oval shaped halo and pointed back-slab. The sculpture was collected by the DAWB. The image is now in the display of the State Archaeological Museum, Kolkata (IAR 1961-62: 107; DASGUPTA 1963: 16; SENGUPTA AND SAHA 2014: 7).

7. Caltabari (SAGARDIGHI PS):

The present image has been found from the village of Chaltabari of Sagardighi police station and now kept in a private collection and worshipped as a Keśava. The main deity (Plate - XVIII.B) is in samapāḍasthānaka posture on a full-blown lotus which is placed on a pañcaratha pedestal. The pedestal is decorated with devotees on both sides and floral design at the center. Lakṣmī
and Sarasvatī stands on either side of Viṣṇu in *tribhaṅga* posture. Lakṣmī is holding a fly-whisk in her right hand and a stalk of lotus in the left hand. Sarasvatī is standing in *tribhaṅga* posture and playing a *vīṇā* with both hands. A single attendant is present on the left side of Sarasvatī. The back slab is decorated with *gajasārdūla* and Kinnara player playing cymbals and *vīṇā* above the *makaramukha*. Vidyādharas are placed on both sides of the centrally placed Kīrtimukha. This sculpture is now kept and worshipped in a private collection of a villager. The main figure is nicely carved in the round from armpit to the foot standing in *samapādasthānaka* pose on a full-blown lotus with a circular nimbus. The main deity has four hands and the upper right and left hands hold *ṣaṅkha* and cakra respectively. The right lower hand is in *varadamudrā* and left hand holds *gadā* (mace). The image wears a *kirītamukuta* with *śīrobandha* and *puritas* and elaborately carved ornaments. The characteristic *tilaka* marks on the forehead; the *vaijayantimālā* and beaded sacred thread are visible. The piece of cloth reaches up to the knee and is tied by a girdle with knot on the right side (MONDAL 2016: 159).

8. Baharampur District Library (BAHARAMPUR PS):

This Trivikrama form of Viṣṇu (Plate -XVIII.C) originally hailed from Sagardighi area and is now kept in the collection of Baharampur district Library, Murshidabad. The upper stela of the icon is broken. The main deity is standing in *samapādasthānaka* posture on a full-blown lotus placed on a *pañcaratha* pedestal. The pedestal is decorated with images of devotees and Garuḍa in *aṅjalimudrā* on either side floral motifs in the middle. The deity is accompanied by Lakṣmī to the right and Sarasvatī to the left. The goddess Lakṣmī is holding a fly-whisk in her right hand and a stalk
of a lotus in the left. On the other hand, the goddess Sarasvatī holds a viṅñā with both hands. Śaṅkhapuruṣa and Cakrapuruṣa are present on either side of the attendant deities. The attributes in four arms are lotus, mace, wheel and conch. The striking feature of the icon is the excessively large nails in all the hands. The hands hold in the clockwise manner which started from lower right and ended at lower left. Viṣṇu is bejeweled with mukuta, ratnakuṇḍalas, hāra, valya, mekhalā, upavīta, nūpura-s. The back slab is beautifully carved with gajasārdūla, makara faced lintels and dancing figures above the makaras. The sacred thread or upavīta is designed with beads. His two attendant Sarasvatī in his left and Laksāmī in his right are attending in a tribhaṅga posture on the double petalled lotus pedestals. A remarkable feature of this sculpture is the presence of Śaṅkhapuruṣa / Cakrapuruṣa depicted on the extreme left right side of the back slab (MONDAL 2016: 160).

9. Salar (Bharatpur PS)

The present village Salar is archaeologically very rich. The site has yielded a good number of Viṣṇu images from a local pond known as Daha Pukur. Eight Viṣṇu images have been reported by Bijoy Kumar Bandopadhyay (BANDOPADHYAY 1982: 90-1). A Padmapāṇi Avalokitešvara stylistically assignable to the Gupta Period was found from the village of Salar, and is now kept in the BSPM, Kolkata (SHARMA 2004: 247). Two Viṣṇu images have been recently found from the village and now kept in a modern temple. The first image of Śridhara (Plate - XVIII.D) form of Viṣṇu of black stone is noted for its fine symmetry of carvings both in the vertical and longitudinal axes. The cuttings of the back-slab along the silhouette of the main deity have created a three-dimensional
effect which is visually balanced by an intricately carved sapTārātha pedestal. The deity stands erect (samapādasthānaka) on a full-blown lotus resting on a bhadrapiṭha of the pañcaratha type. The ornaments are beautifully carved. The locks of hair fall gracefully on his shoulder. The lower front right hand is in varadamudrā and resting on a lotus and left hand holds śaṅkha (conch) which also rests on a full blown lotus. The upper right and left hands hold cakra and gadā respectively. The back slab shows the makara-torana. The makara terminal of the architrave carries the figures of Kinnara and Kinnari on the left and right respectively; the Kinnarī plays on cymbals and the Kinnara on a stringed instrument. Below these, there is gajaśārdūla on both sides. vidyādharas are depicted on the both sides of the upper back slab and a kīrtimukha at the centre of the back slab. The pedestal is decorated with a devotee and Garuḍa on the right and left sides respectively and floral designs at the centre. He is accompanied by Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī whereas, the latter is accompanied by a male figure on her left side. The symmetry of the entire composition is noteworthy due to the presence of a simple carved band that runs across the entire periphery of the stela.

The second image of black basalt Trivikrama form of Viṣṇu (Plate - XIX.A) is depicted as standing in a samapādasthānaka pose on a full blown lotus placed on a sapTārātha pedestal. The pedestal is carved with floral design depicting at the central projection a devotee in kneeling posture and other unidentified objects. The consort of Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī are seen holding their normal attributes. Śaṅkhapuruṣa and Cakrapuruṣa are present at the extreme right and left sides respectively. Viṣṇu has four arms. The
lower right is in varadamurdā resting on a lotus medallion and left hand holds a conch. The upper right and left hands hold wheel and mace respectively. The back slab is decorated with gajaśārdūla, makara- faced lintels, Kinnara, Kinnarī, four Vidyādharas and a makaramukha (MONDAL 2016: 160-161).

10. Dakshinkhanda:

Two Viṣṇu images found from the village are now enshrined in two modern temples and worshipped by the villagers as grāma-devatas (BANDOPADHYAY 1982: 91). The first Viṣṇu image (172x84x19 cm) is damaged and represents the god standing in the usual samapādasthānaka posture on a full blown lotus pedestal (Plate - XX.A). The decorations on the pedestal include the devotee and floral designs. Viṣṇu is accompanied by his consorts standing in ābhaṅga posture on either side on separate lotus pedestal holding their usual attributes. Cakrapuruṣa is shown to the left of Sarasvatī, standing in ābhaṅga posture with his right arm in abhaya mudrā and left arm placed on the waist. Śaṅkhapuruṣa is depicted to the right of Lakṣmī, standing in a posture similar to that of Cakrapuruṣa. Viṣṇu has four arms which are broken from the elbow. Viṣṇu is adorned with kirītamukuta, hārā, nūpura, vanamālā, and yajñopavita. The god stands in front of a torana, having makara ended lintel above which is the depiction of Kinnara playing musical instruments. The remaining portion of the back slab is decorated with figures of gajaśārdūla and floral motifs along with garland bearing Vidyadhara-s on either sides of a stylized kīrtimukha.

The second image of Viṣṇu (107x67x18 cm) is kept in another temple of the village (Plate - XX.B). The god is seen standing in a
samapādasthānaka posture on a full blown lotus pedestal. The pedestal is decorated with figures of Garuḍa, devotee and floral motifs. Cakra and gadā are in his upper left and right hands respectively. Remaining two hands are broken. The deity is accompanied by two main attendant figures of Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī. Both the figures are standing on a separate lotus pedestals in tribhanga posture. These figures are further accompanied by two figures standing on the extreme left and right side of the image. A similar type of image has been found from Bhandartikuri, Bardhaman. (SENGUPTA AND SAHA 2014: 32)

11. Dumnitala (Beldanga PS):

The images of this village have been brought from different find spots and all are now kept in a modern temple (BANDOPADHYAYA 1982: 94-95). A beautiful image of Viṣṇu (37x19x6cm) and fragments of Viṣṇu images are now worshipped with others sculptural remains (Plate - XX.C). Viṣṇu in samapādasthānaka posture stands on a lotus placed above a pañcaratha pedestal containing figure of devotee and Garuḍa in añjali mudrā along with abstract floral motifs. He is accompanied by two consorts Lakṣmī with flywhisk and stalk of a lotus in the two hands and Sarasvatī carrying a vīṇā with both her hands. The attributes in each hand of the Trivikrama form in clockwise direction are lower right hand is in varada mudrā with the palm marked by a floral design and supported by a full blown lotus, a gadā is held in the upper right hand and a cakra with the upper left hand. The lower left holds a śaṅkha which is again placed on a lotus. Viṣṇu is bejwelled with a kirīṭamukuta, kuṇḍala-s, hāra, nūpura-s, upavīta, decorated waist band, and vanamālā. The back slab is plain
with mutilated figure of two Vidyādharas on either side of the stylized Kīrtimukha.

12. Biharia (Naoda PS):

An image of Viṣṇu has been kept in a small shrine of the village of biharia with other sculptural fragments. Upper part of fragmentary image of Viṣṇu holding a gada in the upper right hand and the lower right in varadamudrā with the palm marked by a lotus, lower right holds a śaṅkha and upper left holds a cakra. The face of the deity is clearly visible. Viṣṇu wears a kīrtimukha and ratnakuṇḍala-s. Portion of the back slab with usual decorations are visible (Plate - XX.D).

13. Sagardighi area (Sagardighi PS): Nakkatitala:

This image is now kept in the Indian Museum, Kolkata (BANERJI 1934: 126). The image of Trivikrama is depicted as standing in samapādasthānaka posture on a full blown lotus placed above a pañcaratha pedestal. The pedestal consists of the figure of Garuḍa in kneeling posture in the centre. Garuḍa is accompanied by a devotee to right, naibedya and floral motifs. Above the pañcaratha pedestal on extreme ends are seen figures of Śaṅkhapuruṣa to extreme right and Cakrapuruṣa to extreme left. Lakṣmī and Sarasvaṭī take their usual position. The attributes in the hand of the main deity are varadamudrā, gadā, cakra and śaṅkha. Both the lower hands with attributes are placed above a lotus each. Viṣṇu is adorned with kirītamukuṭa, ratnakuṇḍala-s, hāra, nūpura, vanamālā, and the sacred thread, yajñopavita. The thin folds of the lower garment are shown along with mekhalā. The back slab has the usual features gajaśārdūla-s, ducks, makara faced lintels on which the deity rests.
his shoulder, Vidyādhara-s on either side of a stylized kīrtimukha. An image of Viṣṇu found from Sagardighi is now the State Archaeological Museum, Kolkata. The upper part of the image is broken. At the centre of the pedestal and in front of the leg of the god an image is depicted which may be identified as Prithibi. On the basis of art style the image may be dated to C. 11th century CE. (SENGUPTA AND SAHA 2014: 10) Popara a sacred place of Sagardighi area has yielded different types of sculptural fragments along with fragments of Viṣṇu.

14. Nabadurga (Burwan PS)

This Trivikrama (According to Rupamandana, Agni Purana, Aparajitaprchha, and Padmapurnana) form of Viṣṇu is now kept on a cemented platform at Sasthitala along with other sculptures fragments (Plate - XXI.A). This icon has a narrower stela and is noted for its less congested elaboration. A simple Kīrtimukha is depicted at the apex and the usual Vidyadhara occupy the upper zone of the stela. The god is accompanied by Lakṣmī on his left side and the right side is broken. The goddess Lakṣmī is accompanied by Śaṅkhapuruṣa on her right side. This fragmentary nature of the extant image does not specify the depiction of the entire vanamālā, the lower left hand of the deity, both the feet of the deity and of course the pedestal. The stela is note for its simplicity.

15. Amarkundu (Nabagram PS):

Viṣṇu 63x28x10.5 cm) as Śrīdhara stands in the samapādasthānaka pose on a padmapitha (Plate - XXI.B). The pedestal as usual is decorated with figures of devotee and Garuḍa to left, offerings and floral motifs. Śrīdhara has four arms holding a
gadā in the upper right left and cakra in the lower right is in varadamudrā with the palm marked by a lotus. Both the lower arms are placed on a lotus each. Viṣṇu is accompanied by his usual consorts Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī on either side, both are standing in the ābhaṅga posture and holding their attributes. Viṣṇu is bejewelled with a conical kīrtimukha, kunḍala-s, hārā, vyāla, mekhalā, nūpura-s, upavīta and vanamālā dangling down to his knees. The short upavīta is a special feature of the image.

16. Jhilli (Khargram PS)

In the year 2012 a Viṣṇu image has been found from the village during the renovation of a pond of this village. This image is now in the District Museum, Jiagunj, Murshidabad. During our field survey we have documented some fragments of the Viṣṇu images from the village and they are kept in the sacred places or thans of the village.

17. Gayeshpur (Khargram PS)

Another Viṣṇu as Śrīdhara stands in the samapādasthānaka pose on a padmapitha (Plate - XXI.C). The pedestal as usual is decorated with figures of devotee and Garuḍa to left, offerings and floral motifs. Śrīdhara has four arms holding a gadā in the upper right left and cakra in the lower right is in varadamudrā with the palm marked by a lotus. Both the lower arms are placed on a lotus each. Viṣṇu is accompanied by his usual consorts on either side, both standing in the ābhaṅga posture holding their attributes. This abraded sculpture of Viṣṇu is now kept in a sacred place of the village of Gayeshpur.

18. Shabalpur (Burwan PS):
The image of black basalt Trivikrama form of Viṣṇu is depicted as standing in a samapādasthānaka pose on a full blown lotus placed on a sapTārātha pedestal. The pedestal is carved with floral design depicting at the central projection a devotee in kneeling posture and other unidentified objects. The consort of Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī are seen holding their normal attributes. Śaṅkhapuruṣa and Cakrapuruṣa are present at the extreme right and left sides respectively. Viṣṇu has four arms. The lower right hand is in varadamurdā resting on a lotus medallion and the lower left hand holds a conch. The upper right and left hands hold wheel and mace respectively. The back slab is decorated with gajaśārdūla, makara faced lintels, Kinnara, Kinnarī, four Vidyādhara and a makaramukha (Plate - XXI.D).

19. Suki (Nabagram PS)

This image has been found from the village of Nabagram of the district of Murshidabad (IAR 1980-81: 112) now kept in the State Archaeological Museum, Kolkata. The main deity is standing on a pedestal in samapādasthānaka posture. The pedestal is almost plain with only a devotee depicted on the right side. The main deity holds a gadā with his upper right hand and a cakra with his upper left hand. The lower left hand holds a śaṅkha which is placed on a lotus medallion. The back slab is inadequately carved and a circular halo is present behind the head of the main deity. The deity wears a dhoti and a vanamālā, upavīta, necklace mukuṣa ear ornaments, armlets koṭibandhana and others. Two garland bearers are depicted on the stela. The rounded stele is carved in very low relief. Two attendant deities are depicted on both sides of the main deity sharing a common pedestal with the principal figure. The deity of the right
side is standing in *tribhaṅga* posture. She holds a *cauri* in her right hand and the left hand rests on her thigh. She is adorned with usual garments and ornaments. A lotus stem is carved between the main deity and one of her attendants. This lotus is extended up to the lower right hand. The image has inscription on its pedestal in the proto-Bengali characters of the eleventh century CE. The inscription reads *Sat-bibhū Śri Bahūrupaśya*.

### 20. Bhangamilki (Nabagram PS)

A broken pedestal has been found embedded along with other sculptural fragments under a pipal tree is the village of Bhangamilki. The pedestal of Viṣṇu now kept in the collection of the Department of Archaeology, University of Calcutta, Kolkata. The image was collected by S. R. Das while exploring the Rāḍha area of the district of Murshidabad (DAS 1971: 39). This *pañcaratha* pedestal probably belongs to the image of Viṣṇu. The importance of the specimen lies is the inscription engraved at the central part of pedestal. The reading of the inscription is *śrīmadvākasya*, probably a donor named Vāka. The letters of the inscription are datable to the circa 10th - 11th century CE.

**Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Museum Collection**

#### 1. Jemo (Kandi PS):

Two Trivikrama forms of Viṣṇu have been found from the village of Jemo, near Kandi, is the district of Murshidabad (Plate – XXII.A). These images are now kept in the safe custody of the BSPM, Kolkata. The first specimen is carved in a slab arched and pointed at the top containing a crowned image of a Viṣṇu of the suborder Trivikrama form and culminating in a kīrtimukha as usual.
There is nothing peculiar in the ornaments; both the sardula and the couchant elephant in the background are without riders; the thumb of both the hands of the image show finger rings. The flying gandharvas at the top wear a *karaṇḍamukuta*; Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī are flanked by the attendant figures carrying cakra and śaṅkha respectively, the latter being depicted vertically with the tapering end pointing upwards.

The second Viṣṇu is depicted in a *samapādasthānaka* posture on a full blown lotus placed above a *pañcaratha* pedestal. At the centre of the pedestal a figure of Garuḍa is depicted in kneeling posture and in *namaskāramudrā*. The remaining part is decorated with lotus scroll and the devotees on both sides. The main deity is accompanied by both Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī on both sides. Two other male attendant figures do not carry on their heads the attributes of the god as usual, but hold in their left hands stalks of lotus supporting the attributes, *i.e.*, śaṅkha and cakra. The *makara* terminals of the architrave of the torana in the background are gracefully carved, the long snout and the leafy ear being specially noteworthy. Viṣṇu is adorned beautifully with a *kirīṭamukuta*, *ratnakuṇḍala-s*, *hārā*, *nūpura-s*, *vanamālā* and the sacred thread, *yajñopavita*. The pedestal is of the *pañcaratha* type. It really belongs to the pseudo-sapTārātha type if we consider the arched projection at the ends (GANGULY 1922: 61).

2. **Sagardighi area (Sagardighi PS):**

A fragmenting image of Viṣṇu has been found from Sagardighi area. Lakṣmī is standing in *samābhaṅga* pose holding a *chowrie* in her right hand while the left hand held down in *gajahasta*
pose; she is flanked on her right by a standing male figure in *abhaya* and *katihasta* pose holding a *padma* on his head; higher up is seen the torana representation with the leogryph ridden by a devotee rampant upon a couchant elephant below the makara terminal of the architrave; a squat human figure is standing with outstretched legs on the makara terminal; higher up are noticed the floral device and the gandharva holding a garland and attended by his consort (GANGULY 1922: 65-66).

3. **Manikyarah:**

   The village of Manikyarah is situated under the jurisdiction of Rejinagar police station and 15 kms west of Rejinagar after crossing the river Bhagirathi. A Viṣṇu image found from this village and now kept in the collection of BSPM, Kolkata. The god Viṣṇu of Trivikrama form standing on a fully expanded lotus and measuring without the tenon at base. Both the ends of the pedestal are carved with a peculiar conical representation showing a chess pattern illustrative of the offerings of a devotee. The top of the torana pillars shows a foliage device. The Sardula below the architrave of the torana is not visible in this case. The architrave, again, has not the terminals but shows the representation of a bird perching on either side near its ends.(GANGULI 1922: 61-62)

   **Metal image:** Three metal images have been found from the vicinity of the Sagardighi. These images are now kept in the BSPM, Kolkata.

1. **Hrishikesha Viṣṇu image:**

   A crowned and richly bejeweled brass image of Viṣṇu was also found from the vicinity of Sagardighi (**Plate – XXII.B**). He is of Hrishikesha form and is seated in lalitakshepa mudra on a full-blown
lotus resting on a pedestal of the *pañcaratha* type, the vertical recess between the two storeys of the pedestal being perforated presenting the appearance of windows. The back piece which is similar to that of the earlier image can be detached from the pedestal. It has fixed into a socket of which the padma supporting the image fits. The flame representation of the back piece culminates in a horned *kirītamukuta* with goggle eyes; small hollows for receiving the jewels are noticed in the kīrtimukha, *mukuta*, puritas, torque, armlets, etc. Starting from the right of the image the order in which the attributes of Viṣṇu are held is noted below:—Right lower hand—lotus; right upper hand—discus; left upper hand—mace; left lower hand conch shell. A peculiarity that is noteworthy in this case is that except the lotus, the three attributes rest on a full-blown lotus, springing from stalks held by the god. The attendant figures and Garuḍa are absent (GANGULY 1922: 138-139).

2. **Six headed Viṣṇu:**

The god stands in tribhaṅga pose on a *padmapitha* resting on a *bhadrapitha* of the tribhaṅga type reminiscent of the Buddhist influence. The vertical space (*kantha*) between the two storeys of the *piṭha* is perforated presenting; thereby the appearance of a baluster. The arched back piece having edges simulating flames terminating in a pointed decorative device with a volute on each side is strengthened by a cross piece and an arched base. The apex of the flame representation is set with a ruby. The image is flanked by two male figures crowned with *kirītamukuta*, holding in their hands stalks terminating in lotuses supporting a cakra and *śaṅkha*, the other hand being in *abhaya* pose. The pedestal is ornamented in the centre with the representation of lotus not found in any of the six hands and
shows the figure of the winged Garuḍa on the left side. The attributes of the image are shown in the following order: Right hand—(a) A staff surmounted by an elephant. (b) Cakra or discus, (c) Varada pose. Left hand—(a) Gadā or mace. (b) Śaṅkha or conchshell. (c) A long staff surmounted by Garuḍa. Instead of being serpent-headed as usual the god has a canopy of seven three-headed Nāgas over his head. There is a small votive inscription at the back of the image belonging to the latter half of the 11th century or the first half of the 12th century CE (GANGULY 1922: 139-140).

A well preserved Trivikrama Viṣṇu image has been found from this district. The exact find spot is not available. The image is now in the collection of State Archaeological Museum, Kolkata. The image is dated to circa 11th century CE. (SENGUPTA AND SAHA 2014: 13)

Garuḍavāhana Viṣṇu:

1. Jalbandha:

From this village a Viṣṇu mounted on his vāhana, Garuḍa. Overall the sculptural piece is devoid of rich embellishments. Much of the portion is broken. Viṣṇu sits in lalitāsana on the shoulder of Garuḍa and only the leg of the god is visible. The Garuḍa is seated in and depicts namaskāra mudrā. Rest of the features are damaged. Similar type of image of Garuḍa vāhna Viṣṇu has been found from Jalbandha, now kept in the State Archaeological Museum, Kolkata. (SENGUPTA AND SAHA 2014: 38)
2. **Chandpara:**

A fragmentary sculpture found from the village depicts the Garuḍa in a kneeling posture (**Plate – XIII.A**). The whole figure of Viṣṇu is missing. Both wings of the Garuḍa are damaged. Figures of attendant deities are also broken. The back side of the image contains a beautifully engraved Islamic calligraphy.

3. **Tantibiral:**

A fragmentary sculpture from this village also shows only the image of Garuḍa in kneeling posture (**Plate – XXIII.B**). Except the two legs, the whole figure of Viṣṇu is missing. The left wing of the Garuḍa is damaged. Figures of attendant deities are also broken.

**Incarnations of Viṣṇu:**

The theory of the *Avatāra* is of early origin. In the iconoplastic art tradition of Bengal, ten or more incarnations of Viṣṇu were popular but they cannot be traced back to a very ancient date (ROY 1941: 370-385).

The *Bhagavadgītā* (Ch. IV, stanza 8) mentions that ‘for the protection and preservation of the virtuous and also for the destruction of the wicked, I (Viṣṇu) incarnate myself from age to age.’ J. N. Banerjea (BANERJEA 1974: 390 -392) analyses the data referred to in the Epics, Purāṇas and the *Pāñcarātra* passages enumerating the various incarnations of Viṣṇu. The *Nārāyanīya* section of the *Mahābhārata* contains three lists of the *Avatāras*. All the existing Purāṇas do not give the same list of the *Avatāras*. In the *Varāha Purāṇa* and the *Agni Purāṇa* the names of the incarnations are *Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Narasiṁha, Vāmana, Paraśurāma, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Buddha* and *Kalki*. The above-mentioned
incarnations are more popular in Bengal than those mentioned in the *Bhāgavata Purāna* (ROY 1941: 370). Besides, there are epigraphic records (FLEET 1888: 160-161) indicating the popularity of the *Avatāras*.

**Varāha (Boar) Incarnation:**

In this incarnation, the god Viṣṇu rescued the earth. The image depicting the *Varāha* incarnation of Viṣṇu has been found in different parts of India including Bengal (BHATTASALI 2008: 110, BANERJEA 1974: 417-419, BANERJI 1990: 105). Two specimens have been found from the present study area and both are kept in the BSPM, Kolkata

1. **Jhilli**

The first image of Varaha Viṣṇu (*Plate – XXIII.C*) has been discovered from Jhilli. The upper part of the specimen is damaged Jhilli. The figure appears with the face of a boar and the body of a man. The image of the primeval boar is depicted as a powerful man with the face of a boar (BANERJEA 1974: 413-414). The god is striding to the left. The image stands in the *āḷīḍha* pose or that of an athlete on the serpent coils of a *Nāga* and *Nāginī* supported by a full-blown lotus. The figure of the goddess earth (*prthvī*) and a boar are noticed on the coils mentioned above and between the feet of the incarnation. The order in which the attributes of the god are held is noted as, the right upper hand holding a *cakra*, the right lower hand, the *gadā* and the left lower hand holding the *śaṅkha*. The left upper hand is bent with the elbow pointing upwards. The palm of the left upper hand is carved with a lotus. From the order of the attributes it will appear that the image of Viṣṇu of which the one under reference is an incarnation is of the sub-order Sridhara according to the text of the Padma-Purāṇa, and Hrishikesha according to Hemadri and Agni
Purāṇa. The pedestal is carved with the figure of the winged Garuḍa with outstretched wings, two devotees (male and female) with folded hands and two half-blown lotuses. The horned Sardula with a foliage device hanging from its mouth and rampant upon a couchant elephant is noticed below the makara terminal of the architrave of the torana representation in the background. He is adorned with a mukuṭa (crown) on the head and usual ornaments, such as an elaborate hāra (necklace) around the neck, with yajñopavita (sacred thread) and udarabandha (girdle) round the body, Kēyūras (armlets) and balayas (bracelets) in the arms, dhoti (cloth) and a short vanamālā (garland). The image is made of chlorite stone, its visible part measuring 68 cm x 53 cm. The sculpture is no doubt one of the best sculptural specimens found in the district (GANGULY 1922: 66-67).

2. **Ekana Chandpara:**

A slab containing a nicely carved image of the Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu carved in the round from the armpit to the knee and bearing vermillion marks, has been recorded from this village. The head of the image and the figure of Prthvī supported on the left arm are broken. The attributes are held in the following order: gadā, cakra, padma and śaṅkha (broken). The back slab has its edges carved with the representation of flames and does not show any nimbus, it being very nicely carved with scrolls with lotus insets; the stalks of the lotus scrolls interlace each other just above the head of the main image and below the lotus serving the purpose of an umbrella and terminating in a lotus bud and the crowning lotus at the extreme top. The left foot of the incarnation rests on a lotus held up by the three hooded Nāginī on the left; both the Naga and Nāginī
wear *karaṇḍamukūta*. The flying Gandharvas are seen in pairs on either side at the top. The image bestrides a boar and the figure of Pṛthvī with folded hands resting on the coils of the Nāga and Nāginī. The pedestal is carved on the right side with the figure of Garuḍa with wings of a peculiar form and on the left with that of a devotee. It is noteworthy that the slab which is arched does not terminate in a kīrtimukha as usual, but in a lotus (GANGULY 1922: 67).

3. **Mahesail:**

The beautiful image of Varaha Viśṇu is now kept in a modern temple of the village of Mahesail of Suti PS (Plate – XXIII.D). The upper part of the specimen is damaged. The god is striding to the left. The image stands in the ālīḍha pose or that of an athlete on the serpent coils of a Nāga and Nāginī. Two donor couples are carved on both sides of the pedestal and a floral scroll is depicted at the centre of the pedestal. The attributes in the four hands of the deity are as follows: *cakra* in the lower right, *gadā* in the upper right, Prithvi (broken) resting on the elbow and *śaṅkha* in the lower left. He is adorned with the usual ornaments, such as an elaborate *hāra* (necklace) around the neck, with *yajñopavita* (sacred thread) and *udarabandha* (girdle) round the body, *Kēyūras* (armlets) and *balayas* (bracelets) in the arms, *dhoti* (cloth) and a short *vanamālā* (garland). A *nāginī* to the right holds the stalk of a plant and the remaining part is broken. A nāga in folded hands is depicted on the left side of the main deity. A varāha is carved in between the two legs of the main deity.
Narasiṁha incarnation


1. Gokarna

A beautiful image of Narasiṁha has been found from Gokarna. The image is made of black basalt stone and is graciously executed. It measures 68 cm x 33 cm. The face is that of a lion and the body is that of a man. The other iconic features of the image are not clearly visible. The god has six arms, out of which two lower ones are not visible. The two middle arms (indistinct) are shown tearing open the abdomen of Hiraṇyakaśipu. Apparently, the lower arms hold the legs and hair of Hiraṇyakaśipu. The upper right arm (indistinct) holds a padma (lotus), while the left one has a śaṅkha (conch) (Plate: XXIV.A).

Viṣṇu Lokeśvara/Lokeśvara Viṣṇu

This type of syncretistic icon has been studied by some scholars (BANERJI 1990: 94-96, 125, MAJUMDAR 1929: 177-179; BANERJEA 1974: 554-559; SARKAR 1929: 534-539; GANGULY 1922: 32-33, 139-140; PAL 1961: 307-309; de MALLMANN 1968: BHATTACHARYYA 1985: 24-26). J. N. Banerjea observed that, “Varieties of multi armed images of syncretistic type hailing from different parts of Eastern India, mainly Bengal, are known, in which Vaisnava and Mahayana Buddhist elements have combined the former being more prominent. Such images may be conveniently described as Viṣṇu Lokeśvara, and such a one from Surohar in the district of Dinajpur (Bengal) may be noticed first (BANERJEA 1974: 574).” R. D. Banerji (BANERJI 1990: 96) has
observed that this particular class of images indicates a blending of the older Bhāgavata class of Vaisnava images and the Lokeśvaras of the later Mahayana school of Buddhism. Mallmann is also of the same opinion regarding this iconic form of Viśṇu. D. C. Bhattacharya (BHATTACHARYA 1985: 25-26) has referred to Viśṇu Lokeśvara as Buddhist Viśṇu. Two varieties of this image are known: four handed and twelve handed. In both the cases, however, the snake-hoods over their heads and the figures of Amitābha on the crests have been found.

The Viśṇu Lokeśvara images found from different parts of Bengal (MAJUMDAR 1929: BANERJI, 1980: 94-95; PAL 1961: 307-309) are preserved in the Indian Museum, Kolkata, BSPM, Calcutta, Varendra Research Society, Rajshahi, Ananda Kirtishala, Navasan, Bagnan (Howrah district) and other collections.

The large image of Viśṇu Lokeśvara from Giyasabad is made of chlorite stone and measures 121 cm x 75 cm. this image is now in the of Indian Museum, Kolkata. The image has been found in the year 1853. The elegantly carved image is found standing in the samapādasthānaka posture on a double-petalled lotus under a canopy of seven snake-hoods. The figure has twelve arms with their respective attributes. The lowermost right hand rests on the head of male figures of that side, but a lotus bud is held between the fingers. All the other right hands are upwardly raised at the elbow. The third holds a half-blown lotus flower, with a small but represented in relief on the part corresponding to the corolla, but which is partly broken. The fourth right hand holds a lotus pedestal with an elephant on it; while the sixth right hand holds a lotus pedestal. The first left hand is raised and holds a śaṅkha; the second rests on the head of its attendant figure, and also has an object between the fingers, but is too obscure to find. The third holds a lotus on which there is an object resembling an axe;
the fourth holds a pedestal on which a small animal rests, and the fifth a triśūla looking body with short feline hind-legs an a human head. The sixth arm and the head of the figure are broken. These are hardly traceable as the image is considerably abraded. However, the two visible arms on both sides held in varadamudrā are resting on the heads of the god’s attendant deities who are depicted in dancing postures. The central deity is tastefuly decorated with the usual ornaments, a kirīṭamukuta (crown) on the head, vanamālā (garland), yajñopavita (sacred thread), kuṇḍala (ear rings), elaborate hāra (necklace), kēyūras (armlets), udarabandha (girdle), bālās (bangles) and others.

Sūrya Images:

Sūrya, the Sun-god was worshipped throughout India since very early times. J. N. Banerjea (BANERJEA 1974: 47-102) has studied the iconographic development of the Sun-god. N. K. Bhattasali (BHATTASALI 2008: 148-178) has made an investigation into the iconic features of the images of Sun-god found in East Bengal. So far as our present knowledge goes, Sūrya images are found in north Bengal in good numbers. The Malda Museum has a large collection of different types of Sūrya images collected from different sites of north Bengal. The district of Murshidabad has yielded a good number of Sūrya images. The famous Sūrya images are from Shabalpur of Kandi police station and Amarkundu of Nabagram police station and others part of the district.

1. Shabalpur:

The Shabalpur specimen shows the sun god in samapādasthānaka posture wearing boots and standing on a sapTārātha pedestal. Mahāśvetā stands in front of the god just behind Aruṇa, the charioteer seated in the centre. Seven horses
drawing the chariot of Sūrya emerges from each projection of the sapTārātha pedestal. The wheel of the chariot is carved at the centre. The god is accompanied by Daṇḍī, Piṅgala, Sureṇu, Nikṣubhā, and two female archers with their attributes. The pot bellied Piṅgala stands to the extreme right of the Sūrya probably holding a pen and an ink-pot. Daṇḍī, on the other hand stands to the extreme left with the right hand in abhayamudrā and holding a long staff with the left hand. Both the consorts, Sureṇu and Nikṣubhā, stand on either side of Sūrya facing the deity and holding fly-whisks in their hand. The left hand of the both the consorts is placed on their waist. In addition, two female archers in āḷīḍha and pratyāḷīḍha posture are also seen on either side of Sūrya. Sūrya has two arms holding the stalks of two full blown lotuses in the both his uplifted hands. Sūrya wears a long paridhāna and the tunic is fastened by an avyaṅga. He carries a dagger attached to his waist band to his left. He wears a mukuṭa and profuse jewelry like ratnakūṇḍala-s, hārā, upavīta and uttariya etc. The upper slab is broken and the remaining portion is decorated with figurines as well as geometric and floral designs (Plate – XXIV.B).

2. Amarkundu:

The specimen of the sun god found from this village is in samapāḍasthānaka posture, wearing boots and standing on a sapTārātha pedestal (Plate – XXIV.C)The main figure is carved in the form of a niche of a temple. Mahāśvetā stands in front of the god just behind Aruṇa, the charioteer seated in the centre. Seven horses drawing the chariot of Sūrya emerges from each projection of the sapTārātha pedestal. The wheel of the chariot is carved at the centre. The god is accompanied by Daṇḍī, Piṅgala, Sureṇu, Nikṣubhā, and
two female archers with their attributes. Piṅgala stands to the extreme right of the Sūrya and Daṇḍī, on the other hand stands to the extreme left. The consorts, Sureṇu and Nikṣubhā, hold fly-whisks in their hand and stands on the either side of Sūrya. Two female archers in āliḍha and pratyāliḍha posture are also carved. The main deity Sūrya has two arms and holding the full blown lotuses stalk. He carries a dagger attached to his waist band to his left. He wears a mukuṭa and profuse jewelry like ratnakūndala-s, hārā, upavita and uttaryā etc.

3. **Hukarhut:**

   Figures of Aruṇa the charioteer and that of Mahāśvatā behind the charioteers are well depicted. Sūrya is depicted with booted feet, and it is accompanied by the Daṇḍī, Piṅgala, Sureṇu, Nikṣubhā, and two female archers with their attributes on either side of the main deity (Plate – XXIV.C).

4. **Jajan:**

   The Sūrya icon from is kept in a modern temple of the village of Jajan along with others sculptural fragments. From this village we recorded the lower part of a Sūrya icon along with other sculptural fragments lying under a tree. Each projection of the sapTārātha pedestal depicts a horse, seven of which drawing the chariot of the god. The wheel is carved at the centre of the pedestal (Plate – XXV.A).

5. **Golahut:**

   A broken pedestal of the Sūrya icon is lying in a modern temple of the village of Golahut. The specimen shows five horses
each projection depicted on the of the *pañcaratha* pedestal (*Plate – XXV.C*). The wheel of the chariot is carved at the centre.

6. **Moregram:**

This image is kept in a modern temple of the village of Moregram along with others sculptural fragments (*Plate – XXV.B*).

7. **Alugram:**

This broken pedestal of a Sūrya icon is lying in the modern temple of the village of Alugram along with other sculptural and architectural fragments. Only two horses depicted on the *pañcaratha* pedestal are extant (*Plate – XXV.D*). The pedestal also contains an inscription.

8. **Mahesail:**

The image is now kept in the modern temple of Mahesail. The image is very much abraded. It shows mutilated figures of horses drawing the chariot. Mahāśvatā is visible in between the two legs of the main deity. Aruṇa, the charioteer is totally abraded. The main icon is accompanied by Daṇḍī, Piṅgala, Sureṇu, Nikṣubha and female archers with their usual attributes. Sūrya holds two broken lotus and adorned with usual ornaments (*Plate – XXV.E*).

9. **Joypur:**

An upper part of a Sūrya measuring (26x22x6 cm) is now worshipped in at the Matai temple in the village of Joypur. This sand stone image is badly abraded. The deity holds two full blown lotuses. The lower part of the image is missing.
Śiva

We are well aware of a number of works dealing with the iconography of Śiva (GOPINATH RAO 1916: 55-370; BANERJEA 1974: 446-488; BHATTASALI 2008: 10-140; MITRA 1933: 171-173). According to J.N. Banerjea, “Śiva is one of the most influential members of the orthodox Brahmanical triad. Though he is specially associated with the act of Samhāra (destruction) or pralaya (absorption) in the Hindu concept of Trinity, an exclusive worshipper of Śiva thinks him no less associated with the other two acts of Srṛṣṭi (creation) and Sthiti (preservation) generally attributed to Brahmā and Viṣṇu, the other members of the triad. Śiva is also endowed with the acts of anugraha or prasāda (bestowing grace) and Tirobhava (power of concealment or obstruction). These collectively constitute his five-fold activities (Pañcakṛtyas) (BANERJEA 1974: 446).”

In the Brahmanical texts of early and medieval periods, Śiva is described as the originator and the best exponent of various arts and accomplishments such as Yoga, Vyākhyāna (discourses), music, dancing etc. Śiva has also been conceived of as the lord of all created beings, and is often described as Paśupati, Bhūtapati, and Bhūtanātha. He is the great lord (Maheśvara), the greatest of the gods (Mahādeva), the beloved husband of Umā (the great Mother-goddess) and is said to have been well known by a thousand names ‘Śivasahasranāma’ mentioned in the Mahābhārata (BANERJEA 1974: 446-447)

Śiva Liṅga:

Śiva is widely represented in his symbolic liṅga form (BHATTASALI 2008:142). The worship of Śiva and Śakti together in the form of liṅga with Gaurīpaṭṭa or Yonipītha dates from very ancient times. Śiva liṅgas are found in Murshidabad in large numbers, either as enshrined
or stray finds. The liṅgas found in Murshidabad may be divided into the following classes: (a) Plain (b) Ekamukha and (c) Caturmukha.

**Plain Liṅga:**

Five sites which yielded six plain liṅgas are Chandanbati, Jindighi, Alugram,................. . Chandanbati has enshrined Śiva liṅga in a modern Śiva temple of the village. Most of them are made of blackish stone. The Gaurīpaṭṭa or Yonīpīṭha are mostly rectangular. In two cases, round-shaped Gaurīpaṭṭas have also been noticed.

**Ekamukha liṅga:**

There is a single specimen recorded from Bati. The central upper part of the liṅga is carved with the image of a female deity. The depicted image is apparently Gaurī and she wears a crown, ear ring and necklace. On stylistic grounds, it may be assigned to c. 1000 CE. – c.1100 CE.

**Caturmukha liṅga:**

Caturmukha Śiva liṅgas have been reported from the village of Chandpara and Ugura. The specimen from Chandpara is now worshipped by the villagers in a modern temple (MAJUMDER 2013: 129). The lower part of the liṅga is of black stone and consists only of the Gaurīpaṭṭa, while the upper part is made of chlorite stone or blackish sand stone, measuring 30 cm in height and 1.07 m in diameter. The cylindrically shaped body of the liṅga is carved with four faces on four sides. But the carvings are abraded. The top of the liṅga has marks of damage (Plate – XXVI.A). It is a rare specimen.
**Naṭarāja or Naṭeśa:**

Naṭarāja (symbolizing Tāṇḍava) is a significant aspect of Śiva, the great master of dancing. The *Nṛtyaśāstra* describes this form of Śiva as the personification of the Universe in action and destruction. Many scholars have studied the Naṭarāja image in the light of the canons of art and iconography like *Amśumadbhēdāgama* (RAO 1916: VOL. II, PT. I, 224), *Śilparatna* (RAO 1916: VOL. II, PT. I, 228), *Pūrva Kāraṇāgamand* (RAO 1916: VOL. II, PT. I, 229).

1. **Jasohari:**

   A NaṬārāja icon found from the village of Bilatpan under PS Khargram of Kandi sub-division is now kept in a modern temple of Jasohari and worshipped as Maharudradev (BISWAS 2012: 249). It is a ten handed icon. The depiction of the pair of hands placed on top of the *jatāmukuṭa*, their palms meeting and marking *karatāla* and the interlocked fingers producing the *karkatahasta* in accordance with the *Natyaśāstra*, is noteworthy. The rest of the eight hands, four on each side, hold definite attributes. The four left hands hold the *danda* (staff), *khetaka* (shield), some unidentified object and the right hands hold *naga* (snake), and *Khadga* (sword), *triśūla* (trident), *pāsa*, and *śakti* (lance).

   The god wears a *jaṭāmukuṭa* marked with crescent moon and the garments resemble a tiger skin. Here the Lord is seen wearing *hāra* (necklace), *karna-kuṇḍala*, *udarabandhana* (girdle), *Kēyūras* (armlets), *balayas* (bracelets) in the arms, *katisutras*, a sacred thread (*yajñopavita*) and *akshamala* around the body and hanging on his thigh. His *urdhvaliṅgam* feature is very prominent. The head of the god is slightly bent towards the right and his closed eyes give a heavenly expression to the face of the Lord recalling its notable
counterparts of the Ellora and Elephanta repertoires and of course the Bamunara specimen. The mount is very simple and is without any ornaments. It stands on a double petalled lotus pedestal. The god is flanked by two male attendants or musicians, one on each side of the bull, one of them playing with a mandirā or cymbals in the right and mṛdaṅga in the left. Two flying Vidyādharas are also depicted one on each side of the principal figure, near the top of the stela. The stela is very simply in manner decorated with the Kīrttimukha sign at the top. The pedestal is badly eroded, so, the floral motifs are not clearly shown but there is a miniature figure of a devotee in anjali-mudra carved on a right corner of the pañcaratha pedestal. The overall composition is well balanced, sophisticated and in spite of its weathered condition, it betrays a fine quality of workmanship (Plate – XXVI.B).

Bhairava:

It is one of the well-known terrific (ugra) forms of Śiva. Bhairava is also known as Kālabhairava (for even Kāla, the lord of Death, trembles before him). He is also known as Āmarddaka (because he kills bad persons, marddana) and Pāpabhakṣana (because he swallows the sins of his bhaktas or devotees) (SAHAI 1975: 119). Bhairava is sometimes described as Brahmsiraśchchhēdamūrti in some of the Puranas and the Agamas. Gopinath Rao (RAO 1916: 177) has elaborated on different forms of Bhairava.

The different forms of Bhairava found in Bengal have been described by N. K. Bhattasali (BHATTASALI 2008: 133-134), J. N. Banerjea (BNAERJEA 1974: 465-482) and others. During the present
study, some images of Bhairava have been recorded from Murshidabad. The images discovered so far are either broken or highly damaged.

1. **Giasabad:**

   A rare specimen of this type is found from the Giasabad area and now worshipped in a modern temple along with other architectural fragments. But except the upper part, the entire image broken. The image shows the face of the deity with its staring eyes, slightly open mouth showing fangs, moustached and bearded, and head adorned with coiled hairs rising upwards. Two hands of the god are visible (*Plate – XXVI.C*).

2. **Hukarhut:**

   A fragments of Bhairava image (?) is laying on the ground of along with other sculptural and architectural fragments. Only the head portion is available (*Plate – XXVI.D*)

**Gaṇeṣa**

Gaṇeṣa is one of the deities recognized in *Pañcopasana*, the others being Śiva, Viṣṇu, Sūrya and Śakti. The different iconic forms of Gaṇeṣa along with relevant textual references have been studied by several scholars (GETTY 1936; BANERJEA 1974: 354-358; BHATTASALI 2008: 144-147). So far as the iconographic representations of Gaṇeṣa are concerned, Bhattasali’s observation is worth quoting: “He is usually represented with four hands, but he may have six, eight or more hands and faces. The *Sāradātilaka Tantra* gives several *Dhyānas* of Gaṇeṣa in the 13th Chapter,
in some of which he is represented with his wife or Śakti. But none of these Dhyānas exactly corresponds to the images generally found in Bengal (BHATTASALI 2008: 148-178).” However, the Ganeśa images are found in good numbers from the entire region of Bengal. From Murshidabad two images have been recovered so far.

1. Rājbāḍīdāṅgā:

A metal image of Gaṇeśa has been found from the excavation at Rājbāḍīdāṅgā at a depth of 0.85 meter from the surface. The deity is seated in mahārājali lasana on a rectangular pedestal. The four hands of the deity probably hold from clockwise from upper right a triśula, mūlaka, sweet (?) and modaka. The belly with sacred thread is very prominent. The vehicle, a rat resting below the right foot is extant. A devotee is present on the right side of the pedestal. The rounded halo with floral motifs is present. According to the excavator the image is datable to the 7th -8th century CE (Plate – XXVII.A). A similar type of image has been found from the monastic site of Halud Vihārā of present Bangladesh. (DAS 1971: 46).

2. Mahalandi:

A Gaṇeśa icon has been recorded from Mahalandi. The lower part and the pedestal of the image are broken. Gaṇeśa is represented in a dancing posture (Nṛtya Ganapati) with his short legs. The god has eight arms. Most of the attributes cannot be properly identified. Clock wise attributes are : i) aksmālā in normal right hand ii) lotus iii) goad, iv) unidentified, v) gajahasta, vi) mūlaka, vii) rosary and viii) probably a sweet dish. Gaṇeśa wears a jatāmukūṭa and is bejeweled with bracelets, armbands, necklaces, anklets and upavīta.
An oval shaped halo is carved at the back of the head of the deity. Two vidydharas flying against clouds on either side of a bunch of mangoes with leaves are depicted on the pointed upper back slab (Plate – XXVII.B).

3. Hukarhut:

Upper portion of Gaṅeśa image with only the elephant head of the deity wearing a jaṭamukuta is visible. The fragment also depicts a dish full of sweets by the side of the left ear (Plate – XXVII.C).

4. Bahadurpur:

Fragmentary image of an eight armed dancing Gaṅeśa wearing jaṭāmukuta and various ornaments such as armlets, bangles, and a long upavita, has been found from the village of Bahadurpur. The attributers are not distinct, the upper left hand is in dancing condition. The image is now housed in the state Archaeological Museum, Kolkata (SENGUPTA AND SAHA 2014: 140)

Kārttikeya

Kārttikeya is a minor or subordinate deity among the other iconic forms of the Brahmánical pantheon. The popularity of the War God Kārttikeya is evident from the texts like the Mahābhārata (Vanaparva, Chapters 225-230), the Skandapurāṇa, the Māheśvarakhaṇḍa (Chapters 27-31) the Bṛhat-Saṃhitā, the ViṣṇudharmotṬārā, and the Aṃśumadbhēdāgama, coins like those of the Audumbaras, the Yaudheyas, the Kushanas, Guptas and the epigraphic records and sculptures belonging to different periods. Several scholars (GOPINATH RAO 1914 6: 429-30;
BANERJEA 1974: 141-146) have studied the iconography of Kārttikeya. The images of the god discovered so far in Bengal are comparatively few.

1. **Nabagram:**

   The image is one of the finest stone sculptures preserved in this study area. Bijoy Kumar Bandopadhya has identified this icon as a Gaḍua Viṣṇu (BANDOPADHYAY 1982: 79). It is in a good condition and is made of chlorite (**Plate – XXVII.D**). It measures 71 cm x 32 cm. The depiction on the lower part of the image is very interesting and is skillfully executed. The god is seated in *mahārājalīlā* posture on a double-petalled lotus placed broadly on a *tri-ratha* pedestal. Two female attendant figures are placed on the pedestal. The figure of the right side holds a chauri in her right hand and the left hand is placed on her thigh. On the other hand the figure playing a flute with her right hand holds a pot with her left hand. Both the figures are in *tribhaṅga* posture. The figure of the peacock is placed at the centre of pedestal in such a manner, that the lotus-seat of the god appears to be resting on the back of the vehicle. The facial part of the peacock is slightly abraded. A three dimensional effect has been attempted in this image.

   The god has four hands, the upper right hand holding a spear (*śakti* or *daṇḍa*) and the left hand holding something indistinct, probably *Kukkuṭa* (jungle-cock). The lower right hand is rests on the right folded knee and holds some unidentified object and the palm of the left hand touches the knee of the left legs. The god wears an elaborate *hāra* (necklace), *Karṇakunḍalas* (ear rings), *bālās* (armlet), well-decorated *udarabandhana* (waist girdle) and a *dhoti* (cloth).
The god is in graceful pose. The head-dress is encircled by an elaborate crown. The back slab is decorated with vyāla makaramukha, musicians and two gāndharava figures on both sides of the well decorated kirtimukha. On the basis of the style of execution, the image may be dated about c. 11th century CE.

**Sarasvatī**

Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning, music and fine arts is also known as Vāc/Vāk, Vāgdevī, Vāgisvarī, Vānī, Śāradā, Bhāratī, Vīnāpāṇī and Puṣṭi. She is popular among the three great religious ideologies i.e. Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism. The Buddhist faith conceived her as the consort deity of Mañjuśrī while in Brahmanical mythology; she is sometimes consorted with Brahmā and sometimes with Viṣṇu. In general she is represented sitting on lotus with one leg pendant, playing on a vīṇā (BHATTASALI 2008: 181). Her vehicle swan is represented near her feet. Presently, she is worshipped by children and students as patron goddess of learning.

The image of *meśavāhana* Sarasvatī was first noticed by R.G. Basak and D.C. Bhattacharya in the year 1919. They have documented three *meśavāhana* Sarasvatī from Bangladesh in their book entitled ‘*A Catalogue of the Archaeological Relics in the Museum of the Varendra Research Society*’ (BASAK & BHATTACHARYA 1919: 30-31). N.K. Bhattachari, in his legendary work ‘*Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculpture in the Dacca Museum*’ gives some details about the *meśavāhana* Sarasvatī along with literary sources and icons (BHATTASALI 2008). Amulyacharan Bidyabhusan’s work on ‘Sarasvatī (in Bengali)’ simply mentions *meśavāhana* Sarasvatī from ancient Bengal (BIDYABHUSAN 1933). R.C. Majumdar in his work *History of Bengal* gives a description of
an image of *mēṣavāhana* Sarasvatī from Chattingram in the district of Bogra, Bangladesh (MAJUMDAR 2003: 440 PL LXXII, 175). Kanailal Bhattacharyya’s *Sarasvatī -A Study on Her Concept and Iconography* is another important work which exclusively deals with the literary and archaeological sources of Sarasvatī icon beside her iconographic descriptions (BHATTACHARYYA 1983). In ‘Bengal Sculptures: Hindu Iconography upto c. 1250 AD’, and ‘The Art Heritage of Bangladesh’ Enamul Haque gives a brief note on *mēṣavāhana* Sarasvatī. J.N. Banerjea in his famous works ‘Development of Hindu Iconography’ has mentioned the goddess Sarasvatī as *VyanTārā devatas* and also gives some textual references related to the goddess. T. A. Gopinath Rao in his ‘Elements of Hindu Iconography’ discussed only some textual references of the goddess Sarasvatī (RAO 1985: 378).

1. **Golahut:**

A mesavahana Sarasvatī has been reported from the village. The village Golahat is located 6.5 kms west of Kandi town and 1.5 kms south of the Kandi-Sainthia state highway, in the south-western part of the Murshidabad district, West Bengal. The image is now kept in a modern temple at the southern side of the village, locally known as Jayamangala temple. The village was associated with the medieval text, *Canḍīmaṅgala* by Mukundaram Chakravarti. The hāt (weekly market) of this village has been mentioned several times in this text (SEN 1975). The village has yielded archaeological remains in form of different types of pot sherds, structural remains and habitational remains. The archaeological importance was first noticed by Bijoy Kumar BANDOPADHYAYA (1982:74), where he has given a detailed description of this village. The Golahat icon has been found from a large pond and is now enshrined in a modern
temple, where it is worshipped as Caṇḍī (Plate – XXVIII.A). It is carved from black basalt stone (55 x 41 x 12.5 cm) and is supported by a massive, rounded triratha pedestal comprising different terraced mouldings. The top part of the sculpture is missing. The deity has four arms and is seated in lalitāsana posture on a flat cushion placed on a double-petalled lotus. Her right leg is hanging and rests on a small lotus. Her two front hands hold a diagonally placed, single-stringed vīṇā terminating in a makara-shaped lower end. She holds aksamālā and probably pustaka in her back right and left hands, respectively. The face of the goddess is severely damaged. She wears a long upavīta, a girdle, nupuras and other ornaments. The ram, the mount of the goddess, is depicted on the central projection of the pedestal. The ram is in a couchant posture, its neck is adorned by a chain with a small bell, and the large horns are curved to the back. A devotee/donor in kneeling posture with hands joined in añañjalimudrā is carved on the proper right side of the pedestal, while the left side depicts a naivedya (offering). The back-plate of the sculpture is highly decorated. The main image is backed by a throne. Two geese are beautifully carved on top of the horizontal throne-beam; they have floral tails and are emitting jewels from their bills. Two vyālas (leogryphs) with warriors on the back flank the arm portions of the main deity; they are supported by couchant elephants placed on beautifully carved lotuses. An oval-shaped prabhāmaṇḍala decorated with floral design is carved behind the head of the main deity (MONDAL AND MEVISSEN 2015: 180).
Gaṅgā

1. Chaltabari:

The present deity has been found from the village of Chaltabari, 1.5 kms east of Hukarhut, under Sagardighi police station (Plate – XXVIII.B). The deity stands on a makara, the upper part of the deity is broken. The pañcaratha pedestal is decorated with the figures of devotee and floral motifs. The deity is attended by two female attendants on either sides standing in ābhaṅga pose on lotus pedestals. One devotee is holding chatri or umbrella. The main deity is broken from the waist. The right hand is in abhaya mudrā.

2. Debakundu:

A broken slab measuring without the tennon at base 26.5X23 cm and containing an alto-relievo figure of Gaṅgā, the upper part of which is wanting (Plate – XXVII.C). The goddess stands on a makara (crocodile); her cloth reaches a little above the ankle, its folds being indicated by five lines. The left hand is broken and a very small portion of the right fore-arm and hand wearing a richly worked bracelet exists. She holds something like a flower (or Trisula or lotus) in her right hand. She is flanked by two standing figures; that on the right hand side (a male figure) holds a chatra (umbrella) a portion of the handle of which exists, that on the left hand side is a female figure, standing in a graceful pose holding the chatra in her right hand. The pedestal is carved on its left with the figure of a devotee with folded hands. (GANGULY 1922: 87)
Manasā:

Throughout ancient Bengal, Manasā is worshipped as a folk-deity mainly by the lower castes viz. Bagdis, Bauris, Doms, Kaibartas (Kaout) etc. According to the *Mahābhārata*, (BHATTASALI 2008: 212) Manasā is the consort of the hermit Jaratkaru, mother of Āstika and sister of Vāsukī, the king of serpents. Manasā is sometimes said to be the daughter of Śiva. The deity is sometimes identified with the Buddhist goddess Jāngulī (BHATTASALI 2008: 216-223). In the *dhyāna* (BHATTASALI 2008: 219) contained in the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa* (*Sri Kriṣṇa-Janmakhanaṇḍam*, Ch. 5) Manasā is identified with Suravatī. It is generally held that Manasā is pre-eminently a folk-divinity raised gradually to some recognized position of the Puranic pantheon. It is generally believed that Manasā protected her devotees from snake-bites and bestowed health and prosperity. In medieval Bengali literature, especially *Manasā-maṅgalal-Kāvyas*, we may trace two stages of conflict and compromise before the final absorption of the deity in the Brahmanical system. The origin of Manasā has been traced to Sarasvatī, and also to Jāngulī and Padmāvatī, the Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jaina goddesses respectively (BHATTASALI 2008: 219). Manasā is believed to have obtained a footing in Bengal by c.10th-11th centuries AD (BHATTASALI 2008: 217-223).

Whatever the origin and development of Manasā (BHATTASALI 2008: 224) might be, the sculptural representation of the deity is widely distributed in Bengal. A few Manasa icons have been reported from Murshidabad.

1. Nabagram:

An eroded sculpture of Manasa has been found from Nabagram, is now in the State Archaeological Museum, Kolkata.
The deity sits in *ardhaparyaṅkāsana* on a full blown lotus pedestal. The deity has two arms with the right hand holding a fruit placed above the right knee and the left hand holding a snake. A seven hooded snake canopy covers the head of the goddess. She is accompanied by two figures faintly visible. They are probably identified with Ṛṣi Jaratkāru, her consort to the right and Vasuki (?) to the left. (SENGUPTA AND SAHA 2015: 149)

2. Jasohari:

The Jasohari specimen is seated in *lalitāsana* or in *ardhaparyaṅkāsana* on a lotus pedestal. The pedestal is completely abraded. The goddess has two arms; she holds a mutilated snake with her left and right hand is placed on a right knee. The back slab is decorated with a canopy of snake hood over the head of the main deity. The deity may be assignable to the 13th century CE (Plate – XXVIII.D).

**Mahiṣāsuramardinī**

Durgā in her *ghora* or *ugra* (terrific) aspect is represented as Mahiṣāsuramardinī. The iconographic descriptions referred to in the literary texts along with the sculptural representations of Mahiṣasuramardinī have been studied by scholars. The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* in its “Devīmāhātmya” section gives a vivid description of this aspect of Durgā in great detail. The Mahiṣasuramardinī images are found from the Gupta period onwards. A large number of eight or ten armed images of Mahiṣasuramardinī have been discovered in Bengal. The present study also recorded eight such specimens from different localities of Murshidabad.
1. **Rājbāḍīdāngā:**

A badly mutilated image of Mahiṣāsuramardinī has been found from the place of Jamuna talao of Rājbāḍīdāngā and was first noticed and reported by Captain Layard of the East India Company who published a brief report including a free hand sketch of the image in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in the year 1853. He had identified the image as a six armed Kali. The excavation at this site during the year of 1928-29 by K N Dikshit did not mention any such image from the site. S. R. Das of Calcutta University in the field season of 1964-65 discovered this image from the personal collection of Sri Santosh Sen of the Satui village. The image is now kept in the collection of the Department of Archaeology, University of Calcutta (Plate – XXIX.A). The image measures 125X82cm. The image is eight armed and the upper right hand holds a quiver and the remaining three hands are broken. The first and third (from upper) are hold lotus and bow respectively, remaining two are completely broken. The demon is absent and the deity is standing on the animal (vāhana) itself. S. R. Das dated this image to the seventh century CE. (DAS 1971: 30)

2. **Nabagram:**

The finest specimen has been found from a pond in the village of Nabagram, under Kandi police station (BANDOPADHYAY 1982: 79). The image is now worshipped in a modern temple along with a beautiful image of Kārttikeya (Plate – XXIX.B). The ten armed image of Mahiṣāsuramardinī in a ālīḍha posture is depicted with her left leg firmly rested on a full blown lotus placed over a rectangular pedestal with pañcaratha projections. The projected portion of the pedestal contains floral motifs. The right leg of the
deity rests on the back of the decapitated buffalo out of which the anthropomorphic form of *asura* emerges. The lion, vahana of the goddess bites another leg of the demon. The severed head of the buffalo is depicted lying below. The demon stands in an inclined posture and holds a sword with both his hands. Two *asuras* are depicted on both sides of the main deity. Both are in attacking mode. Both the figures hold sword and dhal. The goddess is depicted as piercing the demon on his back with *śūla* (broken), held in her right hand while the left hand holds the locks of the demon. Clockwise the attributes of the goddess are as follows: i. a pointed weapon, probably the *śakti (?)*, ii. discus (*cakra*) iii. An arrow (*vāna*) placed inside a quiver attached to her right shoulder, iv. sword (*khaḍga*), v. śūla, vi. locks of hair of the demon vii. *khetaka*, viii. *dhanusa*, ix. *paraśu* and x. *aṅkuśa*. The deity wears a well decorated crown. She is adorned with a *hāra*, *ratnakundala*-s, *upavīta* and other ornaments. *Vidyādhara*-s on either side of kīrtimukha is depicted on the upper portion of the back-slab.

3. **Jajan:**

A broken image of Mahiṣāsuramardinī is now kept in the temple of Jajan along with other fragments. The upper part is missing. The lower portion of the image shows the goddess slaying the Asura with a *trisula* and holds the locks of hair. The demon holds a sword with both the hands. The lion attacking the demon and bites the arm of the demon (**Plate – XXIX.E**).

4. **Jhilli:**

A lower part of the goddess Mahiṣāsuramardinī is now kept in the village of Jhilli and worshipped as Sasthi (**Plate – XXIX.D**). The
deity is on a full blown lotus pedestal. The projected portion of the pedestal contains floral motifs. The right leg of the deity rests on the back of the decapitated buffalo out of which the anthropomorphic form of asura emerges. The lion, vahana of the goddess bites another leg of the demon. The severed head of the buffalo is depicted lying below. The demon stands in an inclined posture and probably holds a sword with both his hands. The upper part of the image is completely broken.

5. Eroali:

Another broken image of Mahiṣāsuramardinī has been found from the village of Eroali. The lower part of the deity shows the demon and the vahana and the attendant deity. The main deity is broken (Plate – XXIX.C).

Umā-Maheśvara:

Umā-Maheśvara also represents the saumya (peaceful aspect) category of Saiva icons.

1. Golahut:

The image of Umā-Maheśvara is highly abraded and is made of sand stone (Plate – XXX.A). The image is now kept in a modern temple of the village of Golahut. Śiva or Maheśvara is seated in lalitāsana with the right leg dangling down. Umā sits on his right lap with her left leg hanging down. A bull and a lion – the vāhana of the deities are depicted on a lotus leaf each on the pedestal along with the figure of a donor couple.
2. **Nakkatitala:**

   The image of c is highly corroded and made of sand stone. The image is now kept in a modern temple of the Nakkatitala (Plate – XXX.B). Śiva or Maheśvara is sated in *lalitāsana* with the right leg dangling down and rested on lotus. Umā sits on his right lap with her left leg hanging down. A bull and a lion – the *vāhana* of the deities are depicted on a lotus leaf each on the pedestal along with the figure of a donor.

3. **Dangapara(Sagardighi):**

   An upper portion of the image of Umā-Maheśvara measuring 13x19x7 cm is kept under a tree in the village of Dangapara (Plate – XXIX.C). Śiva has four hands: the normal right hand holds the chin of the goddess while the normal left hand embraces her breast from behind. The upper right hand holds an *utpala* while the upper left hands a *triśūla*. Umā on the other hand holds a *darpana* in her left hand and embraces Maheśvara by putting her right arm round his shoulder. Śiva wears a *jaṭāmukuta* and *kuṇḍala*-s.

4. **Jalbandha:**

   A black basalt image of Umā-Maheśvara found from the village of Jalbandha and now kept in the State Archaeological Museum, Kolkata. (SENGUPTA AND SAHA 2015: 133) The image is almost similar with the image of Golahut.

**Lalitā:**

Lalitā is one of the various names of Durgā occurring in the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* (*Prakṛti-Khaṇḍa*, Chapter 57).109 The text
includes different iconographical descriptions of Lalitā, Durgā and Gaurī. The independent image of Pārvatī is rare in Bengal.

1. **Jalsothi:**

   A pedestal of an icon of Lalitā stylistically assignable to 12th century CE measuring 147 cm x 96 cm and made of blackish stone has been found from Jalsothi (Plate – XXX.E). A vahana of the goddess depicted on the pañcharatha pedestal. A figure of Gaṇeśa is present there which is detached from the main image. The image is now kept under a tree in the village of Jalsothi.

2. **Gura:**

   A broken image of Gauri is now kept in a sacred place of the village of Gura of Nabagram police station (Plate – XXX.D). The image is beautifully carved. She is adorned with beautiful jewellery and a jaṭamukuta on her head. She holds a trident on her left hand.

**Cāmuṇḍā**

Cāmuṇḍā, whose origin is described in the third episode of the Devīmāhātmya section of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, is one of the ugra (terrific) aspects of the Devī or Śakti, included in the list of Saptamāṭkās (BANERJEA 1974: 505). Bhattasali (BHATTASALI 2008: 208-212) has studied the different iconic forms of Cāmuṇḍā as given in the Puranas. There are eight varieties of forms of Cāmuṇḍā enumerated in the Agni Purāṇa (BHATTASALI 2008: 209-211) Gopinath Rao, (GOPINATH RAO 1914: 382-388) Banerjea (BANERJEA 1974: 505) and B. Sahai (SAHAI 1975: 198-205) have studied the iconography of Cāmuṇḍā in the light of literary sources and available archaeological materials. Images of Cāmuṇḍā are quite common in Bengal.
1. **Simuliya:**

A Čāmuṇḍā icon found from Simuliya is made of black basalt stone (41×23×6 cm) and is carved in relief form. The main deity is standing in graceful *trivanga* posture on a pedestal (Plate – XXX.D). On the front side of the pedestal a corpse is depicted in supine posture. The toe of her left leg is touching with the right arm of the corpse. The corpse is quite pot bellied, completely naked and his tongue is sticking out. A jackal is depicted on the left side of the pedestal, whose mouth is turned upwards. Another unidentified relief is depicted on the right side of the pedestal. She has elongated and pendulous breasts and sunken abdomen. Her body is partly covered by the ornaments of snakes and skulls. Her head is covered with a jatamukuta. Her only garments are a filmy scarf and dhoti, whose presence is merely suggested by undulanting patterns of parallel ridges. The long garland of skulls worn by the goddess passes over the knee of the both legs. A circular mark is present on the fore head of the main deity. One right broken arm is in abhaya mudra and another is probably in suchihasta mudra and very thin or skiny with a pairs of bangles are characteristic features of the present deity. In her uppermost hands is stretch the elephant skin. Remaining left hands are holding a *(varshā)* Javelin, a *naramuṇḍa* (alienated human head) and other broken hand probably holding a *sarpa* (snake). Three of the hands on the right hold a *damaru* (hourglass-shaped drum). A dead body is present on the head of the trident. The most interesting feature of this image is a depiction of a scorpion on her abdomen. The facial features of this goddess are quite horrible.
2. **Jemo, Knadi:**

   Another image of Cāmuṇḍā has been found from the village of Jemo, near Kandi. Presently the image is in the collection of BSPM, Kolkata. A broken slab (12" x 10") of the image Cāmuṇḍā is wearing a garland of human skulls and dancing on a Gaṇa standing on a bhadrapiṭha of the pancharatha type. The goddess is flanked by emaciated dancing female figures. The right hand figure holds a cup, probably a kapala or skull containing blood in her right hand; the right hand is raised to the level of the ear in the pose of dancing. The figure to the left hand similarly holds a cup in her left hand. The pedestal is carved with the headless trunk of a dead man being devoured by jackals and vultures. At the bottom of the pedestal is carved the small figure of a devotee with folded hands. (GANGULY 1922: 83-84)

   **Other Images**

   **Nabagram:**

   The image of harihara-pitamaha has been found from the village of Nabagram, Murshidabad. The image is datable to circa 12th century CE and kept in the Indian Museum, Kolkata (IAR 1957-58: 72). Anusua Sengupta identified this image as a composite Saiva deity (Sengupta 1991: 339-41). The main figure of the deity is standing on a full blown lotus pedestal which is farther placed on a decorated triratha pedestal. The figure holds a lotus in his raised right hand and kamaṇḍalu in his hanging left hand. He wears a long garland touching his knee, a sacred thread, necklace, armlet and beaded wristlets. The Jaṭamukṣa in his head is decorated floral motifs and a round spot on his forehead is present. The presence of
nandi and kamandalu are the identifiable iconographic features of Saiva images. A humped bull is shown at the central of the pedestal and two seated devotee in kneeling position are on both sides. On both sides of the main deity two attendant deities are depicted and both are holding a trident by the left and ring like object by the right hands, held near the chest. The stela is pointed and decorated with vidyadharas and kirtimukha.

**Agni:**

An image of Agni has been found from the village of Mahesail under Suti PS (Plate – XXXI.A). The present black basalt image is seated on double petalled lotus pedestal in mahārājālilāsana posture. The right leg is rested on his mount *i.e* ram. The mount is carved on the pedestal. Devotees and floral scroll are carved on the pedestal. The remaining portion of the pedestal is now covered with vermilion. The god has two hands and holds akṣhamālā in his right hand and *kamaṇḍalu* in his left hand. The right hand touches his chest and the left hand rests on the left leg. The god is pot bellied and decorated with the sacred thread. A long beard touches his chest and he also has a long moustache. The icon is adorned with a jaṭamukuta with a beaded wrist band, arm band and ear ornaments. The back slab has depiction of a śikhara type temple decoration. Interestingly there are no depictions of flame.

**Buddhist Sculptures**

The prevalence of Buddhism in this area has been noted by several scholars. Among them Captain Layard who first mentioned about its Buddhist heritage deserves special mention. S. R. Das also described the Buddhist remains of the district. Bijoy Kumar
Bandopadhyay has properly documented the antiquarian remains of the district in details. In his book he has mentioned the Buddhist remains from Jiatkuri, Salar, Bazarsahau, Rājbāḍīdāṅgā, Gadda, Amarkundu and Sagardighi area beside others area of the district. A Padmapani Avalokitesvara stylistically assignable to the Gupta Period was found from the village of Salar, and is now kept in the collection of BSPM, Kolkata (SHARMA 2004: 247). An image of Mārīcī has been reported from the area of Sagardighi of the district of Murshidabad by R. K. Sen of the DAWB (IAR 1983-84: 172). Jajan, Panchthupi are also important archaeological sites which have yielded archaeological remains pertaining to the Buddhist ideology.

The present study area being an intermediary zone between the Pundravardhana/Varendri or present north Bengal and the Dakshina Rāḍha or a part of south and south western Bengal, it must have played a significant role in the settlement dynamics of the early medieval period. The cultural inheritance of the region can easily be gauged by its epigraphic and archaeological evidence. The complex temple organizations, prolific sculptural evidence pertaining to both orthodox and heterodox ideologies, besides monastic developments under the patronage of local lineages are significant early medieval characteristics. While discussing sculptural remains related to Buddhism of the present study area, one must take into consideration the monastic developments in Paharpur (DIKSHIT 1990) of the Dinajpur district (undivided Bengal), Jagajivanpur (ROY 2002) in the district of Malda, Raktamṛittiṅkā Mahavihārā (DAS 1968) in the district of Murshidabad besides, the evidence of a Buddhist complex found at the mound of Bharatpur in the district of Burdwan, West Bengal IAR 1971-72: 50).
The existence of Buddhism in the district of Murshidabad has been found mainly from the Rāḍha area (western part) of the district. Literary and epigraphic sources besides archaeological data give insights about the spread of Buddhism in this area. The excavated site Rājbāḍīdāṅgā i.e. Raktaṃṛittikā Mahavihārā is located 10 kms south of the Baharampur, the district head quarter of Murshidabad. The adjoining districts of Birbhum and Malda (excavated remains of the Jagjivanpur monastery) also witnessed the spread of Buddhism from the 7th -8th centuries CE onwards.

1. **Rājbāḍīdāṅgā Complex:**

   So far as the prevalence of Buddhism is concerned in the district of Murshidabad one should consider the monastic development at Rājbāḍīdāṅgā i.e. Raktaṃṛittikā Mahavihārā. The site was visited by the Chinese traveller Hsuan-tsang, who referred to an existing monastery of the site, known as Lo-to-wei-chi. The exact location of this monastery is quite controversial. According to his account, the country was about 4450 li in circuit and its capital was 20 li in circuit. There were more than ten Buddhist monasteries, and above 2000 brethren who were all adherents of the Samatiya School (BEAL 1981: 201).

   So far as archaeological studies are concerned, F. R. Layard in the year 1852 first visited this district and published an article entitled “The Ancient City of Kansonapuri now called Rungamutty” in the journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (LAYARD 1853). Beveridge H. Published an article entitled ‘The Site of Karṇasuvarṇa’ on Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in the year 1983 (BEVERIDGE 1893). A trial excavation was carried out
by K.N. Dikshit of Archaeological Survey of India in the field season of 1928-29. According to the excavator “The trial excavation conducted late in the season at the Devil’s mound brought to light the remains of structures of at least three periods, the lowest of which appears to be a Buddhist establishment of the 6th to 7th century AD; but no definite confirmation is available about its identity with the Karṇasuvarna vihāra.” (DIKSHIT 1990: 90). During a field survey in 1958-59, a small seated image of Tārā, datable to circa seventh century CE have been recorded from the ruins of a Gupta temple at Karṇasuvarna, District Murshidabad. The specimen is now in the collection of the AMIA, Kolkata (IAR 1958-59: 77). After a long gap, the Department of Archaeology, University of Calcutta, conducted excavations under the supervision of S.R. Das at Rājbāḍīdāngā in the year 1962 and continued up to 1974 with two seasonal breaks. This excavation unearthed the ruins of a monastic establishment having five successive stages of construction, stupa base, a panchayatana temple complex all in kiln burnt bricks, ranging in date from 2nd to 3rd centuries CE. The notable sculptural remains from excavations and explorations consist of fairly large number of stucco sculptures of Bodhisattva, Buddha, bronze Tārā, seated Buddha in Bronze, standing Avalokitesvara (IAR 1964-65: 51), bronze cakra(1962-63: 46) beside other Brahmanical sculptures. Some of the retrieved seals certainly help us in tracing the original location of the Raktamṛittikā monastery at Rājbāḍīdāngā and near its vicinity (DAS 1966, 1968). Among other finds, special mention may be made of seals and sealings containing the usual dharma-cakra flanked by two deer and a two-line legend or the usual Buddhist formula or personal inscriptions. Some of the sealing refer to the
illustrious Raktamṛittikā-vihāra and its ārya-bhikṣu (IAR 1963-64: 64).

The Kolkata Circle of Archaeological Survey of India excavated at the mound of Nilkuthidanga to delineate the nature of the habitational remains of the area. The excavations were supervised by Bimal Bandyopadhyay, Superintendent Archaeologist of Kolkata Circle for the field season of 2004-05, 2005-06 who published a brief report of the excavation in the Journal of Bengal Art (BANDYOPADHYAY 2008). During the field season of 2008-2009, DAWB, conducted an excavation at Rākshasidāṅgā mound of Rājbāḍīdāṅgā area. The excavation has yielded remains of brick structures. On the basis of stratigraphy the entire structural remains may be divided into two phases. The earlier phase belongs to the post-Gupta period, i.e. 6th/7th century CE and the later belongs to Pala/Sena period (NEWS LETTER CASTEI 2010: 18).

A black basalt image in dhyana mudra posture and seated on a pedestal has been found recently in the vicinity of Rājbāḍīdāṅgā while digging a land. The front side of the image is completely broken. The importance of this image lies in the fact that it has an inscription (Buddhist creed) engraved on the back. Below the pedestal there is a peg. The principal figure is wearing a dhoti, designed at the edge. The extant portion does not show very fine execution. On the basis of palaeography the image can be assignable to c. 7th – 8th century CE.
Seated Bronze figure of Buddha:

A seated metal image of Buudha found from the excavation at Rājbāḍīdāngā is datable to the 7th century CE. (IAR 1964-65: 51). The image is now kept in the Department of Archaeology, University of Calcutta. The deity is seated in vajraparyāṅkāsana on a rectangular pedestal. The deity exhibits bhūmisparśamudrā and the upper portion of the body is covered by garment. The vehicle, a rat, rests below right foot. A devotee is present on the right side of the pedestal. The rounded halo with floral motifs is present at the back of the main deity (Plate – XXXI.B).

Standing Bronze figure of Padmapani:

An image of Padmapani Avalokiteswara has been found from the excavation at Rājbāḍīdāngā. The figure is standing in ābhaṅga posture and the left hand holds a lotus while the right hand is broken. A thick drapery is hanging up to the ankle of the deity. The mukuṭa is adorned with the depiction of a Buddha figure (Plate – XXXI.C).

Tārā:

A seated metal image has been found from the ruins of the Gupta temple of Karṇasuvarṇa, Murshidabad. The image is now kept in the AMIA, Kolkata. The image is datable to circa 7th century CE (IAR 1958-59: 77).

2. Sagardighi area:

This is one of the most archaeologically potential areas of the district. The name Sagardighi was probably derived from the name of a large tank located at the centre of the modern habitational area.
The tank was dug during the Pala period. According to R.D. Banerji some sculptures of Shaḍaksharī group were discovered from the bank of a tank or lake called Sagardighi (BANERJI 1990: 133). The archaeological remains found from this area include potsherds of different wares, sculptural remains, brick-bats, architectural members and other habitational remains. The locality known as Popara of the present village of Sagardighi is well known for its sculptural remains associated with both the Buddhist and Brahmanical ideologies. Two broken Buddhist sculptures measuring 37×47×13cm and 74×35×18cm, besides, a bust of Viṣṇu are kept just beside a modern Shiva temple. All these images are now collectively worshipped as Shiva. One of the said Buddhist sculptures has an Arabic inscription (the calligraphy is noteworthy) engraved on its back side. There are a significant numbers of Brahmanical sculptures now kept in the different sacred places of the village and some of them are in the collection of different Museums. At Kalitala of the village of brahmanigram of Sagardighi area some sculptural fragments are kept which include a pedestal of a Viṣṇu sculpture, a broken stele depicting pancha dhyani Buddha, some broken pieces of Śiva liṅga and other very fragile pieces of unidentified specimens, all unfortunately plastered. A mutilated stone sculpture of the goddess Mārīcī ascribable to circa eleventh century CE had been collected from this region by R. K. Sen of the DAWB (IAR 1983-84 :172). This three headed and eight armed goddess is standing in pratyalidha posture on a sapTārātha high pedestal. Seven pigs and a Rahu, as car rider are depicted on the pedestal. The deity has three face (one boar and two anthropomorphic) and eight hands. Her attributes on her right hands from below are a needle, ankusa, arrow and vajra. The lowest left
hand is broken where as, the remaining hold (from below) thread, bow and pasa. Vattali, Varali and Vadali are three attendant figures of the deity. First two are depicted at the right and left sides of the main deity and Vadali in between the legs of the principal figure. Architectural designs are depicted on the border of the stele. The upper part of the stela is partially broken (SENGUPTA AND SAHA 2014: 205). Such images are found in considerable numbers from different places of eastern India. Besides the example from Ujani, Bangladesh, one must mention about a significant one from Satakhandha now in the collection of the State Archaeological Museum, Kolkata (SENGUPTA AND SAHA 2014: 206). A small image of Tārā is now kept in a small temple in the compound of Sagardighi Police Station.

3. **Jalbandha:**

The site Jalbandha is located 15 kms south of Raghunathgunj. The entire present settlement is located on an extensive mound. At the centre of the village there is a modern temple which is basically located on the ancient structural part of the mound. This mound has yielded bricks of different sizes, stone architectural appendages, sculptures and sculptural fragments of Buddhist and Brahmanical pantheon. A few sculptures images have been collected from this village and they are presently in the collection of the AMIA, Kolkata, and the State Archaeological Museum, Kolkata (MONDAL 2013: 161).

An unfinished (?) image of Avalokitesvara image has been found from the village and kept in the State Archaeological Museum, Kolkata (SENGUPTA AND SAHA 2014: 213). The image
is seated on a full blown lotus pedestal and is in *ardhaparyanaka* posture. The god holds a full blown lotus with the left hand and the right hand is in *varadamudra* posture. Another full blown lotus is depicted on the right side of the main deity. The edge of the back-slab is decorated with floral designs.

4. **Amarkundu:**

This is one of the most important archaeological sites of the district of Murshidabad. S.R Das (DAS 1971: 21), Bijoy Kumar Bandopadhyay (BANDOPADHYAY 1982: 62-63) and others have reported on the archaeological repertoire from the site. It is located 13 kms north west of Baharampur. Cultural remains at several locales of the site indicate its long antiquity. It is also important that there is a ruined temple made of large stone slabs and bricks. Inside a modern temple two Buddhist images are now kept and worshiped with other Brahmanical sculptures (*Plate – XXXI.D*). An image of Avalokiteśvara (57x29x12 cm) is seated in *vamalalitasana* posture on a double petalled lotus which is further placed on a *pancharatha* pedestal. The hanging leg is placed on a small lotus and the other leg is folded. The right hand is kept in *varada* posture and the left hand holds a full blown lotus. The pedestal is carved with buds of lotus and the effigies of devotees. A couple of figures is depicted on the right side of the main deity. Both the deities are in standing posture and their hands are in *namaskāramudrā*. The main icon wears the usual garments and jewellery. His head is covered with a *jaṭamukūṭa*. A double banded *prabhamaṇḍala* is present on the back of the deity. The stela is decorated with swan emitting jewel and other floral designs. *Panca dhyani* Buddhas are depicted on the top of the stela. The border of the stela is decorated with a simple raised
band. The stela is also decorated with architectural motifs (Plate - 6). Another small and seated Buddhist image (11.5x9x3cm) besides other Brahmanical ones have been recorded from the site.

5. **Ugra-Bhatpara:**

The site is located 2.5 kms west of Jibanti and 10 kms south-west of Baharampur, the district headquarter. The modern settlement of the village is located partially on the ancient mound. This ancient mound has yielded terracotta objects, architectural members, potsherds, iron objects and sculptural remains. Structural remains are visible on the surface of the mound, however, it is difficult to ascertain the nature of the structure. An inscribed standing Buddha image along with other sculptural fragments are now kept under a pipal tree in the courtyard of the residence of a local villager, Mantu Das, and is now worshipped as *Sasthi*. Apparently the inscription may be the usual Buddhist creed. The sculpture is badly damaged. Two attendant figures are depicted on the both sides of the main deity. The attendant on the left side is a female and holding a *chattrra*. On the right side a male attendant holds a *kamandalu* in his left hand and the right hand is broken. Two hands of the main deity are broken and it appears that the left is in *abhaya mudra*. The nature of portraying his lower garment as reaching down to the ankle is certainly representative of the post-Gupta art idiom. The drapery is depicted in form of a series of regular folds. A circular halo is present on the back of the head of the main deity. The stela is bordered by a two-fold carving, a floral one skirting the stela followed by a raised band. The inscription is engraved on the stele along the border. A *stupa* is carved on the stele. These types of
sculptures have been found from south Bihar as well as from the different sites of the Lower Ganga Plain area (Plate – XXXII.A)

6. **Burwan:**

The headquarters of the P.S. of the same name lies in the southern part of the district. The place is about 12 kms south-west of Kandi, located along the Kandi-Burwan main road. In the north-western corner of the village there is a late medieval terracotta temple is situated on a structural mound. The temple is decorated with beautiful terracotta plaques. Interestingly, in the *garbhagriha* a beautiful image of Buddha (97×60×7) cm, known as *Bābā Madhab* to the local people, is now worshipped (Plate – XXXII.B). The main deity is seated on a beautifully decorated double petalled lotus which is further placed on a high *panca-ratha* pedestal. His right hand is touching the earth and the left hand is kept on his lap. Horizontally, the lower pedestal is divided in three equal parts. Buddha is shown in *bhūmisparśa mudrā* seated inside a *sikhara* type of temple on a double petalled lotus. The depiction of the transparent garment of the Buddha clearly indicates a mature artistic skill. Most probably the sculptor/sculptors were well acquainted with the technical expertise in making the effigies of the lord. The seated Buddha is beautifully poised and juxtaposed by an equally impressive stela that depicts architectural appendages in a grand scale. At first glance it seems that Buddha is seated within a niche of a temple or monastery. Two devotees are standing in *namaskara mudrā* on both sides of the cornice of the temple shaped structure. *Vyala*-s are depicted on both sides of the deity. The border of the stele is decorated with beaded and floral design. Beside this specimen, there are other fragments of Brahmanical sculptures placed both inside and outside the temple.
7. Dumnitala:

Dumnitala is a small temple village, located 4 kms east of Beldanga railway station in the district of Murshidabad, West Bengal (BANDOPADHYAY 1982: 94-95, MONDAL and ACHARYA 2015: 112-113). The temple complex from where the sculpture has been documented is on the bank of a spill-off channel left by the river Bhagirathi (Plate – XXXII.C). Since there is a possibility of the change of river course, one may consider the local myth about the significance of the said spill-off channel i.e., it was a navigable water course and was operative in the distant past. The present specimen, made of black basalt stone (41×23×6 cm) is carved in relief form. Unfortunately, the lotus held in her left hand is broken, and it seems that the nose, forehead and crown are intentionally broken. Compared to the specimens mentioned above, this image is quite heavily built with a not so accentuated slender disposition. The deity sits in vamalalitasana on a double-petalled lotus or viśva-padma which is placed on a pancaratha pedestal. The left hand of the deity holds a sanāla nilotpala (blue lotus) which is partially broken and the right hand is in boon giving posture or placed in varada mudrā. On the palm of her right hand, there is most probably an auspicious mark which cannot be clearly identified. The present image wears a scarf and a skirt marked with double lines and flowers in between. The goddess wears a diadem with fluttering ribbons. The compact prabhamandala with petal motifs seems to have been the work of a not so skilled carver. The stela is bordered by a two-fold carving, a floral one skirting the stela followed by a raised band with floriated intersections. Two worshippers or devotees seated in kneeling posture, are carved on the pancaratha pedestal. The
devotees (probably the donor couple), a male on the proper right and a female on the left, depict anjalimudra. The stela is more or less bereft of ornamentation, though the apex bears the depiction of the dhyani Buddha Amoghasiddhi seated on a double petalled lotus pedestal. Representations of two votive stupas resting on double-petalled lotus pedestals are found on both sides of the head of the principal figure. A throne/architectural motif are depicted on the back of the goddess.

8. **Jajan:**

Jajan is a remarkable site and is located 7 kms south of the Kandi town. According to the oral traditions the name Jajan has probably been derived from the word ‘Jayajana’ and was quite popular among the Mahayanist people (BANDOPADHYA 1982: 88-89). The entire settlement is located on an ancient mound. The village has a good number of archaeological remains of late historical/ early medieval period. Undoubtedly the place laid bare the evidences of one temple complex locally known as Sarbamangala temple as attested by the significant numbers of architectural members. The sculptural assemblages of the site consist of broken Viṣṇu images, one pedestal of Sūrya, Mahiṣāsuramardinī, and others. Two broken pieces of Buddhist (?) sculptures have also been recorded. One of them is seated on a double petalled lotus pedestal in dhyana mudra.

9. **Jiagunj Museum specimen, Murshidabad**

It is one of the most beautiful sculptures of Astamahabhaya-Tārā datable to 11th / 12th century CE. This inscribed image is presently in the collection of the Jiaganj Museum, Murshidabad.
Probably the village of Baragram in the district of Birbhum is the original provenance of the specimen. The back-slab is cut along the silhouette of the main deity and it enhances the three-dimensionality. The specimen is somehow unsurpassed in its sensitive modelling and balanced tension. The deity is seen seated on a double petalled full blown lotus pedestal in *lalitāsana* posture. Her pendent right leg is rested on another full blown lotus issuing from an elaborate foliated scroll occupying a considerable portion of the *ratha* pedestal. The left hand of the deity holds an *utpala* (upper portion is broken) and the fingers are arranged in the manner of *vitarka-mudra*. Her right hand is in the *varada-mudrā* and rests on the right knee. The deity is bejeweled with multi-stranded armlets, necklace, ear-studs and is draped in a pleated garment as indicated by the parallel ridges. Her diaphanous *sari* is fastened by an ornamented girdle with an elaborate centre piece. Her calm countenance with half open eyes indicates a somewhat pensive state of mind. Significantly, a svelte figure, a lucid expression and the spiritual power are successfully reflected in this specimen. The slightly tilted head is crowned with a succinct *jaṭamukuta*. The richly ornamental back slab is found carved with the effigies of Five Transcendent Buddhas in their particular postures and *mudras*. The edge of the back–slab is relieved with the figures of Tārā images in their varied postures, altogether eight in number. It is interesting that, the carving technique renders these Tārā figures a three-dimensional appearance. They were provided with their respective lotus thrones. The portion of the stela from the head of the deity to the waist is decorated with niche like carvings (represented by three tiered mouldings) surmounted by a neatly carved *kirtimukha*. The hovering figures of *gandharva, kinnara* and *kinnari* have been accommodated in the free
space of the back-slab. The deity is attended by Asokakanta and Heruka whose figures are carved on both sides of the principal figure. Her quite heavy three-dimensional portrayal with the crowded back-slab, besides the pointed apex of the stela certainly suggest that the specimen may be assigned to circa 11th-12th century CE (BANDOPADHYAY 2007).