CHAPTER V

CANDI CULT IN ACTION: WEST BENGAL.

5.1 IMPACT ON THE SOCIO-RELIGIOUS LIFE:

India is well known as a land of the villages. About 85% (eighty five percent) of India's population is rural in the strict sense of the term. Hence, the villages have been playing an important part in the daily life and livelihood of the Indian folk. It is needless to state that before the recent emergence of industrial growth and urbanization, the civilization of the Indian sub-continent mostly rested and flourished on the village-based society. The villages of India are tradition-based and it is seen that the villages in the different levels of socio-cultural development maintain a close link in the orientation of total philosophy of living.

The people of India usually live in an atmosphere of indigenous beliefs, traditions and superstitions which are conditioned by the direct influence of the various village deities or the tutelary deities of the villagers. On the other hand, the villages of India do not offer an uniform social pattern, there exist great variations in population, climate and topography. Hence, in understanding Indian Society emphasis for the analysis of the socio-religious and
ritualistic pattern must necessarily be given on the regional basis.

This process is continuous throughout India and all the linguistic and cultural regions of India depict the same picture. When we come to the region of our study it is seen that the basic features of life here are pulsated with that great Indian tradition. The state i.e. West Bengal to which this region is a part provides numerous examples of this kind and the villagers of West Bengal still worship jointly, assemble together in the temples or sacred groves or holy places not necessarily to uphold the traditional rituals, beliefs and practices, but for the benefit of the villagers irrespective of caste and creed. In many cases, the village priest caters for all, and keeps the temple god or goddess in trim for defensive security, but simultaneously the social ceremonies may be partitioned or be uniformed on the caste-lines, taboo and pollution may determine the limits of joint participation giving rise to caste priesthood and diverse ritual practices.

Modern amenities of enjoyments like cinema, radio and in many cases television and V.C.R. are easily available to a section of village folk. Metal roads connected with the cities, towns and busy market places are penetrating into the heart of the villages situated even in the remote corners. Inspite of conspicuous changes owing to the introduction of various technological developments in day to day society of the rural folk the traditional life of the
people has not been affected much. Religion still plays a distinct and dominant part in the life and thinking of the villagers and will certainly play the same role for the indefinite period. Though austere purity in thought, word and deed is not the ideal, numerous beliefs and ceremonies portray the villager as a devout man. The drab life of working, eating and sleeping is made gay by colourful festivals, singing of sacred songs and ringing of bells praying benediction. Behind all these gaiety and revelry there is the simple heart of the villager offering sincere worship, whether it be to a benevolent spirit, a god or to an inanimate tree, which, to him, is sacred (Majumdar : 1958 : 233). Modern education and urbanization is not able to weaken the roots of the age-old beliefs and manners of the common people. In most of the cases the common folk follow their own line of thinking and judgement, which has been intermingled with the age-old traditions current in the society and locality. Further, it is also true that there is a tendency among the common villagers to identify their folk deities as one of the members of the Aryan pantheon or the Sanskritic-Brahminical pantheon. All these factors are inter-related with each other. But the features of social structure have to be considered in connection with the cult of village-deity or the tutelary deity of the villagers, in the light of the village-based rites, rituals and religious beliefs related with the 'Gramya-Devatas':-

Firstly, though the whole village community takes active part in the various stages of the ceremonies, but the different
caste-groups have different parts to play and they are thus differentiated from one another.

Secondly, though each village community has its own unity and exhibited in the cult performances, there is some sort of co-operation between different villages, and members of one may take active part in the ceremonies and festivals of another without hesitation or giving birth to the question related with the prevalent caste system or such other problems.

Thirdly, there is the fact that local deities of the villages have been assimilated to the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon as and when a particular local deity is identified with Śiva or Pārvatī (Radcliff Brown : 1952). Such identification is facilitates by the fact that goddesses such as Cāṇḍī, Kālī, Bhaïrābi, Chinnamastā are not the products of purely Sanskritic-Brahminical imagination; on the other hand, they are believed to represent an earlier stage of amalgamation in which Hindu-Brahminical ideas are compounded with the indigenous and aboriginal idea of ruling spirits. This feature may also be traced through the cult of the village-deity like Cāṇḍī.

Furthermore, different kinds of performances of folk cults and rituals, that are originated out of the long-drawn processes of adoration of the 'Gramya-Devatas' bring forth frenzied inspiration throughout the region. The fairs and festivals connected with the
village-deity Candi take place at the different periods of the Bengali calendar year, in which the common villagers irrespective of caste and class, community, participate in a traditional and gayful way. It is most interesting to note that people belonging to various castes and communities not only participate wholeheartedly but they actually perform some duties at the different phases of propitiation, apparently ignoring the current caste system, social bar and existent norms as well as time-long usages. In the different categories of festivals concentrated group-life may be seen, - the multifarious nature of hierarchical society becomes unified and all stand on the common platform for the common cause, that is, the propitiation of the village-deity for the betterment of the villagers. The behavioural pattern of the common villagers are thus flourished in the background of the village-deity cult or the cult of 'Gramya-Devata' collectively present an interesting and gayful field of observing the nature and extent of corporate life of the common folk of the villages.

Hence, through the cult of the 'Gramya-Devata' one can find out the socio-religious solidarity and unity. In the present study above-mentioned features have also been pointed out in the relevant portion.

To mention the participation of the different caste-group in the functional activities of adoration of the deity Candi, the case of the 'Karmakara' (Blacksmith) may be taken as an instance.
The people belonging to 'Karmakara' by caste have the sole authority to sacrifice animal at the time of propitiation. The Karmakar or the official sacrificer receives the chopped off head and one of the hind legs of the sacrificed animal as his remuneration. It is the general custom current in the society, and it should be treated as the part of the religious behaviour. Yet, there is some exceptional cases where either the 'Deyashi' or the Brahmin-priest performs the act of sacrificing the animal at the time of worship. In some other cases, the persons belonging to various castes, namely, Kumbhakar (Potter), Sadgop, Bagdi, etc., perform the act of sacrificing the animal at the auspicious moment. In the village 'Basuri' (P.S. Haripal, District - Hooghly) the animal offered to the deity Candī usually is let loose and kept alive in the custody of the 'Deyashi' Bagdi by caste.

On the other hand, the prevalent custom usually followed in many places are mentioned in the following Table No.V:1, wherefrom the trend and the primary trait related with the cult of the village deity Candī can be traced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of village</th>
<th>Deity's name</th>
<th>Period of worship</th>
<th>Caste of sacrificer</th>
<th>Type of animal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raspur (Howrah)</td>
<td>Gaq Candī</td>
<td>Sept.-Oct. (Aswin)</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd...
In many cases, the act of sacrificing at the auspicious moment is done either by the priest himself or by the Deyashi himself.
In some other cases it is found that there are official sacrificers who belong to different caste-groups. As per tradition they perform this particular job of sacrificing the animal. This trend is shown in the following Table No.V:2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of village (West Dinajpur)</th>
<th>Name of deity</th>
<th>Period of worship</th>
<th>Caste of sacrificer</th>
<th>Type of animal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pauli (Murshidabad)</td>
<td>Bhagawati Caṇḍī</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Brahmin-Priest</td>
<td>Goat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalyanpur (Murshidabad)</td>
<td>Kalyan Caṇḍī</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulbul Candi (Maldaha)</td>
<td>Bulbul Caṇḍī</td>
<td>Every Tuesday &amp; Saturday</td>
<td>Rajbanshi</td>
<td>Goat and Pigeon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwarhatta (Hooghly)</td>
<td>Dwari Daini</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>Goat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttardaha (Birbhum)</td>
<td>Bagria Caṇḍī</td>
<td>Jany.-Feb. (Magha)</td>
<td>Brahmin-Priest</td>
<td>Goat and Sheep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belai (Birbhum)</td>
<td>Belai Caṇḍī</td>
<td>Every Tuesday &amp; Saturday Sept.-Oct. (Aswin)</td>
<td>Sadgop</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara (Birbhum)</td>
<td>Dhaniksha Caṇḍī</td>
<td>Sept.-Oct. (Aswin)</td>
<td>Brahmin-Priest</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bikrampur (Bankura)</td>
<td>Caṇḍī</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Kshatriya</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd..
The custom varies from region to region, village to village which is reflected in the abovenoted Table No.V:2. Goats and sheep are the most common animals used as offering. Simultaneously, animals like buffalo and sometimes birds like pigeon (even cock and hen) are also accepted as offering animals. The persons who normally perform the act of sacrificing are being honoured by giving away the 'head' (mudi) of the sacrificed animal. But there are some occasions when the official sacrificer is paid in cash as his remuneration.

Like 'Karmakara' (Blacksmith), the particular job was reserved for the 'Malakara' - florist community to collect flowers.
and to prepare ornaments of flowers and pith (sola). In good old days it was their caste-occupation. Now-a-days, they prepare decorative materials made of pith and remuneration is given in cash in lieu of tax-free land.

Similar to the Karmakara and Malakara communities, the Doms and Muchis (jal-achal and at-chut castes) still engage themselves to play on the drums and some other musical instruments during the propitiation, procession and immersion ceremony. The folk deities are in general propitiated by the non-Brahmin priests and they, most of the time, come from the caste-groups occupying the lowest rungs of the social ladder.

Inspite of multifarious changes in social philosophy bringing tremendous effect on the caste categories its powerful role in the various fields of folk-religion and Hindu-Brahminical religious behaviour is still remarkable to a great extent. In explaining these features of caste system, some scholars have observed that it denies equality of social status to all sections of the society. The basic structure of such a society in the hierarchical arrangement in which clusters of castes occupy different levels (Mathur : 1964 : 1). The caste-groups are united reciprocally in the rigid background of ritualistic performances based on the multiple functions of the folk deities concerned. Generally the Brahmins have the hierarchical and sole customary facilities to adore the deities and to perform related functions. In the hierarchical arrangement
various clusters of castes occupy different levels, and with the exception of the topmost and bottom levels, each such level is either higher or lower than the other. In the Hindu hierarchical arrangement of castes, Brahmans hold the highest position when the Jal-achals, at-chuts hold position from lower down to the lowest. In the following Table No.V:3 the cluster of caste alignment prevalent in the area under study at present could be shown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste and Community</th>
<th>Rank and Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahmin, Grahacharya.</td>
<td>Highest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayestha, Vaidya, Karan,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahishya, Sadgop, Vaishnava.</td>
<td>Higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teli, Malakar, Kamar (Blacksmith),</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumbhakar (Potter), Goala, Napit,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tantubaya (Weaver), Sutradyar (Carpenter),</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swarnakar, Gop, Barujibi, Kamila, Moyra.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bagdi, Pod, Namasudra, Dhopa,</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajbanshi, Sunri, Chuter.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dulia, Kaora, Dhibar, Patar Bauri, Mal.</td>
<td>Lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadi, Muchi, Dom, Chamar.</td>
<td>Lowest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is true that the hierarchical arrangement, a group of people automatically manage to place themselves in a dominating
position in the field of religion and related behavioural pattern.

Next comes the question of unity and frequent inter-mixture and inter-change between the villagers themselves and the dwellers of the adjacent region specially on the occasion of the regular propitiation and annual worship. Different sections of people usually take active part in the sphere of festivals and adoration of the deity. Hence, various types of actions and interactions, i.e., social, religious, economic and even political, take place in the world of festivals but above all an integrated pattern of solidarity, mutual understandings and exchange of various ideas including the coherent attitude come to the limelight. These factors are always conditioned by the mentality of leading a group-life.

In the festivals centering the propitiation of folk deities and solemnity observing of the ritualistic ceremonies and performances, active participation of different castes and communities irrespective of creed and beliefs become the essential feature; particularly at the time of special pujas and the annual adoration and festivals, rigidity of prevalent caste-system as well as the wretched communal feelings disappeared, though for a short while. Further, at the annual adoration of the village-level deities, that is, 'Gramya-Devatas', the prevalent efficacy and superiority of Brahminical doctrine and practices in the sphere of religious behaviours and ritualistic patterns become almost inactive and normally loosen its rigidity for the time being. On the other side, the very
common people occupying the lower strata in the socio-economic sphere play a distinct and dominant role in the socio-religious field and a new bond of brotherhood, a new pattern of social and religious behaviour appear in the villages concerned. These features may be categorically illustrated through the concrete studies on the modes of behaviour of the villagers belonging to diverse caste groups.

In the following portion, field-reports have been analysed to cater various data in relation with the present study.

(i) DEITY : Mangal Candî at village Metela (Dist. Birbhum) -

There is a famous shrine of Candî at the village Metela in the district of Birbhum. The proper location of the village Metela is at the southern corner of the famous holy stream Bakreswar within the jurisdiction of Dubrajpur Police Station (being J.L.No.58) of Sadar Sub-Division of Birbhum. Nearly one thousand people belonging to various hinduised caste-groups other than the three tribal communities reside in the village under study. In village Metela there are altogether thirteen caste-groups with specific hierarchical pattern based on purity-pollution concept. The caste-groups are Brahmin, Grahacharya, Sadgop, Karmakara, Vaishnava, Sutraddhara, Moyra, Goala, Mal, Bagdi, Bauri, Dom and Muchi.

In addition to these, there are three tribal communities like the Kora, the Pahari and the Santal.
The mud-built altar of the 'Gramya-Devata' Candi is situated in the Bauripara (the ward of the Bauri community) which is by the side of a village path. The said village-path connects the innermost portion of the village Metela. Further, the village-path is ultimately connected with a main road passing through the region. The regular propitiation and annual adoration-cum-festival of the said folk-deity Candi usually bring forth many peculiar features which attract large number of devotees and common folk from the different parts of the district of Birbhum and sometimes even from outside Birbhum. Hence, the influence and impact of the folk-deity Candi on the socio-religious life of the common folk can be ascertained easily, in this part of the globe.

The famous shrine of Candi in the Bauripara of village Metela is laid under a large-sized Pipal tree (Ficus religiosa). At the foot of the said Pipal tree there is a raised platform on which the village deities, namely, Mangal Candi, Khyapa Ma, Kali, Dharmaraj and Manasa are kept side by side. Small-sized stone-slabs anointed with oil and vermillion represent the icon of the deities. There is no such icon or 'murti' as we generally find in the descriptions of the Sanskritie-Brahminical texts.

The shrine of Candi is now under the possession and management of Bauri Deyashi, Sanatan Bauri, by name. Sanatan officiates the hieratic performances as the 'Deyashi' in a traditional way and he is the only successor in the main line. No Brahmin priest is
appointed or ever engaged to adore the said Mangal Caṇḍī. Sanatan
does it as his father used to do.

Apart from the regular worship, special pujas are performed
on every Sunday. The date of annual adoration and festival is being
fixed on the third day of the Bengali month Magha, corresponding to
January-February of the Christian calendar. The date for the annual
propitiation of Manasa, Dharmaraj, that is, the deities other than
Caṇḍī are also fixed in other months.

The deity Mangal Caṇḍī has been accepted as the tutelary
deity of the village Metela and She is adored by the people of more
than forty villages, which are situated in the adjacent areas of the
shrine. Hence, the deity Mangal Caṇḍī is deeply connected with the
common villagers of that region. At the different times of the year
the goddess Mangal Caṇḍī is usually engaged in circumambulation at
the adjacent villages and localities of Her shrine just to earn
adoration and helps to observe the ceremonial functions. At the
time of outbreak of epidemics and diseases like cholera, small-pox,
gastro entritis, chicken pox or any such other diseases in the
village areas, the propitiation of Mangal Caṇḍī is done in special
manner with due homage and devotion, by all classes of people irres‐
pective of caste and creed. It is noticed that though the deity
Mangal Caṇḍī at village Metela is the exclusive property of a person
belonging to the Bauri community, and the Bauri-Deyashi though holds
the lower stratum in the caste-alignment and regarded as the
'jal-achal' and 'at-chut' by the traditional caste society, yet the goddess Mangal Candi adored by him (Sanatan Bauri) holds her position aloft the age-old caste-system and the cult of untouchability still existed in the society.

At the time of annual festival and propitiation, a large number of crowd consisting of men, women and children coming from the different parts of the region assemble at the shrine of Mangal Candi.

Mode and Characteristics of Annual Festival:

A few days before the annual festival and propitiation the shrine of Mangal Candi is cleaned and the adjacent place to the said shrine is smeared with cow-dung paste. Ritualistic drawings with the help of rice-paste are made by the women folk of Deyashi's family and his relatives. A large-sized canopy is hung up over the courtyard of the shrine which gives the place a new look and expresses the festive mood. Flowers and decorative designs made of various coloured papers and pith were also used.

On the very day of annual worship and festival, villagers from the different areas, belonging to various castes and communities begin to arrive at the shrine from the very early morning. The devotees usually bring some sorts of offerings consisting of 'atap' rice (sun-dried rice), banana, green coconuts, betel leaves and betel nuts, fruits, sweetmeats and vermillion. Numerous devotees approach
the deity Mangal Candi with goat and sheep. These animals are offered and sacrificed at the auspicious moment as a mark of great honour, devotion and homage. Sometimes, the slaying of animals are done by the devotees just as a mark of fulfilling the long-cherished desire. It is trusted that without the grace and boon of the deity Mangal Candi it would not be possible to fulfil one's desire.

During the time of observing the ceremonial and ritualistic activities, it is marked that, in all cases due importance is given to compromise and cohesion in between the devotees as well as the participants who come from far and near, and the organizers, as well as the authorities, irrespective of caste, colour and creed. Practically, a bond of union and brotherhood appears in the field by which the people belonging to 'jal-chal' and 'jal-achal', 'chut' and 'at-chut' castes and communities take active part in the annual festival.

It is mentioned elsewhere that the people belonging to different caste-groups have different parts to play in a festival centring the folk-deities or the 'Gramya-Devata' like Candi. At Metela village this feature is prominently exposed.

Caste Groups and Service Pattern:

It is customary that service is to be offered at the annual festival of Mangal Candi of the village Metela, by the different caste-groups from higher to the lowest. Brahmins occupying the
highest position in the caste-alignment also pay their homage and devotion. The service is rendered sometimes without any kind of remuneration and in a few cases with some honorarium. The service pattern is given in the following Table:

**TABLE NO. V:4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service pattern</th>
<th>Caste group</th>
<th>Nature of honorarium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizing the Annual Festival</td>
<td>Bauri</td>
<td>Five seers of rice and one dhuti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To decorate the shrine and place of festival</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Two seers of rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall management</td>
<td>Goala</td>
<td>Honorary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invitation to the villagers of various areas</td>
<td>Sadgop</td>
<td>Honorary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slaying of animals at auspicious moment</td>
<td>Bagdi and Karmakara</td>
<td>Two chopped off heads of the sacrificed goats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To collect flowers and prepare flower decorations</td>
<td>Moyra</td>
<td>One plateful of Prasad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution of Prasad at the end of propitiation</td>
<td>Sutradhar</td>
<td>Honorary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To collect rice, vegetables from different families</td>
<td>Mal and Bagdi</td>
<td>Two to three chopped off heads of sacrificed animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing on the Drums and other musical instruments</td>
<td>Dom</td>
<td>Five seers of rice plus Rs. 10/- in cash</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the abovenoted Table (being No.V:4), it becomes clear that there exists a system of 'division of labour' from the organi-
-zational point of view. It also leads towards making a platform of unity and brotherhood, where the 'jal-achal' and 'at-chut' caste-groups are treated as an essential factor or part, and they are accepted within the fold of 'rites and rituals' ignoring the wrathful castehood.

(ii) DEITY : Candi at village Maliara (Dist. Bankura) -

The most prosperous and ancient village Maliara is situated within the jurisdiction of Badjora Police Station in the district of Bankura (being J.L.No.5). The sky-line is ornamented with the large-sized plants and chimneys of the coke-ovens at Durgapur Steel town. Durgapur Railway station is not more than a stone's throw from the village Maliara. Durgapur-Purulia Road via Badjora passes through the heart of Maliara and it practically divides the village area into two uneven parts. A by-pass under the same name is also in existence. Buses and private cars are regularly ply on the main road while the Super-Express Buses and lorries, etc. usually run through the by-pass just to avoid the busy market place and densely populated village areas. The said Durgapur-Purulia Road via Badjora and Saltora stretches up to the Santal Pargana in the neighbouring State of Bihar. The aforesaid by-pass touches the southern part of the village Maliara.

The said village is now inhabited by more than 7000 persons according to the Census Report. It has twenty wards (i.e. paras).
Each ward (para) is named after a caste or community who are residing there in a large number. The names of the wards (paras) are as follows:

(i) Kanyakubjya Para - mainly inhabited by the Kanuji Brahmins.
(ii) Mahadani Para - both the wards are mainly inhabited by the Brahmins of Bengali origin.
(iii) Parikshya Para - inhabited by 'Kayastha' by caste.
(iv) Kayastha Para - inhabitants belonging to Traders' group.
(v) Sen Para - followers of 'Vaishnavism'.
(vi) Vaishnava Para - dominated by 'milkman' by caste-occupation.
(vii) Goala Para - caste dealing in distillation and selling of wine.
(viii) Sunri Para - goldsmith by caste-occupation.
(ix) Swarnakara Para or Jele Para - fisherman by caste-occupation (Scheduled Caste).
(x) Dhibar Para or Jele Para - blacksmith by caste-occupation.
(xi) Karmakara Para or Kamarpara - engaged in preparing earthenware, dolls, icons, etc.
(xii) Chutar Para - scheduled caste (jal-achal and at-chut).
(xiii) Bagdi Para - scheduled caste (jal-achal and at-chut).
(xiv) Bauri Para - scheduled caste who are engaged in doing the wood-work (jal-achal & at-chut).
(xv) Lohar Para - caste dealing in betel-leaves as their caste-occupation.
(xvi) Barujibi or Barui Para - sweeper (scheduled caste/jal-achal and at-chut).
(xvii) Methor Para - Contd..
(xviii) Akuria Para - dom (Scheduled caste /jal-achal and at-chut).

(xix) Muchi Para - cobbler by caste-occupation (Scheduled caste/jal-achal and at-chut).

Apart from these there is also another ward where the 'Adibasi' (aboriginal tribe) Santals reside and hence the said ward is commonly known as -

(xx) Santal Para.

The village Maliara is bounded by -

River Damodar, 0 On the North and
Durgapur Steel Complex, 0 North-East
Durgapur Railway Station 0

Villages, namely,
Nadichya, Chaitanyapur 0 On the South and
and the jungly hill 0 South-East
tract of Saharjore 0

Villages, namely,
Keshabpur and Baguli 0 On the East

Village-area, namely,
Srichandanpur and 0 On the West
Duberdanga 0

There are six Primary Schools, one Secondary School for boys, one Secondary School for girls and one Higher Secondary School (Classes XI & XII) for both the sections (co-education). The High School for boys was founded in the year 1905 A.D. with the financial aid given by the Raj family of Maliara. The newly introduced Panchayat system is also in action. There are nine more Primary Schools established within the Maliara Anchal Panchayat.
The village Maliara is connected by the regular bus-services with the nearby important places namely, Durlavpur, Mejia, Saltora, Gangajalghati, Badjora, Bankura and Durgapur; the buses regularly ply through the adjacent district headquarters like Midinipur, Bardhamana and Purulia.

The village-area, as it appears is very old and it has its own traditional rituals, rites and cults. Religious ceremonies are regularly held centering the folk-deities, namely Candi, Manasa, Basanta-Kumari, Siva, Panchanananda, Sitala, etc.

Maliara is inhabited by the people of twenty caste-groups and communities, which are as follows, namely, Brahmin, Kayastha, Vaishnava, Swarnakara, Barujibi, Karmakara, Goala, Malakar, Sutradhar, Sunri, Bagdi, Chutar, Bauri, Jele (Dhibar), Lohar, Mal, Muchi, Akuria-Dom, Methor, and Santal.

**Ancient Shrines and Temples:**

This village is regarded as the store-house of many old types of temples and shrines.

A few decorated 'Chālā' and 'Ratna' type temples, having the dedicatory inscriptions, made of bricks and one dilapidated sand-stone 'Nava-Ratna' type temple can still be seen in the different parts of the village. The said sand-stone 'Nava-Ratna' temple is claimed to be built during the early period of 17th Century A.D.
There are at least six deities, almost under the same type of name and style 'Candi' is seen to exert her influence on the different 'paras' (Wards), namely,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the deity</th>
<th>Name of the ward</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) 'Caṇḍi'</td>
<td>Bagdi Para</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) 'Caṇḍi'</td>
<td>Jele Para (Dhibar Para)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) 'Caṇḍi'</td>
<td>Kayastha Para</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) 'Haradeb Caṇḍi'</td>
<td>Kanyakubjya Para</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) 'Mangal Caṇḍi'</td>
<td>Mahadani Para</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) 'Dulu Caṇḍi'</td>
<td>Panchanantala</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though all those deities are being worshipped by the different communities or the persons belonging to various castes as their tutelary deity for the last few generations, but the 'Caṇḍi' propitiated regularly at the Dhibar (Jele) Para is worth-mentioning. Its annual festival draws innumerable people from the distant areas like Calcutta, Ranigunj, Ondal, Asansole, Purulia, Medinipur, Bardhamana apart from the adjacent regions and village areas. More than ten thousand people assemble to participate in the annual festival of the folk-deity Caṇḍi. The annual propitiation and festival actually continue for nearly seven days, though the previously fixed date for the purpose is the 'Jaishtha Purnima', that is, on the full-moon day in the Bengali month of Jaishtha (May-June).
The Shrine of Candi at Dhibar Para:

The shrine of Candi at Dhibar (Jele) para is connected by a village path and is situated at the northern portion of the village Maliara. The deity Candi is now housed in a pucca building having a small verandah and an open courtyard in front of the shrine. An well-decorated and colourful wooden sacrificial post is also found in the open courtyard. The two clay-made horses (height 3'-6" approximately) are also kept. Apart from the deity Candi itself, there are a few icons of 'spirits' like 'Dakini and Yogini' along with some small-sized terracotta horses and a god-pot in the said shrine. The icon of the deity Candi is enthroned on a wooden seat. The deity, as it appears to be, is nothing but a small-sized round-shaped stone-slab anointed with vermillion paste. It is claimed that the 'Yantra' is being kept in a wooden box, - none but the Deyashi looks at it.

Sri Prahallad Chandra Dhibar, aged about 60, is now acting as Deyashi. He leads a very virtuous life having a devoted wife and a few children. The deity Candi is the family-deity of the said Sri Prahallad Chandra Dhibar. Prahallad Babu acts as the Deyashi of the said deity Candi. In absence of Sri Dhibar, Smt. Pramila Debi, the wife of Deyashi, usually perform the act of 'Deyashini'. The regular Propitiation in a Brahminical way is done by Sri Jnanshankar Fouzdar, who resides in the same village. The deity Candi of Dhibar para (Jele para) has been accepted as the tutelary deity by the common villagers.
Mode and Characteristics of Annual Festival:

Though the date of annual festival and propitiation is prefixed (i.e. Jaistha Purnima) but the ritualistic and ceremonial functions start about a week ahead. The first day of observance starts on 'Dasahara' and it apparently concludes on the day after the full-moon of Jaistha (May-June). During the annual propitiation, a fair starts and runs for a couple of days which expresses the festive mood of the villagers.

On the very day of 'Dasahara' the Deyashi Prahallad Chandra Dhibar abstains from all kinds of cereal food and observes the all day-long by performing some ritualistic ceremonies. At the very auspicious moment of 'Dasahara' day the Deyashi goes to the sacred tank commonly known as 'Rani Sayar' situated on the western side of the village (near Kanyakubjya para) and takes a holy bath there. After bathing the Deyashi fills up an earthenware pot (ghata) with water of the said 'Rani Sayar' and keeps it on his head and comes back to the shrine Candi on foot. The drummers beat the drums throughout the way. A small procession consisting of the members of the Deyashi's family and the women-folk, children belonging to different castes including the 'Pujari-Brahmin' spontaneously follow the Deyashi upto the shrine of Caṇḍī. After reaching the shrine of Caṇḍī, the Deyashi keeps the 'ghata' (earthenware pot) filled with water in a particular corner previously smeared with cow-dung paste. With this the ritualistic performances start.
The day after 'Dasahara' is treated as the 'Jiran dibas', that is, the rest-day. On the third day from Dasahara, the 'Pata' (a kind of wooden plate or seat fitted with iron spikes) is brought out by the Deyashi from the shrine and is being handed over to 'Mul Bhaktya'. The 'Mul Bhaktya' associated with the other 'Bhaktyas' carried the 'Pata' to the particular house of a person belonging to 'Karmakara'. This particular folk-custom is supported by a mythical story, which runs as follows:-

Long ago, a person belonging to Karmakara (alias Kamar) by caste had a vision of the Deity Candl in the state of dreaming. He awoke from the dream and heard an order that the Deity Candl's murti (icon) is kept at a particular place, wherefrom the 'Kamar' should recover 'Her' murti and he should arrange for regular worship. The 'Kamar' informed the matter to his friend belonging to the 'Dhibar' caste. This 'Dhibar' was the paternal ancestor of Sri Prahallad Dhibar. The incident actually happened more than 100 years ago. From then, the ancestral persons of Prahallad Dhibar has been acting as the 'Deyashi' of Candl and the 'Pata' (seat) goes at first to the particular house of 'Karmakara' group.

At the 'Kamarsala' (workshop of the blacksmith) the 'Pata' is renovated and after the completion of renovation work the said 'Pata' is brought to Rani Sayar by the 'Mul Bhaktya' associated with the other 'Bhaktyas'. At 'Rani Sayar' the 'Pata' is cleaned up and a puja is done by the Brahmin-priest Jnanshankar Fouzdar over the said
'Pata'. In the meantime the Bhaktyas also take a holy bath at Rani Sayar and come back to the shrine of Candi at Dhibar para, carrying the 'Pata' on their heads. During this time the drummers belonging to Dom community follow the Bhaktyas and beat the drums all through the way, which attract many men, women and children belonging to various caste-groups, who watch the ceremonial functions. These people also make a procession following the Priest, Deyashi and the Bhaktyas during the coming back of 'Pata' to the shrine. The Bhaktyas start to observe fasting throughout the day-long and refrain themselves from taking any kind of cereal and staple food. They usually take single meal in a day normally with milk, fruits, sweets, whey (ghol), curdled milk.

The Deyashi also observes the day with fasting and takes single meal in a day, generally in the evening, without rice and cereal foods. He abstains from all sorts of household affairs for the time being and fully engage himself only in the propitiatory duties of the deity Candi.

It is believed by the common folk of the area that the Deity Candi resides at the eastern corner (on the bank) of Rani Sayar, which is commonly known as Bada Bagan. Like Candi of Dhibar para, Haradeb Candi of Kanyakubjya para also resides at the western corner of the said Bada Bagan. They were formally invited by the Pujari and Deyashi. Some ritualistic performances are done on this occasion at the prescribed two sites. This function is being done on the fourth day
commencing from 'Dasahara'. On the same day another type of ceremony pertaining to the ritual is also held. The ceremony is known as 'Pata barano', that is, the 'Pata' goes out in circumambulation in some of the selected nearby villages. The number of these specified villages are more than sixteen, and these are noted below:


Naturally it takes pretty long time to complete the whole affair. The 'Mul Bhaktya' associated with the other 'Bhaktyas' usually engage in circumambulation from very early morning and come back to the shrine at mid-night. The sportive villagers belonging to different castes, ranging from highest to the lowest, follow the Bhaktyas. The drummers belonging to the Dom community also follow the 'Bhaktyas'. This ceremony creates a maddening situation and helps to elevate the minds of the processionists and the Bhaktyas in such a state that they actually loose the sense of time as well as the sensation of thirst and hunger. In the months of May and June (Jaistha), the entire region of study becomes very hot and the scorching rays of the blazing sun puts the entire living world in an oppressing situation. But the 'Bhaktyas' and the associated persons, the
drummers, and the 'Deyashi' engage themselves in the circumambulation of holy places of different villages with irresistible will force. After the completion of the circumambulation in the various villages, the 'Mul Bhaktya', associated 'Bhaktyas', the 'Deyashi' and the drummers come back to the shrine of Candi at Dhibar para of Maliara. After that another ceremony begins. This ceremony is usually known as 'Kanta Khela', that is, playing with the thorny plants. The 'Mul Bhaktya' and the associated 'Bhaktyas' begin to dance at the courtyard of Candi temple in harmony with the rhythmic sounds of the drums and other musical instruments, bolding prickly shrubs in their hands. During the 'Kanta Khela' the 'Bhaktyas' begin to beat each other with the said prickly shrubs. In the last phase of the dancing ceremony the 'Bhaktyas' begin to wallowing on a bed made of the prickly shrubs. The 'Kanta Khela' is normally done at mid-night. But a large number of people belonging to different caste-groups assemble to witness the function. When the 'Kanta Khela' is over, red glow of the next early morning sun is seen on the eastern part of the horizon. This ceremony really creates a frantic situation in the village Maliara.

On the fifth day following the 'Dasahara', the 'Mul Bhaktya' and the other 'Bhaktyas' further go to take a holy bath in the Rani Sayar. Afterwards they wear new 'Dhuti' and assemble again in the courtyard of the shrine and they stand in a row before the tutelary deity Candi and at a regular interval begin to shout in
exultation uttering the name and fame of Candi. After doing this in
the shrine, all the 'Bhaktyas', the 'Deyashi', the Brahmin Pujari,
the drummers begin to circumambulate the different wards of the
village Maliara. Spontaneously, a large crowd forms a colourful
procession, and begin to follow the formers. The crowd forms the
procession consisting of men, women and children belonging to
various caste-groups. Practically, there is no bar of rank and status,
castes and classes amongst the processionists. The said procession
lastly goes to the Badabagan on the bank of Rani Sayar. There the
Brahmin-priest makes a vow in honour of both the deities, namely,
'Candi' and 'Haradeb Candi', who are believed to reside in their
abode on the eastern and western part of the Badabagan, respectively.
After the completion of these ritualistic ceremonies, all the persons
come back to the shrine of Candi at Dhibar para. The 'Deyashi' comes
back with some flowers offered to the said deities residing at the
abodes of Badabagan including two small-sized terracotta horses.
During the propitiation at Badabagan on the bank of Rani Sayar a
piece of red-coloured cloth, sun-dried rice (atap), banana, betel
leaves, betel nuts, sacred thread (Paita), water of sanctified river,
vermillion, small-sized terracotta horses, sweets, burning incense
sticks and lamps are offered to both the deities, arranging properly
in large-sized metal plates. After the worship at Badabagan, the
Bhaktyas, the Deyashi, the Brahmin-pujari, the drummers and the
processionists come to the shrine of 'Patal phore Siva'
(the Lord Siva dwelling in the infernal regions) at the Kanyakubjya para. Here also propitiation is done in full measure offering the items, namely, the sacred thread, sun-dried rice, banana, sweets, leaves of wood-apple tree (Bel), burning incense sticks and lamp.

After the completion of 'puja' of 'Patal Phore Siva', the Bhaktyas and the processionists go to shrine of 'Panchananda' situated at the heart of the village. Here worship is done with sun-dried rice, banana, betel leaves and betel nuts, vermillion, sweets, burning incense sticks and lamp. After that, the Bhaktyas and the attending persons belonging to various castes gradually go to the shrines of 'Kālī' and 'Budo Siva', and worship these two deities offering the same items stated elsewhere. It is mentionable that all the time, that is, during the pujas and circumambulation of the shrines of the deities stated above, the 'Pata' is being borne by the Bhaktyas and the worship is done in the presence of the said 'Pata'. After the completion of pujas at the Badabagan and at the different shrines of village-deities namely, Patal Phore Siva, Budo Siva, Kālī, Panchananda, - the 'Pata' is brought to the different dwelling houses of the villagers of Maliara. Circumambulation of 'Pata' at the dwelling houses is done on the ground that by this way the people would be able to adore the deity in their own houses and the goddess may confer boon on the devotees. Some persons at first, pray to the Goddess Candi there, to fulfil their heart's content during the annual propitiation, and usually they want the presence
of 'Pata' at their houses as a mark of fulfilment of heart's contentment with the grace of the Deity Candi. When the circumambulation of the 'Pata' is over, the Bhaktyas, the drummers, the processionists and the 'Pata' come back at 'Dhibar Para' with a colourful procession. During the circumambulation of the 'Pata' at the different dwelling houses of the villagers, the women folk belonging to various castes and communities, rank and status stand at their respective dwelling houses' entrance and blow conch shell, throw flowers over the 'Pata' to greet the Bhaktyas and the processionists and pay homage to the Deity Candi.

After coming back of the Bhaktyas along with the 'Pata' at the said shrine of the Goddess Candi again an worship is done by the Brahmin-priest following the Sanskritised-Brahminical procedure.

On the very day of Jaistha Purnima, the arrangement of propitiation in a conspicuous and colourful way is done. Innumerable devotees, men, women and children assemble at the courtyard of the Candi just to have a sight (Darshan) and also to pay homage to the Deity. The scene is worth-seeing. A colourful gathering is made on the said occasion. The small verandah of the shrine and the adjacent courtyard becomes full of the brim by the devotees coming from far and near. At the auspicious moment the worship starts in presence of the Bhaktyas, the devotees and the persons belonging to different castes and communities, rank and status, age and nature. The worship is done in a Sanskritised-Brahminical manner. Sanskritic Mantras,
as depicted in the sacred scriptures, are chanted. The minds of the Bhaktyas, the devotees and the visitors become tender with the transcendental feelings. The sacrificial fire is ignited.

On the day of annual adoration, the common villagers begin to come at the shrine of Caṇḍā with the materials of worship, namely, sun-dried rice, fruits, banana, flowers, bel-leaves and incense stick. Some people also bring alive animals to sacrifice at the auspicious moment.

On the very night of 'Purnima' (full-moon of Jaistha), the 'Yantra' (which is generally kept in a closed container) is brought out of the temple for the purpose of circumambulating the different wards of the village Maliara and to attend the various shrines at the said village. This is a splendid function. At first the Deity Caṇḍā (i.e. Yantra) is placed within a conical-shaped container, (commonly known as 'Toka') made of palm-leaves. Within the said 'Toka' two and quarter seers of atap rice (sun-dried rice) along with sacred thread, betal leaves, betel nuts, vermillion, camphor, molasses, chick-pea, honey, sandal-wood, sandal paste, fenugreek (methi), emblic myrobalam (amlaki) are kept properly and over these materials the 'Yantra' is placed with care. After that the said 'Toka' is placed on the back of a white-coloured clay-made horse. The clay-made horse is then kept on a hand-drawn cart or chariot. The 'Pata' is also placed on the back of the other clay-made horse and this is also kept on another hand-driven cart. After properly
placing these objects, the Deyashi makes an order to move. Innumerable persons assemble there to watch the ceremony. Spontaneously, a colourful procession is formed. The Bhaktyas begin to draw the carts slowly. The drummers begin to play on their musical instruments. Apart from the village-drummers engaged by the Deyashi, many devotees voluntarily summon the musical parties and the expenses incurred are paid by them. The village-paths get overcrowded by men, women and children of different ages. Though the moonlight creates an unworldly atmosphere high above the sky but the village-paths are illuminated with the artificial lights. The gayful procession moves slowly towards the 'Jamuna Bandh', which is a lake covering an area of nearly 100 bighas of land. Bathing and water libation of the Deity Candi at the full-moon night of Jaistha is done in this large-sized lake situated on the southern part of the village. The shrine of Candi at Bagdi Para is not far from Jamuna Bandh and the 'by-pass' of Durgapur-Purulia Road touches its northern part. A festive mood swells automatically the hearts of the people who participate as visitor, as devotee and as Bhaktya. This festival of bathing and water libation associated with the related functions are popularly known as 'Candi Gajan'. This ritualistic ceremony actually takes a long long time. In the evening of the 'Full-Moon night', the Deity Candi goes out for circumambulation in the village wards, bathing and water libation and She comes back on the next day morning roughly round about 8 A.M. after completing the holy bath in the 'Jamuna Bandh'.
After coming back at the shrine of Dhibar Para, the Brahmin-priest arranges for a special puja with the accompaniment of Homa - the ceremonial sacred fire. This time also the puja is done in the Sanskritized-Brahminical way. On completion of ritualistic ceremonies, a permission is given by the Brahmin-priest for sacrificing the animals. Innumerable goats and rams, which are duly offered to the Deity Cāndi, herebefore, by the devotees and the common folk irrespective of caste and creed, rank and status, begin to be sacrificed. There is also a procedure. At first, a pair of goats is sacrificed by the Deyashi himself. After that, the goats offered by the persons belonging to Brahmin by caste are sacrificed. Then the animals offered by other castes are sacrificed. Sacrificing of the goats and rams is usually done by the relatives of 'Deyashi' and is also done by the person belonging to 'Karmakara' by caste. During the annual propitiation the Brahmin-priest is being assisted by the women folk and Deyashi himself.

On completion of the annual propitiation and ignition of the ceremonial sacred fire including the sacrificing of goats and rams, the 'Annachhatra' festival starts. The common village fold, devotees and innumerable vow-takers offer rice, vegetables, spices, and other cooking materials for preparing food for all. The Mahaprasad is also prepared. A few thousand people belonging to different castes and communities, rank and status, accept the meal by sitting side by side without arising any question about the caste-alignment.
Practically, the caste-barrier vanishes at this festival specially when the persons belonging to higher caste accept the prasad at 'Annachhatra' sitting side by side with the people of 'jal-chal' and 'jal-achal', 'chut' and 'at-chut' communities. Like the distribution, preparation of food is also done by the different caste-groups ranging from highest to lower. All these ceremonies are done very peacefully.

During the annual festival and propitiation, various duties are performed by the people belonging to different caste-groups and some of these persons are doing the sacred job, generation after generation, mostly without, sometimes with some nominal honorarium (remuneration). The following Table gives the concrete idea on the service and remuneration pattern:

**TABLE NO.V:5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Pattern</th>
<th>Caste-Group</th>
<th>Nature of Remuneration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual Worship</td>
<td>Brahmin Priest</td>
<td>Prasad, rice 5 seers, vegetables, 1 piece of head of a sacrificed goat and pranami in cash.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrangement of</td>
<td>'Dhibar' Deyashi</td>
<td>Pranami in cash and various kinds of articles, like dhuti, sari and cash. Rice and vegetables.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Worship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Management</td>
<td>Relatives of 'Dhibar' Honorary</td>
<td>Deyashi and the persons belonging to different castes and communities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
TABLE NO.V:5 (CONTD.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service. Pattern</th>
<th>Caste-Group</th>
<th>Nature of Remuneration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sacrificing of animals</td>
<td>Dhibar and</td>
<td>Two heads of sacrificed animals - two pieces each.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karmakara</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution of Prasad of mixed</td>
<td>Napit</td>
<td>One plateful of Prasad and 'Mahaprasad' at 'Annachhatra'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fruits</td>
<td></td>
<td>plus five seers of rice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing on the drums</td>
<td>Dom</td>
<td>Five seers of rice, one piece dhuti, Prasad at 'Annachhatra'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and other musical instruments</td>
<td></td>
<td>plus Rs.40/- in cash.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decoration with pith and flowers</td>
<td>Malakar</td>
<td>Rs.25/- in cash plus Prasad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire-works on the night of 'Cangir Gajan'</td>
<td>Malakar</td>
<td>Cash donation plus Prasad.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is most interesting to note here that apart from the village drummers belonging to the Dom community, the devotees and the vow-takers also arrange for performing the musical soires at the procession held on the auspicious night of full-moon. The musicians of the musical parties usually play on the big drums, flutes, kettle drums, bag-pipes, 'dhamsa', etc. Many musicians of those musical parties are belong to the muslim community. The devotees vow-takers, organisers and the visitors admit the presence of the muslim community as the musical-party members. These people of musical parties stay at the courtyard of the shrine for a couple of days and normally take meals, prasad, etc. given by the organisers and the 'Deyashi'.

In the concluding session of the annual worship and festival the Bhaktyas go to the lake namely 'Jamuna Bandh' and take a holy
dip there. After doing this, the 'Mul Bhaktya' fills up an earthenware pitcher and bring it to the shrine of Candi at Dhibar-para in a reverse position (turning up side down), by placing the pitcher on his head. After reaching at the shrine, the pitcher is being handed over to the Brahmin priest through Deyashi. Molasses, slices of banana and five leaves of neem tree (margosa-Azadirachta Indica) are then placed in the water. The priest utters some Sanskritic mantras for sanctifying it. This water is regarded as sacred and it is popularly known as 'Niam jal'. All the Bhaktyas drink some quantity of Niam jal which ceremonially indicates the completion of the painstaking vow taken by the Deyashis. After the observance of this ceremony they are allowed to do all types of normal works. This ceremony is done on the day after the annual worship. A chadak festival is also held for a couple of days. Some ten thousand people attend a fair held on these occasions. When the Niam jal ceremony is over, the Deity Candi goes to the nearby temples of Siva at Nilkanthatala, where Siva, Durga, and Mahaprabhu reside. The Deity Candi comes back to Her own shrine within a couple of hours and the priest announces the festival to be over for the said year. The persons present at the shrine express the desire to come back and join the festival in the next year. Thus is the end of the festival of Candiir Gajan at the village Maliara.
(iii) DEITY : Makad Cand at village Makardaha (Dist. Howrah) -

The village Makardaha is one of the largest and most prosperous areas situated within the jurisdiction of Domjur P.S. (being J.L.No.34). The Howrah-Amta asphalt road passes through the heart of the village on which regular bus services ply from Howrah City. There are also some important roads which connect the adjacent mentionable sites, like Andul, Mahiari (Mouri) Santragachi and Begri.

Makardaha has been developed on the right bank of the derelict Saraswati channel, 16 Kms west-southwest of the district headquarter. It contains seven Primary Schools, two Higher Secondary Schools (one for the boys and the other for the girls), two rural Libraries (one of which is the noted Saraswat Library), a Tol, a Post Office and one Cinema Hall. Formerly, there were several Tols in the village teaching Vyakarana, Nyaya and Darshana.

In some of the old records, the name of the village is mentioned as 'Rameswarbati' probably from the name of the honourable inhabitant of the then village Rameswar Choudhury, Brahmin by caste. The name Rameswarbati becomes obsolete at present. Sometimes ago the village was known as Matipur (i.e. abode of mother) alias Mapurdaha, wherefrom the present name Makardaha might have been originated, keeping similarity with the name of the Deity. The village is mainly inhabited by the people belonging to the caste- groups, almost five in number, such as, Brahmin, Kayastha, Mahisya,
Karmakar and Kumbhakar.

Legend and the Antiquity:

There is a five legendary background which illustrates that Srimanta the merchant hero of Chandi Mangala Kavya (Bengali verses of 16th Century A.D.) used to sail boats with merchandise on the river Saraswati, the tributary of the Bhagirathi. In the past, the main course of Bhagirathi was not the only navigable route as at present. The vigorous course of water flowed through the Saraswati "from atleast the 12th Century A.D. to the 16th Century A.D." (Mukherjee : 1938 : 141). During the 16th Century A.D. the combined water of the Saraswati and the Damodar entered into the Ganges at Betadda (modern Betore), which was famous for the shrine of Betai Candi, mentioned in the Mangal Kavyas of mediaeval period. Before 1586 A.D., Betore was also well-known as an anchorage-ground for large sea-going vessels.

The Shrine:

The shrine of Mākaq Canṇī, after whom the village is named, was erected in 1801 A.D., by the blind zamindar Ramnarayan Kundu Choudhuri of Andul-Mahiari, being instructed by the Goddess in a dream. Accordingly the construction of the present brick-built shrine was done and reportedly recovered from his blindness. It is generally ascertained that there was a stone-built temple in the remote past, as because a few curved stone-pillars and fragments of
some other building materials are found and kept in the premises of the shrine. Probably owing to some natural calamities it was demolished and disappeared.

There is a date-plaque on the frontal porch of the present a-tchala style brick-built temple bearing the following inscriptions in Bengali:

"Sri Sri Candimatathakurani
Subha 31 Asada San 1228 Sal
1743 Sakabda Mahiari Nibasi
Sri Ramkanta Kundu Choudhury
Kartika Ei Mandir Sthapita Haila.

Mistri Sri Ramkanai Das"

It speaks that this temple of the Goddess Candi has been erected by Sri Ramkanta Kundu Choudhury of Mahiari on the auspicious day 31st Asada, 1228 B.S. corresponding to 1743 Saka. Architect and Builder was Ram Kanai Das.

The Icon:

The deity is represented by a rectangular piece of black basalt stone sticking out of a square depression in the centre of the sanctum. A close observance indicates that the said piece of black basalt is an architectural member possibly the corner portion
of a Sikhara Deul of modest height. The upper part of the stone besmeared with vermilion is regarded as the face of the deity and a pair of silver-made eyes are set up to give an impressive idea.

The name of the deity may possibly be originated from the Caṇḍī of Markandeya Purana through folk etymology, i.e. Markandeya Caṇḍī—Mākaḍ Caṇḍī.

Caste Group and Service Pattern:

Before the abolition of zamindary system in West Bengal, the arrangement of regular propitiation was done by the Kundu Choudhury family of Andul Mahiary and some landed property was also given by them, treated as Devottar Estate of Mākaḍ Caṇḍī. Apart from the income received out of Kundu Choudhury's Devottar Estate, donations in cash and kinds are given generously by the pilgrims, devotees and local people, irrespective of caste and creed, rank and status. Even the Muslim communities residing at the neighbouring areas usually donate articles as well as cash money on the special occasions and festivals, though normally they are not entitled to attend the pujas and enter into the premises of the shrine. When an epidemic breaks out within the village or in its adjacent areas, the Muslims are permitted to offer pujas, but they are not allowed to enter into the temple courtyard.

Regular propitiation is done by the descendants and family members of Rajendra Nath Chattopadhyaya (Brahmin by caste), who
came from Bally (in the Howrah District) at the request of Rameshwar Choudhury.

The principal festival of the deity, usually known as 'Pancham Dol', is held on the fifth day after the Dol Purnima in the month of Phalgoon (February-March). The said ceremony is attended by a large crowd (nearly thirty thousand) and a fair is held for a month. Display of fire-works at night on that auspicious occasion draws people from far and near.

On the fourth day after the Dol Purnima, a festival, commonly known as "Annachhatra" is held and it is attended by some ten thousand people irrespective of caste and creed, rank and status. All of them take cooked rice and vegetables as 'Prasadi Anna' by sitting side by side within the temple campus ignoring the 'chut' and 'at-chut' concept, prevalent in the caste dominated society. An invitation letter is also issued in the name of the deity Candi to all the devotees irrespective of rank and status, bearing the intimation to attend the festival of 'Annachhatra'.

Apart from the 'Pancham Dol' special pujas are offered on the following auspicious days, namely, Saradiya Durga Puja, Kali Puja in Kartick (September-October), Jagaddhatri Puja in Agrahayana (November-December), Raksha Kali Puja in Poush (December-January), Chaitra Sankranti the last day of Chaitra (March-April), and Nava-Barsha (first day of Baisakh, i.e. April-May). On these occasions people offer pujas irrespective of caste and creed.
Sacrificing of animals is done on the Śāradīyā Navami, Kālī Puja, Rakṣā Kālī Puja by the temple authority. The devotees may also offer animals like goat and sheep according to their will. No restriction is put forward in this regard.

As per traditional custom Sri Panchanan Karmakar of Begri village comes to sacrifice the animals before the deity. He receives the chopped off head of the animal or some cash as honorarium.

The prime festival (i.e., the Pancham Dol) is managed and run jointly by the temple authorities and the devotees by way of forming a Steering Committee for the purpose, namely Candi Savait Sangha (i.e., Association of the devotees of Candi). The last date of the month of Asada (July-August) is fixed to observe the Foundation Day of the Shrine.

Devotees offer the articles like sun-dried rice (Atap rice) various kinds of seasonal fruits, sweetmeats and 'Raskara' (made of coconuts blanded with sugar), Payesh (made of rice, milk and sugar), vermillion and green coconuts. Except these the priests also offer cooked food and rice, cooked meat of sacrificed animals (only on special occasions) and fish curry in a regular manner. In every evening milk, curdled milk and sweets made of coconuts are offered to the deity by the Brahmin priest.
Deity: Candi at Village Lauberia (Dist. Birbhum):

Candi of Lauberia village in the district of Birbhum is akin to the Goddess Candi at Metela belonging to the same district. Village Lauberia lies under the jurisdiction of Khairasole Police Station (being J.L.No.123). The nearest town is Dubrajpur. Here also the Deity Candi belongs to the Bauri community like Metela. She is the family deity of Rampada Bauri, the chief Deyashi at the present moment. There are two other goddesses, namely, Sitala and Manasa, in the shrine of Candi, and is regularly worshipped by the said Rampada Bauri. Though the deity belongs to the Bauri community, who are treated as the 'jal achal' and 'at-chut' in the hinduised society yet the deity Candi is being adored by all sections of people irrespective of caste and creed, rank and status including the Brahmins, living in a large number in the adjacent villages. Lauberia is inhabited by the caste groups like Brahmin, Kayastha, Sadgop, Moyra, Napit, Bagdi, Bauri, Dom and Muchi.

The mud-hut shrine of Candi is situated within the Bauripara which is connected by a village-path with the other portions of the village Lauberia. The surrounding area of the shrine is inhabited by the people of Bauri community. This deity, like Metela, is famous in vast area covering nearly five square miles.

Apart from the regular propitiation, annual festival draws innumerable devotees and worshippers from distant areas. The annual
During the annual festival of Caṇḍī at Lauberia, an interesting case of village-level participation can easily be marked. It is noticed that, almost all the people belonging to highest to lowest not only participate in the ceremonial functions, but also they intend to take active part in the general supervision and the related activities by formulating an overwhelming spirit. It is most interesting to note that even the Brahmin-priest also attends the annual propitiation and pay due homage. They bring various types of offerings, namely, rice and vegetables, sweets, new dhutis and saris. All these offerings are at first arranged in front of the deity, systematically and side by side. After that, at the auspicious moment, all these objects are dedicated. A large number of people belonging to Brahmin, Kayastha and such other enlightened and educated groups of people attend the ceremony by sitting side by side with the 'at-chut' and 'jal-achal' castes. The people belonging to latter group are very poor and they hold the lower most rung of the Hinduised society. Naturally they have no such scope to be enlightened or educated like the higher caste people. But it is most interesting that during the propitiation of Caṇḍī, caste and class barrier abolishes.

Though the 'Bauris' are treated as the 'jal-achal' caste to the high caste Hindus, yet the 'Deyashi' belonging to the same caste,
earns reputation and almost an honourable rank in the socio-religious affairs keeping the deity Candī in its forefront.

The above-mentioned dictum may easily be analysed from the following Table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Pattern</th>
<th>Caste participation</th>
<th>Honorarium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Propitiation of the Deity Candī</td>
<td>Bauri</td>
<td>Honorary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of the annual festival</td>
<td>Sādgop</td>
<td>Honorary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall management</td>
<td>Kayastha</td>
<td>Honorary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning of the Shrine and its adjacent areas</td>
<td>Bagdi</td>
<td>One seer of rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution of Prasad</td>
<td>Moyra</td>
<td>Honorary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plucking of flowers</td>
<td>Napit</td>
<td>One plateful of Prasad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection of rice and vegetables from the different dwelling houses of the locality</td>
<td>Bauri</td>
<td>One chopped head of the sacrificed animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimation of the date of annual festival and worship to the villagers</td>
<td>Dom</td>
<td>One seer of rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing on the drums (dhak) and on other musical instruments</td>
<td>Dom</td>
<td>Rupees ten in cash plus two seers of rice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(v) **Deity : Candi at village Khairadih (Dist: Birbhum)**

Mangal Candi of Khairadih village prepares a base for integration of caste, class and communities, not only in the village of 'Her' residence, but also in the surrounding villages. As a result of this kind of fusion, certain type of compactness automatically appears in the field of behavioural pattern of the villages, during the adoration of the deity. That is to say, the very pattern of propitiation of Mangal Candi is so arranged that it requires the participation of different caste-groups, and the people concerned also take it as a sacred duty to co-operate with each other without arising any question regarding the existing traditional barrier of the rank, caste, class and community.

Village Khairadih is situated at the northern side of Bakreswar under the Rajnagar Police Station in the district of Birbhum (being J.L.No.50). Khairadih is accessible by a morum road which is connected with Suri-Dubrajpur metalled road. The Suri-Dubrajpur Road lies in between the localities Bakreswar and Tantipara. This metalled road is connected with the district of Santal Parganas in the State of Bihar.

It is a medium-sized village with 13 caste-groups and a Muslim community. The following castes namely, Vaishnava, Tantubaya, Sutradhar, Bagdi, Dom, Goala, Sunri, Bauri, Moyra, Kamar, Kumor and Teli are seen to reside in this village.
Most of the inhabitants of this village in cultivation and allied job, except the Tanti (Tantubaya) community. The members of Tantubaya community possess handlooms and they are engaged in manufacturing the 'Tusser' clothes, - the most mentionable product of West Bengal. These goods are also exported to the other foreign countries and earn foreign currency. Hence, the product of tusser has been able to earn reputation.

The Muslim community lives in the southern part of the village and the morum road separates the Muslim ward from the Hindu ward.

The Mangal Cāṇḍī is enshrined in a mud-built temple. Within the boundary wall of the shrine there are - one nat-mandir in front of the mud-built temple, one Bhog-mandir, i.e. where the food for the deity is cooked, one resting place for the Sanyasis and one masonry well.

The Deity Mangal Cāṇḍī is the family deity of a Tantubaya family. The Deyashi of the deity Mangal Cāṇḍī also belongs to the same caste, i.e. Tantubaya. Apart from the shrine of Mangal Cāṇḍī, there is a seat of an indigenous village-goddess named 'Gaila Budi'. The seat of 'Gaila Budi' is situated within a mango grove. It is at the southern part of the village Khairadih. Besides these deities, the Muslim community has the shrines of Pir and Darga. The Hindu community adores Kāli.
The annual festival of goddess Mangal Candi is being held on the third Tuesday of the Bengali month of Chaitra (March-April). The 'Deyashi' belongs to 'Tantubaya' community, arranges for annual propitiation and ceremonial functions. Practically, the 'Deyashi' meets up all the expenses incurred against the annual festival and propitiation. A special fund for the purpose is maintained by the 'Deyashi' with the financial aid and active co-operation of the devotees.

At first, the Deyashi of Mangal Candi sends intimation about the annual festival and worship to the priest, Brahmin by caste, who resides at village Parasiya, next to the 'Napit' (barbar) at Tantipara village and then to the Deyashis of Goddess Manasa at Tantipara and Lakshminarayanpur villages clearly seven days ahead of the annual festival. Actually, the preparation for annual festival starts with the sending of 'invitations' to the concerned persons stated above.

First of all, the adjoining areas of the shrine are cleaned by some one Kalicharan Bagdi, whereas the shrine is cleaned and whitewashed by the family members of the 'Deyashi'. At the top of the Nat-mandir clay models are placed which exhibit the different scenes regarding preaching of religion by the prophets.

A member of the Napit community (i.e. village barbar) goes to Lakshminarayanpur village a few days before the annual adoration to bring the icon of Manasa at Khairadih village. The Napit carries
the deity by keeping on his head and one person belonging to 'Sutradhar' community holds the umbrella over Her head. The drummers belonging to the Dom and Muchi community beat the country-drums and play on the other musical instruments through the journey from Lakshminarayanpur to Khairadih. On the day before the Annual festival, the Manasa of Tantipara village is also brought by the Napit with holding the umbrella by the Sutradhar and beating of the drums by the Doms and the Muchis to the shrine of Mangal Candi, i.e. the deity Manasa of Tantipara village comes and joins with the deities kept at the shrine of Mangal Candi at Khairadihi in the aforesaid manner. During the journey to the shrine of Mangal Candi, the deity Manasa is placed beneath an old Pipal tree (Ficus religiosa) and is adored by the Brahmin-priest. A large crowd witness the ceremony of adoration. Afterwards She is carried to the shrine of Mangal Candi in the preceding way.

On the day of Annual Worship the Deyashi observes fasting throughout the day. The Brahmin-priest performs all the ceremonial functions relating to the propitiation of Mangal Candi. Before worship, the deity Mangal Candi goes out for circumambulation in the village Khairadih. The deity is kept on a wooden throne by the Brahmin-priest and during the circumambulation the throne is carried by the members of Deyashi's family. A person, belonging to Sutrañhar caste, holds umbrella on Her head. A large crowd consisting of men, women and children belonging to different castes follow the Deity engaged in circumambulation. The female members of the Deyashi's
family take the lead with a Purna-Ghat and some others make line by sprinkling water from the pot holding in her hand and the other female members blow conch-shell and make sound of 'Ulu'. The drummers belonging to the Dom and Muchi communities play on the drums and other musical instruments throughout the way. The procession lastly reaches beneath the prefixed and aforesaid Pipal tree (Ficus religiosa) which is situated at the southern portion of the village. Here a ceremonial function is held with the deity Mangal Caṇḍī, which is known as Gachbera or encircling the tree. The bearer of the Deity Mangal Caṇḍī stands by the side of the aforesaid sacred Pipal (Ficus religiosa) tree, and women folk, who are eight in number, belonging to the Deyashi's family, follow him. During the function of encircling the tree ('Gachbera'), one of the women folk holds the Purna-Ghat in her waist while the others hold a bamboo reel containing the thread. They gradually encircle the Pipal tree unreeling the thread from the bamboo spool and winding round the stem of the aforesaid Pipal tree. The entire ceremony is popularly known as Gach-Bera. All the persons present at the Gachbera ceremony, start going round the Pipal tree for seven times. The attending women-folk blow conch shells and some of them make the sound of ulu to celebrate the Gach bera ceremony. After completion of the Gach bera function, the women-folk of the Deyashi's family and the processionists move towards the shrine of Mangal Caṇḍī. In the meantime, that is, during the coming back to the shrine at Khairadih the processionists go to the than shrine of Gaila Budi for a short
while. After reaching the shrine the women-folk handed over the Deity Mangal Caṇḍī to the Deyashi. The Deyashi then places the deity at Her original seat.

After this function, the Bari (water) is ceremonially brought from the nearby sacred tank, situated at the eastern side of the village Khairadih. It is carried by the Brahmin-priest and a woman-member belonging to the Deyashi's family, carries the Purnaghat. She leads the Brahmin-priest carrying the Bari. A large procession is formed by the men, women and children of the village, the drummers beat the drums loudly throughout the way. When this procession with Bari and Purnaghat passes the village path the women folk of different houses and belonging to various castes stand at their doorsteps, each of them holding a Purnaghat, which they think proper to show respect to the deity Mangal Caṇḍī in an auspicious moment. After reaching at the shrine, the bari is kept just in front of the seat of the Deity Mangal Caṇḍī and the Purnaghat is kept at the right corner of the shrine. The Brahmin priest then takes his seat to worship the Deity Mangal Caṇḍī. It is noticeable that the Deyashi does not interfere into the actual worship but he observes and supervises all the aspects related with the ceremonial functions and usually takes his seat just at the temple door. The Brahmin Priest conducts the propitiatory function in a Sanskritized-Brahminical way. A 'Yanja' (fire oblation) ceremony is performed at the verandah of the temple. It is a worth-mentioning ceremonial performance. All the devotees and the participants observe this
ceremony of 'Fire Oblation' and hear the mantras in Sanskrit, uttered in a rhythmic tone by the Brahmin-Priest.

From the following Table No.V:7, it is found that different castes have different parts to play during the Annual worship and festival of Mangal Caṇḍī at the village Khairadih and its neighbouring areas. Actually, the 'Vratya' people propitiate the Deity Mangal Caṇḍī throughout the year and take active part in the Annual festival even in presence of the Brahmin-Priest.

**TABLE NO.V:7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service pattern</th>
<th>Caste-group of participant</th>
<th>Honorarium</th>
<th>Village affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Propitiation in a Brahminical way</td>
<td>Brahmin-Priest</td>
<td>A share of Pranami in cash and kinds</td>
<td>Parasiya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bringing of terracotta horses, being the representatives of Gaila Budi</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Honorary</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of annual festival</td>
<td>Tantubaya</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Khairadih</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrangement of propitiatory job</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>A share of Pranami</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrying and showing of Mangal Ghat</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Honorary</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing Arts, religious songs</td>
<td>Vaishnava</td>
<td>Prasad and cooked food</td>
<td>Khairadih and its adjoining villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encircling the sacred Pinal tree: Gachbera with Purnaghat and thread</td>
<td>Tantubaya</td>
<td>Honorary</td>
<td>Khairadih</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Pattern</th>
<th>Caste-group of participant</th>
<th>Honorarium</th>
<th>Village affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bringing of Manasa of village Lakshminarayanpur</td>
<td>Napit</td>
<td>Prasad and cooked food</td>
<td>Tantipara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting of flowers</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply of earthenware vessels, etc.</td>
<td>Kumbhakar</td>
<td>Price paid in cash</td>
<td>Khairadih</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slaying of animals</td>
<td>Karmakara</td>
<td>Two chopped off heads of victimised animals</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holding of umbrella over the head of Deity during Her circumambulation</td>
<td>Sutradhar</td>
<td>Honorary</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning of the Temple area on the eve of annual festival</td>
<td>Bagdi</td>
<td>Two seers of rice and Prasad plus one piece of dhutti</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing on the drums and other musical instruments</td>
<td>Dom and Muchi</td>
<td>Rs. 40/- in cash, Prasad and one piece of dhutti</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering of puja materials, e.g., dhuti, sari, sweets, atap rice, vermillion, etc.</td>
<td>All castes</td>
<td>Honorary</td>
<td>Khairadih and its neighbouring areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply of rice and vegetables, etc.</td>
<td>All castes</td>
<td>Honorary</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial help in liquid cash</td>
<td>All castes</td>
<td>Honorary</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(vi) **Deity : Beti Candi at village Betarui (Dist: Midnapore)**:

The village Betarui is situated in almost the remotest part of Midnapore district under the jurisdiction of Belda Police Station, being J.L.No.249. The said village is connected by an unmetalled road with its nearest market-area and bus-stoppage, namely, Khakurdah, on the Kanthi-Kharagpur (via Egra-Belda) route. The village Betarui is practically unaccessible during the rainy season. The distance from Khakurdah to Betarui is about five kilometers.

There lies a vast paddy field on the northern, southern and western sides of the village and on the eastern side of the village there lies the unmetalled road and a village namely, Kedar. Siva Temple of the village Kedar is very famous within the Police Station Belda. Khakurdah is situated on the extreme north of the village Betarui.

The village Betarui is divided into some wards, known as paras which are as follows : (a) Bamunpara, (b) Kumorpara, (c) Bagdipara, (d) Hadipara, (e) Muslamanpara, and (f) Santalpara. Muslamanpara is constituted by the Muslim families and the Santalpara is inhabited by the Santal population.

There is a Primary School, namely, Betarui Prathamick Vidyalaya, which is situated near the shrine of the Deity Beti Candi. For hither education in school level the students have to go to
Khakurdah and for college-level studies they have to go either to Belda or Kanthi.

The Deity Beti Candi:

The shrine of the deity Beti Candi is situated on the western part of the village Betarui. The name of the village indicates the existence of the deity from long time past.

The icon of the deity Beti Candi is nothing but a fragment of iguana-shaped laterite stone. The laterite stone is most commonly found in this part of the district Midnapore. There is no temple over the shrine. The deity is installed beneath a group of trees, such as, Asvathwa (Ficus religiosa), Vata (Banyan - Ficus Bengalensis), Tamarind (Tamarindus Indica) and some other sacred trees. Very near to the shrine of Beti Candi, there is a medium-sized tank commonly known as 'Beti Candi Pukur', which is treated as a sacred tank and the water of the said tank is used in the worship or such other functions.

The annual worship is done according to the calendar of Śrādiyā Durgā Puja; hence special puja-offerings are made by the villagers on the auspicious days of Mahā Saptami, Mahā Ashtami and Mahā Navami.

Apart from the annual propitiation held in the month of September-October (i.e., Aswin in Bengali calendar), special arrange-
-ment of offering 'Kshir Bhog' function is held generally in the month of July-August (i.e., Ashara). Offering of 'Kshir Bhog' is usually done either on Tuesday or on Saturday.

Daily worship is also done by the Brahmin-Priest.

Caste Alignment and Service Pattern:

The castes and communities of the village are Brahmin, Mahishya, Teli, Tantubaya, Karmakar, Kumbhakar, Bagdi, Hadi and Vaishnava. Besides these, there are two other communities like the Muslim and the Santals, the members of which do not take part in the worship of the deity.

The propitiatory functions of the deity Beti Candi are done regularly by the Brahmin priests, whose surname is 'Chakravorty' alias, 'Pitari'. At present Sri Baneswar Chakravorty, son of late Haraprasad Pitari is engaged in doing the functions of propitiation. Late Umaprasad Pitari, grandfather of Baneswar was appointed to perform the priestly functions by the then zemindar Digambar Das Adhikary and Jagannath Rana. Though the zemindary system has long been abolished, but the priestly functions of the Beti Candi is now-a-days also done by the same family. The Hinduised people take active part in the festivals of Beti Candi, in a regular manner.

Though the piece of land where the shrine of the deity Beti Candi installed is now owned by the descendants of some Esmail
Mullick belonging to Muslim community, yet they do not take any part in the festival. Tribal group also do not take any part in the propitiation. They take vow and on fulfilment of the vow they usually offer Sindur (vermilion), Atap rice (Sun-dried rice), Banana, Green coconuts, seasonal fruits and ghee, etc. to the deity. Sacrificing of animals is not unknown at all but this system is on the verge of abolition.

During the annual adoration, the Brahmin priest takes the leading part. He formally announces the auspicious day of annual function in a meeting of the villagers. The said meeting is usually attended by all caste-groups. The priest allots some duties like the collection of sun-dried rice and various kinds of vegetables amongst the different caste-groups and also appeals to all the villagers for financial help. Generally a small committee is constituted for the purpose of raising the fund for worship. The persons who have some kind of influence over the villagers accept gladly the duties assigned to them. The Committee consisting of persons belonging to different caste-groups, helps the priest to perform pripitiatory functions held on the auspicious days of Maha Saptami, Maha Ashtami and Maha Navami. Flowers which are locally available are supplied by all the caste-groups during the said three auspicious days. Special offerings for vow are also made by various caste-groups.

It is found that a brotherly feeling prevails amongst the villagers irrespective of caste-groups, rank and status, just to
perform the annual worship properly. 'Prasad' is also distributed amongst all the sections of the villagers. And in this way a uniform bondage of brotherly behaviour usually helps to overcome the odds of life of the villagers of Betarui.
(vii)  Deity :  Candi at village Asda (Dist: Midnapore) :

Asda village is situated in the interior part of the Police Station Narayangarh (at present Belda), being J.L.No.704. The nearest bus-stoppage and market place is Khakurdaha, which is about seven kilometers away from the village Asda. An unmetalled village-road connects with Khakurdaha and this road becomes inaccessible during the rainy period.

The village Asda is surrounded by a vast paddy field and the Belda-Kanthi Road on its North, a creek namely 'Bagui Khal' on its South, the villages Amdiha and Purusottampur on the East and the other villages Amda and Karanji on its Western side.

The village mentioned is divided into some wards (i.e. paras), namely, Purbapara (i.e. eastern ward), Paschimpara (western ward) and Madhyapara (the Central ward). Hence it appears that the village is almost rectangular-shaped and situated in east-west direction.

The village is inhabited by different caste-groups like Kayastha, Mahishya, Solanki, Raju (Chamar), Hadi, Dhopa and Tanti with a small community of tribal folk like Santal. It is noticeable that there is no such people who are belong to Brahmin by caste.

People belonging to Muslim community are not found within the village-boundary of Asda.
The Deity Candi of Asda:

The shrine of the Deity Candi is situated under a few trees, namely, Kaetbel and Kali.

A headless icon of 'Nrisimha', the fourth incarnation (avatar form) of Lord Visnu, along with some fragments of laterite stone are placed beneath the said trees. The icon of Candi is made of black Basalt stone.

The annual propitiation is held on the auspicious day of Mahā Ashtamī in Aswin (September-October).

Apart from the annual worship, a special puja offering is done usually on an auspicious day in the month of Ashara (July-August) which is locally known as 'Jatal'.

Daily worship is also done.

Caste Alignment and Pattern of Service:

It is noticeable that there is no settlement of Brahmin community in Asda village. The priestly class of people live in the adjacent village, namely, Amdiha (alias Amuria).

The villagers of Amdiha and Asda worship and jointly take part in the annual function and also in 'Jatal'. There lives various hinduised caste-groups, namely, Brahmin, Kayastha, Tantubaya, Mahishya, Vaishnava and Dhopa in the village Amdiha which is adjacent to Asda.
The 'Batabyal' family of Amdih village (being J.L.No.280) performs the priestly functions of the deity Candi of Asda village.

In the propitiatory functions of the deity Candi of Asda village, people belonging to various castes and communities take active part. They, according to their financial status, generously donate and send offerings as a part of the vow to the deity Candi. Seasonal fruits, green coconuts, sun-dried rice, sindur, milk, sweetmeats, vegetables, etc. are usually offered to the deity. In 'Jatal' performance 'Kshir-Bhog' is an essential item which is offered by the villagers to the deity.

Subscriptions are collected from the villagers of Asda and Amdih to perform the 'puja' festivals in 'Jatal' and 'Maha Astami' by a Board of Management constituted for the said purpose. The members of 'Hadi' and 'Chamar' communities of the villages, namely, Betarui, Asda and Sandariachak are invited to perform the musical soirees with the help of drums, flutes and ringing bells, etc. and in turn honorarium is given in kinds and cash. All sections of Hinduised communities take part in the adoration and by this way they show a uniform and brotherly behaviour to each other. The villagers of the two villages, viz., Asda and Amdih become united centering the propitiation of Candi.
Deity : Lalat-Candi of village Lalat (Dist : Midnapore) :

Lalat village is characterized by the existence of a tutelary deity Lalatcandi. It falls within the boundary of the Police Station Dantan, being J.L.No.278.

Lalat village is situated on the Kharagpur-Kanthi Road (via Belda-Egra) and there is a bus-stoppage in the said village. A tablet about the shrine of the deity Lalatcandi is placed on the said bus-stoppage, so that, the passer-by and the bus-passengers may be aware of the presence of the deity Lalatcandi. The name of the village 'Lalat' is closely connected with its folk deity 'Lalatcandi' and it indicates 'Her' intimate connection with the village. The tablet about 'Her' presence on the road-side has been made conspicuous and which is also associated with a collection box expressing an appear to the people to contribute their mite for the worship of the deity.

The village Lalat is surrounded by the villages, viz., Chandpur, Bhadua, Amdi and Pahadichak on the East; Sauri and Khakurdaha on the West; Pradima, Agarba and Ekaruki on the North; Kashmali, Purulda and Jahallada on the South.

The Deity Lalatcandi :

The shrine of the deity Lalatcandi is situated on the road-side of the old track of Belda-Kanthi route. The shrine of the
deity appears to be a flat-roof temple like building and it also appears that it is not much old.

About one hundred years ago, some Ramprasad Pradhan of Kotbar (being J.L.No.647 - adjacent to Lalat) collected a piece of laterite stone from the bank of the river Subarnarekha just to use it as a measuring weight in his business-centre. After a few days Ramprasad got a divine instruction through dream that he should not use the piece of laterite stone as a measuring-weight, as it was the Candi Herself. So, Ramprasad should arrange for Her worship in a regular manner by appointing a Brahmin-priest. Subsequently Ramprasad did so and denoted some land to the pujari as a mark of revelation.

At present some Rajani Chakraborty, belonging to Brahmin community, is engaged as pujari and he manages everything related with the priestly functions, collection of contributions as well as the distribution of prasad and bhog. Apart from the daily worship, special propitiation and offerings are made on every Tuesday and Saturday. Special offerings are also made on the auspicious days of Dol Purnima (Full-moon day of Phalgoon, i.e., February-March) and 'Akshyay Tritia' in the month of Baisakh (April-May). Annual propitiation is done on the auspicious day of 'Mahā Astamī' and a large number of people attend the function. On 'Mahā Astamī' day, gourd and sugarcane are slayed in lieu of goat or other animals.
The icon looks like a head of a cow made of laterite stone. At present, a few circular and oblong pieces of silver plates are attached on the said stone-slab, as such these indicate the eyes, nose and mouth (on the whole, the face) of the icon. Vermillion with oil and ghee is pasted on the entire slab.

The deity was originally placed under a 'Bel' (Belva - Aegle marmelos) tree by Ramprasad Pradhan, but She is now housed in a flat-roofed building surrounded by a group of trees.

The castes and communities of the village Lalat are Brahmin, Mahishya, Dhopa, Kodma and Vaishnava and Santals.

On the auspicious days of 'Mahā Astami', 'Dol Purnima', Akshyay Tritia, including every Tuesday and Saturday, innumerable devotees come from the adjacent villages for the purpose of worshipp­ing the deity Lalatcandl. The pujari accepts the offerings, such as green coconuts, vermilion, sun-dried rice, bananas, sweets from the devotee-people irrespective of caste and creed. The pujari and his family members manage everything like the collection of cash, distribution of prasad amongst the devotees, etc. in a soothing manner.

The worship of the deity is attended by everybody irrespec­tive of caste and creed, of the nearby villages and sometimes they come even from the remotest village-area of Midnapore district.
Apart from the auspicious days, special offerings are also made on the occasion of marriage ceremony of the villagers and they believe that the blessings of Lalatcanḍī is an essential feature of wedding ceremony, laying foundation of a residential house, opening of a business or a shop, and even plantation of rice-seedlings during rainy season.
The village Bhetia (P.S.Kharagpur, J.L.No.166) is twelve miles away from the Kharagpur town and stands by the side of a asphalt road running from Kharagpur to Kesiari. The nearest bus-stoppage is at Demouli (being J.L.No.163), nearly three miles away from the village Bhetia. The said village is approachable by the bus services regularly on the Kesiari-Jhargram (via Hatigerya, P.S.Keshiari - J.L. No.44) and Digha-Jhargram (via Kesiari-Hatigeriya-Shyamalpur) route.

Bhetia is surrounded by large-sized paddy fields and sal (Shorea Robusta) forest and seems practically isolated.

The said village has at least nine wards (Paras) which are as follows : (a) Kamarpara (Blacksmith ward), (b) Bhuinyapara (Chutar i.e. Carpenter ward), (c) Sadgoppara (Agriculturists), (d) Solankipara (Traders' ward), (e) Manjhipara (Fishermen ward), (f) Daluipara (Bagdi - Scheduled caste), (g) Beharapara (Hadi - Scheduled caste), (h) Uttarpasa (Northern ward), (i) Adibasipara (Ward for Santals) Bhumij and Kora - the tribal group of people. There is no such people who belong to Muslim community, and the majority group of people belonging to the Solanki or Sukli, a trading caste, who have not been turned into the agriculturiests. Next comes the Fishermen group (Manjhi families) who have more than fifty families.
The Shrine of Bheticandī:

The temple of Bheticandī at Bhetia is of brick-built, 'sikhara-deul' style without 'rathapaga' having an 'āt-chālā' (i.e. mandapa - assembly hall). The temple is eastern-facing and the base of the temple is made of locally available laterite stone, which is nearly 6'x6' ft. square. This is the chief temple of Balarampur Pargana which has an approximate area of 214 square miles.

There is a date-plaque in Bengali attached on the eastern side of the temple, which is as follows:

"Sri Sri Bhetia Canḍī Mata
Mandir Prathisthata
Sri Bejoy Krishna Pal
San 1329 Sal"

--- that is, the present temple of the Bheticaṇḍī was founded and erected by Bejoy Krishna Pal in the year 1329 B.S., 1922-'23 -- according to English Calendar year. Originally, there was a thatched shrine which stood here formerly. There is a tank nearby, namely 'Sat Ranir Ghat' which has the meaning 'the bathing tank of seven queens'.

Within the temple, there is a mud and brick-built rectangular sized platform, on which the deity is placed. The icon of the deity is a circular-shaped stone of 8" inches diameter. To its right-side,
there is a small terracotta image of an elephant commonly known as 'Malabhanja' which is treated as the second representation of the deity Bheticandi. Both the objects are painted with deep-coloured red-ochre. On the left side of the circular-shaped stone there is a small but broken piece of stone image of a female deity, namely, 'Bhairavi' having two swords in her hands.

The height of the icon of the said 'Bhairavi' is about 15" inches and is painted with oil and red-ochre.

The 'āt-chālā' and the sikhara temple of Bheticandi is encircled with a boundary wall made of laterite stones and mortar. The temple and its surroundings are well-maintained.

Caste Alignment and Service Pattern:

The Manjhi and Bag families, belonging to fishermen caste form one of the major part of the inhabitants of Bhetia. The priest of the deity Bheticandi is a fisherman by caste and it is said that this has been so from the very beginning of the propitiation. But it is simultaneously interesting to note that the present priest generally identify him as a member of the 'Kshatriya' community and he wears the sacred thread (i.e. Paita) like the Bramhins. At present Sri Dulal Chandra Bag, the grandson of Late Basanta Bag acts as priest of the deity Bheticandi. He usually follows the priestly methods as his father Late Methor Chandra Bag and his grand-father Late Basanta Bag had done. He performs the daily worship in morning
after taking a bath in the nearby tank, viz., 'Sat Ranir Ghat', and wears a fresh cloth. He brings a pot of water, some flowers along with small quantity of sun-dried rice and coarse sugar (gur) with him. The floor of the temple is at first cleaned and washed by him. He then sits on a small-sized mat facing towards northern side. The platform where the images of the deities are kept, remains to his left. No specific incantations are uttered by him as is required for worshipping any deity of Vedic-Brahminical pantheon.

The auspicious days are Tuesday and Wednesday in every week. On these days devotees come from different village-areas, some of which lie far from the temple of Bheticandi.

There lives various hinduised caste-group people, namely, Sadgop, Solanki, Karmakar, Sutradhar, Hadi, Bagdi, Dhibar (Manjhi) including some other tribal folk-groups, such as, Santal, Bhumij and Kora in the village Bhetia.

The worshippers usually come from the following castes and communities, from far and nearby villages, like Kayastha, Karan, Mahishya, Sadgop, Solanki, Tanti, Teli, Kamar, Napit, Vaishnava, Bagdi, Dhopa, Chhutar, Bagal, Hadi, Dom and Muchi.

The people belonging to Marwari communities come of from Kharagpur and its adjacent areas, come here to adore the deity Bheticandi. Practically there is no bar about the Hinduised caste
and communities. Irrespective of caste and creed, rank and status Hinduised people can offer their pujas. The pilgrims, on the other hand, have no objection about the priest of the Goddess Bheticaṇḍī. They accept 'prasad' and water from the hands of the priest, who practically belongs to lower rung of the Hinduised caste.

Altogether five types of puja-offerings are made to the Deity, namely,

(i) Naivedya, which consists of fruits, coarse sugar (gur), small quantity of germinating pulse in lieu of bananas and sweets.

(ii) Aminyabhog, which consists of uncooked sun-dried rice of about half kilogram or more and various kinds of raw and fresh vegetables.

(iii) Kshirbhog, which is a preparation of sun-dried rice with gur (coarse sugar), milk and spices. The cooking is to be done by the priest himself, in a new earthen pot. This kind of offering is usually made by vow-takers as special item.

(iv) Mohanbhog, is also prepared by the priest himself and the sun-dried rice is replaced by semolina. Ghee (refined butter-oil) is used in the preparation.

(v) Bali or animal sacrifice was frequently done by the devotees and vow-takers. But an influential zemindar of Balrampur,
named Nirmal Chandra Adhikari stopped this system about a few decades ago, as he was a member of Vaishnava community. Yet, the system of animal sacrifice was not fully abolished or eradicated by the said zamindar. On the auspicious day of 'Makar Sankranti' (i.e. the last day of the month of Poush /December-January) at least one goat is sacrificed for the welfare of the villagers of Bhetia. But the sacrificing of goat is done on the bank of a nearby tank, viz., 'Tal Pukur' where there is a 'than' (sacred place) of Goddess Kali under a particular Sheora (Murraya exotica) tree. The Goddess Kali receives the victimised animal on behalf of Bheticandi. The priest himself decapitates the animal and he receives the head of the goat as a mark of his honorarium. A person belonging to fisherman caste holds the hind legs of the goat and receives one of the hind legs. If a sacrifice is performed by a person who resides in another village, then the priest receives Rs.1.25 in cash apart from the head of the victimised animal.

Votive images of elephants and horses, made of burnt-clay are frequently offered to the Deity. These are painted with vermillon paste and then laid aside in a place. Sometimes, devotees offer 'Chakshuchitra', - a kind of circular-shaped, thin silver medals to the Deity as a mark of the fulfilment of vow. Offerings of 'Chakshuchitra' is limited.
Usual offerings and pujas are made for the following purposes, such as, (a) Curing from illness, (b) General well-being of the family members, (c) Praying prosperity in trade and commerce, (d) Securing employment, (e) Winning in law-suits, (f) Birth of male child, (g) Success in political election, (h) Keeping peace and prosperity in household, and (i) Praying safety during the collection of firewood in jungles, and even for (j) Curing of cattle diseases, that is, the people depends on the supernatural power of the deity in every respect and they think that 'She' will help them to cross the ocean of crisis in this earthly world.
The Deity Jaicandi of Patharkati, under the Sankrail Police Station (being J.L.No.134-801), is renowned and she spreads her influence over an wide area starting from Kharagpur to Jhargram. The village Patharkati is popularly known as Pitalkanthi in the locality. Patharkanti is well connected with all season asphalt roads running from Jhargram to Kesiari via Kultikari and Hatigeriya. This road is about three miles away and lies to the western side of the said village. Further, Railway Station at Sardiha (P.S.Gopiballavpur - being J.L.No.166-318) is situated about twelve miles away from the village on the southern direction.

The village is divided into some wards (i.e., paras), which are as follows: (a) Talaipara, (b) Sardarpara, (c) Kachapara, (d) Dompara, (e) Uttarpara (Northern ward), (f) Madhyapara (Central ward), and (g) Dakshin para (Southern ward).

The village Patharkanti was originally covered with thick jungles in which the Lodha communities had their small settlements. Formerly, the jungle lay within the zamindary of the Satpati Brahmins of Banpatna-Khelar Pargana under the Narayangarh Police Station. In the year 1820 A.D., the Satpati Brahmins donated about fifty acres of land to some Tukumani Lodha, who is believed to be first priest of the deity Jaicandi.
In 1866 A.D., the zemindary was passed by the lineages of Praharaj and Sarangi families from the hands of Satpati as the latter had no male issue; so the property went to the daughter's line. The then members of Praharaj and Sarangi families appointed a Hindu-Brahmin of Utkal (Crissa) origin, though a protest was raised by the Lodha community. Lastly, a compromise was made in a way that both the Lodhas and the Utkaliya Brahmins will perform the priestly functions without discrimination. This system was mentionably followed during the Sāradiyā Durgā Puja held in the month of Aswin (September-October), when the receipts in cash and kinds were equally shared by the said two parties. After the abolition of zemindary system in the post-independence period, the Brahmin priest had to face many a trouble and opposition from the Lodha community and ultimately the Brahmins had to leave the priestly functions and the right of his share permanently. At present it is seen that the Lodha priest generally appoints a Brahmin priest temporarily during the Sāradiyā Durgā Puja against some remuneration.

The Legend:

The Goddess Jaicandī, for the first time, appeared before Nandaram Mahato of Mayurbhanj origin, when Nandaram entered the jungle in search of his lost buffalo and fell asleep under a Sal (Shorea robusta) tree. Nandaram dreamt that the Goddess Jaicandī appeared before him in the form of a middle-aged woman and ordered him to
settle down in that particular area after erecting a temple in 'Her' honour. Nandaram then awoke and returned home. Afterwards he, with his fellow men, settled down in that area and erected a temple in honour of the Goddess Jaicanḍī. The Mahatos or the Kurmi Kshatriyas are the oldest inhabitants of that area, who originally came from Mayurbhanj of Orissa. Actually, the Lodhas and Mahatos were the first group of devotees who arranged for the propitiation of the deity Jaicanḍī.

There is also another legend prevalent in the locality specially amongst the Lodha community.

Once upon a time there was a king named Ram Lodha in the locality of Patharkanti. He was known to all and loved by all. One day while he was engaged in hunting some animals as a part of his livelihood, he entered into the nearby sanctuary and found out the icon of the Goddess Jaicanḍī under a tree. Ram Lodha and his fellow men then cleared up the adjacent area where the icon of Jaicanḍī was found out and began to propitiate Her regularly being cherished with the hope of obtaining animals in large quantities during their hunting time. As such many inhabitants of the nearby localities began to come to the deity as a part of their daily routine. During the zamindary period, the devotees usually come from the nearby villages which are thirty-six in number, and all belonging to the Banpatna-Khelar Pargana and propitiate the Deity.
The Icon and Shrine of Jaicandī:

The icon of the deity Jaicandī is made of black basalt stone and it appears to me as a broken portion of a door jamb on which the images of Durga seated on an elephant, Ganesh and Lakshmi are inscribed in bas-relief technique. On this broken Durgā-image the Lodha priest has set silver eyes, a nose and a mouth and lastly doubled with vermilion and covered it with a red-coloured sari. On the right side of this image, there is an architectural member made of black basalt stone, bearing the resemblance of the shape of 'Pancha Ratha Paga' which is 2'-0'' ft. in length, 5'' (five) inches in height and the maximum width is 1'-0'' ft. There is also another icon which has been described as 'Bhairava' of the Goddess Jaicandī which is originally an image of Lord Vishnu, having lotus and club (mace) in his upper and lower left hands.

The shrine of the Goddess Jaicandī is a rectangular-shaped laterite stone and brick-built structure having a small verandah in front of it. The roof of the temple is flat. Two stakes (i.e., harikathas) are fixed in front of the temple, one is meant for the large-sized animals like buffalo and the other for the goats. There are some stone blocks having earthenware pots on its top are used to keep the blood of the victimised animals. The entire compound of the temple is covered with a few trees like Asvattha (Ficus Religiosa), Kuchla (Strychnos nux vomica) and Neem (Melia azadirecinta) and at the base of these trees are placed innumerable terracotta horses and elephants already offered to the goddess.
Within the temple, apart from the goddess Jaicandi and Her Bhairava, there are also some images of the deities like Krishna and Jagannatha. Two large-sized terracotta elephants are placed by the two sides of the deities.

Caste Alignment and Service Pattern:

The village Patharkanti is inhabited both by the communities of caste-Hindus like Brahmin, Teli, Napit, Vaishnava, Dhopa, Hadi, Dom, Shahis, Mal and Muchi including some tribal-groups, namely, Lodha, Mahato, Sabara, Mahali and Kora.

Both the caste-Hindus and the tribal communities, sometimes even the people belonging to the Muslim communities come here to propitiate the Goddess Jaicandi. The Muslims are not permitted to enter into the temple premises but they can send their offerings through their Hinduised friends. People belonging to the following Caste-Hindu communities take part in the propitiation of the Goddess Jaicandi, namely, Brahmin, Kayastha, Karan, Mahishya, Sadgop, Vaishnava, Teli, Kamar, Napit, Tanti, Gop, Chhutar, Namasudra, Dhopa, Sahis, Dhibar, Kaora, Dulia, Hadi, Muchi and Dom.

Aboriginal tribal group of communities are as follows who worship the Goddess Jaicandi:

Mahato (Kurmi Kshatriya), Majhi, Lodha, Sabara, Bhumij, Santal, Kora and Mahali.
The priestly functions are performed by the non-Brahmin priests who are practically belong to the Lodha community. The Lodhas are claimed to be the members of the original group of priests who arranged first to propitiate regularly the Goddess Jaicandi; hence they have special claims, powers and privileges over the others. At present two priests, namely, Suren and Bankim belonging to Lodha community are engaged in the duties of propitiation and they claim that the Jaicandi is their family deity. They usually wear 'Paita' (sacred thread) like the Hindu-Brahmin priests. Suren and Bankim are the sons of Late Hatiram Lodha, who perform the priestly functions jointly with the Utkaliya Hindu-Brahmin priest named Mohini Mohan Pahari, belonging to the Bharadwaja gotra. Ancestors of Mohini Mohan Pahari were brought to this side in 1866 A.D. by the then zamindars. Pahari, the Brahmin priest, was entitled to collect the fifty percent share of offerings made by the devotees, from Hatiram Lodha, the tribal priest. It is seen that the Lodha priest takes his seat nearer to the Goddess Jaicandi, but the Brahmin priest places himself at a safe distance from the Lodha priest and even sometimes he is to take seat at a lower level than the Lodha priest. It indicates the former's superior position and power to perform the propitiatory functions. At present, Pahari families are out of picture as they are treated as antagonistic by the Lodhas; hence they are impeded by the latter group of people.
Before worship, the Lodha priest takes a bath and wears a washed cloth and engage himself in cleaning the temple premises and the deities. He then fetches water, flowers, sindur, puja-offerings including 'kosa-kusi', clarified butter to lit a lamp and a copy of 'Purohit Darpan' that is, a Directory which contains the Hinduised methods of priestine functions. But at the time of worship, the Lodha priest follows his own methods and usually does not utter any kind of Sanskritic mantras. He just takes his seat in front of the goddess and begins to contemplate, offers flowers time to time to the Goddess during his meditation. Objects like sun-dried rice, bananas, vermillion, clarified butter, green coconut, sweets, etc. are offered to the deity.

Two Hindu Brahmin priests, Sri Gopikanta Acharya of Hatigeriya, and Sri Paresh Acharya of Patashpur are called on to perform the propitiatory functions during the auspicious days beginning from Mahā Saptamī and ending on Vijayā Dasamī following the Brahminical-Sanskritic methods. Acharya Brahmins are engaged purely on temporary basis against some honorarium in cash and kinds.

Sacrificing of animals like buffalo, goat and birds like cock, pigeon, duck, etc. are much prevalent amongst the devotees of Jaicanḍī. Sometimes, the animals or the birds are offered to the deity but they are taken away by the Lodha priest in alive condition.

Tuesdays and Saturdays are the most auspicious days for puja-offerings, sacrificing animals and birds. Except these two days
in a week, there are also some auspicious days when offering of animals and birds are treated as a part of the 'puja' and as a mark of great honour. These days are Ambubachi, Mahā Navamī, Vijāyā Dasami and Chaitra Sankranti. Innumerable animals are victimised on Mahā Navamī and Vijāyā Dasami.

Lodhas generally take active part in sacrificing the animals but the people belonging to other castes may also do so. Though there is no hard and fast rule in the job of sacrificing the animals but usually Haripada Paramanik, belonging to Lodha community acts as a slayer. Haripada and his assistant are paid for that particular job. The normal fees paid for slaying the animals are as follows: (a) Priest - Re.1.00; (b) Slayer - Re.0.50 ; (c) Asstt.Slayer - Re.0.25 and (d) Drummer - Re.0.15. These rates may vary from time to time according to the good wishes of the devotees. Further, the prevalent custom is that the heads of the victimised animals are offered to the Goddess Jaicandī and afterwards they are taken away by the Lodha priest. Sometimes there are many sacrifices in a day, then these are shared by him freely with his neighbouring people and even the Lodha priest also sells them. A portion of the hind legs is also given away to the slayer, slayer's assistant and the drummer.

Puja offerings are made either as a routine work or on the fulfilment of a vow. Devotees propitiate the Goddess Jaicandī and take vow for the following purposes - (a) for prosperity in home and service, (b) for a son, (c) recovery from serious illness, (d) for
victory in law suit, (e) for success in examination, (f) for good harvest, (g) for recovery of last cattle or animals, (h) for victory in a football or cricket match, (i) for more milk in the cow's udder, (j) for the improvement of the health condition of the children, (k) for a good match in marriage, and (l) for cure of cattle diseases etc.

Puja Offerings:

At least four kinds of puja offerings are made by the devotees of Jaicana, which are as follows:

The first type consists of milk and sweetmeats like Sandesh, Batasa, Bunde, etc.

The second type consists of various kinds of fruits which include pumpkins, gourds, coconuts, etc.

The third type consists of animals and birds like buffalo, goat, sheep, duck, cock, pigeon, etc. These are usually beheaded with a sharp sword. Buffalos are mainly offered by the Lodhas and the birds are also offered by the tribal folk.

The fourth kind of offerings are the clay (terracotta) images of elephants and horses associated with other kinds of objects mentioned before. These terracotal objects are first placed before the Goddess Jaicana daubed with vermillion and after puja is over they are placed under one of the trees in the temple compound.
The village Baliuk is situated under the jurisdiction of Tamluk Police Station (J.L.No.16). The village is connected with all-season metalled road, and the said road stretches in between Mecheda to Haldia, Mecheda to Digha via Tamluk. The distance from Tamluk to Baliuk is about ten kilometers. Tamluk in ancient time was known probably as the famous sea-port 'Tamralipta'. It is also now a prosperous and growing sub-divisional town, situated on the western bank of river Rupnarayan. The nearest bus-stoppage is at Kaktya market.

The village has three wards, namely, Brahminpara, Tantipara and Mahishyapara. The people belonging to Subarnabanik caste also reside in this village. There is no other caste people.

The Legend:

A legend about the prevalency of the propitiation of Balluk Candi in the hoary past is almost known to all the villagers. The legend is that the area where the shrine of Balluk Candi is situated was a jungle where ferocious animals like tiger, hayena resided. At the time of the invasion of the 'Bargi' (Maratha invaders and robbers) in this area, they entered in the jungle and took shelter for the time being. During that time, the 'Bargis' cleaned up some jungly areas and unknowingly hurt on the head of the icon of the
The deity became angry and ordered the leader of the 'Bargis' that he should arrange for propitiation in a regular manner. The deity had identified Herself as 'Candi', - the goddess of jungly animals. The leader of the 'Bargis' did so according to the order of the goddess Candi. When the Bargis left the place permanently, the people of the locality found out the shrine of Candi, which was already known through hearsay and propitiation to the deity was continued.

The site, where the icon of Candi resides is known as Balluk, - hence, the deity was identified as 'Ballukcandi', that is, the Goddess Candi of Balluk.

**The Icon and the Shrine of Ballukcandi:**

The icon of Ballukcandi is a roudish piece of black basalt stone having 10" inches in diameter. A portion of the said stone is submerged on the earth. Originally, the icon was placed under a tree locally known as 'Kali', - at present the icon is kept in a brick-built, south-facing and flat-roofed temple. The present temple is not old. There is a cut-mark on the upper side of the icon; the rumour is that the 'Bargis' had done it. The 'Kali' tree, under which the deity was originally placed is still a living object.

The site of the shrine of Ballukcandi is connected by a village-path with the other parts of the village. There is a corrugated-roofed 'ät-chalā' on the south-eastern side of the Ballukcandi's
temple. Within the same compound, there is also another flat-roofed brick-built temple in existence, which is commonly known as 'Siva Temple' and in the said 'Siva' temple images of 'Madangopal Jiu' and his consort 'Radharani' are kept on a wooden palanquin.

The eyes and the nose of the Goddess Ballukcanḍi are marked with round and oblong-shaped discs of silver which were donated by some devotee.

There is also a than of Olabibi in front of the temple of Ballukcanḍi.

A wooden chariot has been donated by the inhabitants of Balluk, in honour of the 'Panchadevata', namely, Ballukcanḍi, Madangopal Jiu, Kālī, Śitalā and Olabibi. 'Ratha Jatra' festival is also held in the month of Ashara (July-August) in every year.

Caste, Service Pattern and Propitiation:

The annual festival of Ballukcanḍi is held on the auspicious days of 'Śāradiyā Durgā Puja', that is, on the four auspicious days like Mahā Saptami, Mahā Astami, Mahā Navami and Vijayā Dasami; the villagers of Balluk and its adjacent areas send puja offerings in honour of Ballukcanḍi, irrespective of caste, rank and status. For the smooth running of annual worship and festivals usually held in the months of Ashara and Chaitra, a Puja Committee is also formed by the villagers in a democratic way. This Committee is commonly known...
as 'Gram Committee' and the following persons are elected as the members of the Gram Committee:

(1) Sri Achutyananda Bag (Caste: Mahishya)
(2) " Hirendra Nath Jana ( " " )
(3) " Ashok Kr. Pramanick ( " " )
(4) " Kshudiram Bera ( " " )
(5) " Hrikesh Debsharma (Caste: Brahmin)

Sri Abhoy Charan Chakravorty, belonging to Brahmin by caste is the priest, whose ancestors were appointed to perform the priestly functions.

From a Settlement Record of the Land Revenue Department of the State Government, it is evident that, in 1920 A.D., the names of Sagar Chandra Jana, Baikuntha Nath Mandal and Kartick Chandra Mal, all of whom belong to Mahishya community, were recorded as the 'Sevayats' of Ballukcandi and some Kumudini Dassi, wife of Late Gopal Lal Sil had generously donated sixty bighas of low-land in favour of the Goddess Ballukcandi. From the income of this landed property expenses of the worship is given away.

The people belonging to Mahishya community are in the dominant position in the locality, the others are Brahmin, Tantubaya, and Subarnabanick.

There is no hindrance in sending puja offerings by the people belonging to any Hinduised-caste people. In general puja offerings
are made with the sun-dried rice, banana, sweets, batasa, sindur and seasonal fruits.

Sacrificing of animals is not prevalent at present.

The people belonging to Dom caste act as the drummers and musicians in the annual festival, who reside in the adjacent villages, namely, Hogolberia and Bahiragar.

During the annual festival of Ballukcanḍī, devotees come usually from the different villages, some of which are situated at distant places. The most prominently known places are Mecheda, Bhogpur, Raghunathbati, Sabalara, Prasad Chak, Tamluk, Janubasan, Paikpari, Yasomantapaur and even from Shyampur P.S. of Howrah district. Daily worship is done by Brahmin priest belonging to Sandilya Gotra.
Balageria village is situated in the Contai (Kanthi) sub-division (P.S. Contai, J.L.No.77) and is connected by a morum-road with its nearest bus-stoppage at Bhabanichak. Bhabanichak is situated on the Digha-Kharagpur route via Kanthi, Egra and Belda.

Balageria is almost a prosperous village. At the entrance of the village, there is a primary school - 'Balageria Prathamick Vidyalaya'. Other than the morum-road, the village is also connected by a navigable canal, namely, Orissa Coast Canal. The village is surrounded by vast paddy fields on all its four sides. The distance from Bhabanichak, the nearest bus-stoppage to the village Balageria proper is about five kilometers.

There are six paras or wards in the village, which are as follows : (1) Mishrapara, (2) Pandapara, (3) Nandapara, (4) Janapara, (5) Daluipara, and (6) Paidyapara. In the outer belt of the village, there reside a few families belonging to the Muslim community.

The Legend :

The legendary background depicts that Sarpai, a village situated on the bank of a rivulet, was once covered with dense jungles and was the home of ferocious animals and crocodiles. There was a shrine of Mangal Candî at the said Sarpai village. The deity was
worshipped there on some fixed auspicious days, like the Saradiya Durgotsava and Paush Sankranti (i.e., the last day of Paus/December-January). The priest usually resided at Balageria, whose name was Haranarayan alias Dhruba Mishra. Dhruba Mishra used to go to Sarpai from Balageria, by riding on a crocodile through riverine route. Naturally, Dhruba had to overcome some hindrance on his way to Sarpai and back. In most of the time he could not maintain the proper time of worship, specially when Dhruba became old. The deity then appeared before Dhruba through dream and ordered him to replace 'Her' at Balageria by which he can maintain the worship routine. The deity also expressed that on the next morning Dhruba should go to the bank of the canal (now known as Orissa Coast Canal) and would get one piece of square wooden block having length of five to six feet. From this wooden block he himself should prepare an Icon of the Goddess Mangal Candi. As such on the next morning Dhruba found out the prescribed wooden block and established the same in his home. From then, the deity resides at Balageria. From the genealogical chart, it is known that Dhruba Mishra was alive in the earliest part of the 19th Century A.D. Through hearsay it is known that the original temple at Sarpai is still in existence, though in a dilapidated condition.

The Icon:

The icon of Mangal Candi at Balageria village is made of a wooden square block, - 12" x 12" inches in size. The major part of
the block lies buried in the earth. Nearly 2'-0" (two) feet is above the earth, which is daubed with thick oil and vermillion paste and covered with a red-coloured sari. The face of the deity is curved on the said wooden block. The eyes, the nose and the mouth of icon is marked with silver plates. A metallic crown is placed on the head of the icon.

Caste and Service Pattern:

The village is inhabited by various hinduised castes which are as follows: Brahmin, Karan, Mahishya, Tantubaya, Raju, Kodma, Swarnakara and Vaishnava.

The Goddess Mangal Caṇḍī is at present treated as the family deity of the two Brahmin families, whose surnames are Mishra and Nanda. Originally, the Mishra family was the priest of the Goddess Mangal Caṇḍī, but the Nanda family possesses the power of propitiation by way of purchasing a share of the properties of Mishra family. Equal share is being now carried by the said two families, that is, Nanda and Mishra, whose gotras are Kashyapa and Bharadwaj respectively.

Apart from the said two Brahmin families, devotees from far and near come and participate in the annual function and on the every auspicious days like Tuesday and Saturday in every week; annual festival and worship is held on the Saradiya Durgotsav, - the other auspicious days are Kāli Puja, Poush Sankranti, Basanti Puja and Chaitra Sankranti. In general puja offerings are made with sun-dried
rice, sindur, seasonal fruits, clarified butter, card, milk, sweets, batasa, curdled milk, green coconut and banana.

On the fulfilment of a vow, devotees offer special puja with the objects like Luchi (thin cake of flour fried in boiling ghee/clarified butter), sweets made of semolina, cakes made of rice, porridge, cooked vegetables and rice. Sometimes, devotees also sacrifice animals like goat and sheep.

The sacrificing of animals is done by the two persons, namely, Madhusudan Das and Abani Ganjan, both belong to Mahishya by caste. For every act of sacrifice, each of them is entitled to get Rs. 3/- per head in cash plus 1 Kg. rice. The head of the victimised animal goes in favour of the priest. The devotees sacrifice animals generally either on Tuesday or on Saturday, but during the annual festival, held in the month of Aswin (September-October) in Kali puja held in Kartick (October-November) and in Basanti puja held in Chaitra (March-April), animal sacrifice is done by the Mishra and Nanda families. It is a part of the worship stricting belong to the family's traditional system.

The Goddess Mangal Cāḍī is adored by the following directives and chanting Sanskritic mantras from the "Purohit Darpan" and other related scriptures. During the annual festival, performance of vocal music accompanied with musical instruments is done by Krishna Chandra Ari, belonging to Mahishya community. This is an essential
feature in the festivals. In this way we find a sense of equality and bond of brotherhood during the festival of Mangal Candi.
Raspur village is situated on the left bank of derelict Damodar channel 5 Kms. north-west of Amta P.S. headquarter, (being J.L.No.153), with which it is connected by an unmetalled road forming the top of the embankment of the river.

The village possesses two primary schools and one rural health centre. Apart from these, there are two Higher Secondary Schools, in this village, one for the boys' and the other for the girls' founded in the year 1876 A.D. and 1878 A.D. respectively. The village also contains one library, which was founded in the year 1883 A.D. and converted into Govt. Sponsored Rural Library by the State Government authority during the year 1966 A.D.

The village Raspur has an old tradition of being a seat of learning and is much famous for the birth place of the poet "Kavichandra" Ramkrishna Roy, the author of 'Śivāyana', which extolled the virtues and exploits of Lord Śiva. The bengali verse, namely, 'Śivāyana' was composed in between the period 1635 A.D. - 1640 A.D.

The Legendary Episode:

The presiding deity of the village Raspur is Gaḍ Cāṇḍī, which has some legendary episode about the introduction of worship.

Once upon a time the goddess Gaḍ Cāṇḍī appeared in the
village Gaḍ Chumuk on the bank of the river Damodar in Shyampur P.S. of Howrah district. She was then regularly propitiated by a Brahmin priest, but due to the wrong propitiatory method followed by the said Brahmin priest, the deity Gaḍ Candī became furious and angry. Due to Her rage and cruelty, the families of the priest had to face much trouble and even unnatural death. Only one male-child of 12 years old, whose name was Batuk Sarbananda, anyhow escaped from the rage and punishment of the deity Gaḍ Candī. Batuk, out of fear fled away from Gaḍ Chumuk and with the help of his paternal-sister. He lastly took shelter in the residential house of some Jayananda Koley, belonging to Mahishya by caste, residing at the village Raspur. Obviously, the daily worship of the deity Gaḍ Candī came to a point of standstill for the long absence of the priest. The deity Gaḍ Candī then left the village Gaḍ Chumuk in search of Batuk, the surviving male person of the priest's family. 'She' came to the village Raspur and appeared before Ghanashyam Roy, belonging to Kayastha by caste, and ordered him in a dream, to make an arrangement of daily worship for 'Her', by engaging Batuk as the priest.

Ghanashyam arranged so by establishing 'Her' icon made of clay. In the Bengali calender year 1261 B.S. (corresponding to 1853-54 A.D.) the said clay-made icon was replaced by a wooden image.

The Icon of Gaḍ Candī:

The icon of the deity Gaḍ Candī is housed in a brick-built flat-roofed temple. The deity is seated on a lotus having three eyes,
wearing a red-coloured sadi, and a coronet on her head with some other ornaments. She poses as the grantor of a boon and saviour from dangerous position, i.e. Barabhayadatri. The icon of the deity including the lotus-seat is placed on a wooden throne.

On the right side of the deity there are the image of Ganesh, Lakshmi, Sasthi, and Jayā. On the left the images of Kartick, Saraswati, Sitala and Vijaya are placed. Apart from these, there are also the images of Manasa and Lord Siva are kept. The said Manasa icon, made of black basalt stone, bears the affinity of the sculpture belonging to Pala period (8th-10th Century A.D.). It is also interesting to note that a icon of 'Dakshin Roy', a popular folk deity of lower 24-Parganas is being worshipped here regularly.

The Festivals :

The deity Gaḍ Candī is now worshipped regularly by a brahmin-priest, namely, Manoranjan Chakraborty, aged about 50. Though the deity belongs to the said Manoranjan Chakraborty and treated as his family deity, but the deity is adored by people irrespective of caste and creed, rank and status, and 'She' has been treated as the tutelary deity of the village Raspur.

The annual festival is held on the Saradiyā Durgā Puja during the month of Aswin (i.e., September-October). On the Baisakhi Purnima tithi (i.e., full-moon day in Baisakh/April-May) special
pujas are done with the sacrificing of animals, by the devotees on that auspicious day. Gajan festival is also held in the last day of Chaitra (March-April).

Apart from these, special offerings are made by the women folk of Raspur and its adjacent villages on the every Tuesday of Jaistha (May-June), which is commonly known as 'Jai Mangal Bar', i.e., the vow of auspicious Tuesday of the month of Jaistha. This ritual is connected with the peace and prosperity of the locality as well as the family members of the devotees.

**Service Pattern and Peoples Participation**:

The village Raspur is inhabited by the people belonging to different hinduised castes and communities namely, Brahman, Kayastha, Hadi, Muchi, Dhopa, Dhibar, Mahishya and Karmakar. Muslims also reside in the said village.

Some landed property was donated by the Burdwan-Raj family in honour of the deity Gad Candi. Some Satish Chandra Roy, belonging to Kayastha by caste, of the same village also donated a few bighas of land for the regular propitiation of the deity.

During the annual festival held in the month of Aswin (September-October), hinduised people irrespective of caste, creed, colour, rank and status offer pujas, accept prasad and take active part in the festival. Female members of each household or families
offer sun-dried rice (Atap), milk, seasonal fruits and sweets to the deity and they usually observe some taboos like refraining from washing of garments with soda-water and soap, eating rice and salt etc. The animal sacrifice is a prevalent custom and this is done by a person belonging to Karmakar by caste. No person belonging to some other caste is not entitled to perform this particular duty. The slayer of animals is remunerated usually either with some cash and rice or is offered with the head of the victimised animal. During the Mahā Navamī festival, he is remunerated with a piece of dhuti, rice, cash Rs.5/- and one plate prasad.

Here it is noticed that an atmosphere of brotherhood and a bond of friendship as well as the sense of equality appear in the village Raspur during the festivals of Gaḍ Caṇḍī. People belonging to different castes try to ignore the age-old custom of purity and pollution concept at the shrine of the deity Gaḍ Caṇḍī. Hence, we may say that at Raspur, the goddess Gaḍ Caṇḍī caters Her influence over the people to come out from the existing concept of caste-system and helps to create an ideal feelings and bond of unity and equality.
Amta has now been converted in an non-municipal town having the offices of Amta Development Block (No.1), a Post Office, a Sub-Registry Office, a Munsiff's Court and a fine bunglow of Irrigation Department of the State Government. Apart from these, there are six primary schools, three higher secondary schools for boys and girls, one degree college and a rural library.

Amta is situated on the eastern bank of the derelict channel of the river Damodar. Upto the middle of 19th Century A.D., it was a busy centre of trade and commerce for salt brought from Hijli and rice from Contai (both in the district of Midnapore), coal from Ranigunge (in Burdwan district), wood from North Bengal, tobacco from Purnea (in the State of Bihar). At that period the river Damodar was navigable and obviously was treated as a highway of commerce, bearing hundreds of cargo boats. At present the said picture has been changed yet it is a growing centre for the agricultural products specially rice, betel-leaf and vegetables.

Amta has been mentioned in the several mediaeval Bengali verses including Candī Mangal of 'Kavikankan' Mukundaram Chakraborty.

Now this place may be treated as the 'gateway' of innumerable prosperous villages situated on the western bank of Damodar.
The Legend:

The best known spot of Amta is the shrine of Melai Candi alias Malai Candi. In general, the folk-belief is, that, during the famous 'Daksha-Yanja', the knee-joint of Satī, the wife of Lord Śiva fell here and hence this place became the holy 'Satī-pith' or Shakta-pith.

The prevalent legend is that, originally the shrine of the deity Melai alias Malai Candi was in the neighbouring village, namely, Jayanti situated in the western bank of the river Damodar. Some brahmin-priest, Jatadhari Chakraborty by name saw the deity in a dream and found her icon at Jayanti. According to the desire and order of the deity, Jatadhari engaged himself as the priest and arranged for regular propitiation. As the days rolled on Jatadhari became more and more old and some time came when Jatadhari became unable to worship the deity properly and regularly as because his residence was at Amta a few miles away from Jayanti, and obviously he had to cross the river Damodar every day. On seeing this difficulty the deity further expressed 'Her' desire to migrate Her shrine at the prosperous market-area at Amta. Jatadhari did so, by way of transferring the icon from the neighbouring village Jayanti to the 'hat-tala' of Amta and accordingly arranged for regular propitiation.

There is also another legend prevalent in the locality.

Once upon a time a merchant lost his boats full of salt, during a rainy and stormy period, in the river Damodar. The merchant,
as a result, had to take resort in the temple of Malai Candi at night. He worshipped the deity and prayed 'Her' grace to restore his lost items of merchandise. The deity Malai Candi became pleased too much and granted the prayer of the merchant. In return, the said merchant built up the 'at-chala' type temple.

The Shrine and the Icon:

The present 'at-chala' temple was constructed by Krishna Chandra Dutta of Hatkhola, Calcutta, who had a salt-depot at Amta. The date-plaque of the temple above the entrance now became illegible but it is said to ascribe the erection of the edifice to a Karmakar in 1056 B.S. (i.e. Bengali calendar year) corresponding to 1949-50 A.D. (Cf. Banerjee : 1972 : 583). But Santra opines that the temple of Malai Candi was not erected by 'Karmakar', he may be the temple-architect, as it was a popular custom to inscribe the name of the temple-architect on the facade (Santra : 1976 : 24-25).

It is a simple 'at-chala' structure with a detached 'mandapa' hall (assembly hall) in the fore-court and a subsidiary shrine of Lord Siva to the south-east, the whole complex being enclosed by a compound wall the entrance gateway being on South.

The icon of Melai alias Malai Candi is made of black basalt stone, now heavily painted with vermillion yet this could be ascribed to Pala period (c.8th-10 A.D.) from the 'padapith'.
Images of Basudeva and Kartick belonging to Pala period are being worshipped with the deity Melai Candi.

The temple of Malai Candi may be treated as one of the oldest temple not only in the district of Howrah, but also in the State of West Bengal (Cf. JASB, May, 1909, p.145).

Festivals:

The annual festival is held on the auspicious day of Baisakhi Purnima (i.e., full-moon day of Baisakh/April-May).

Apart from the annual festival and worship, the deity is specially adored on the auspicious days of "Śaradiyā Durgā Puja", the period of which begins from Maha Sasthi tithi and lasts upto Mahā Navamī tithi.

Except those five days, the deity is propitiated in a special manner on the festive occasions of Maghi Purnima (i.e., full-moon day of Magh/January-February) and the seventh day after the Dol Purnima (i.e., full-moon day of Phalgun/February-March). The later date is commonly known as 'Saptam Dol'.

People's Participation:

Amta has now been converted into a Class IV (non-municipal) town and the hinduised people belonging to Brahman, Kayastha,
Mahishya, Sadgop, Karmakar, Kumbhakar, Teli, Bagdi, Dom, Muchi, Dhopa by caste are living here side by side other than the non-hinduised communities. The hinduised people are the main devotees of Malai Canḍī.

The deity Malai alias Melai Canḍī is propitiated regularly by a brahmin-priest and during the daily worship the priest offers Naivedya consisting of Atap (sun-dried) rice, seasonal fruits, sweets etc. in the morning and in the evening milk, curdled milk, sweets etc. are usually offered, which is known as 'Sital Bhog'.

The deity's sevait's own a 'Debottar' property and though it is a source of income, yet the traders and the businessmen of Amta market and the shop-keepers of Amta 'hat' have created a special fund by way of collecting rents and fees in kinds and coins, to meet the expenses for the adoration of the deity Malai Canḍī. Apart from these, the devotees belonging to various castes, e.g., Mahishya, Kayastha, Brahman, Karmakar, Kumbhakar, Bagdi, Teli, Napit, Sutradhar, etc. donate generously either in cash or in kinds as a part of their vow.

On the auspicious days of annual festival in Baisakhi Purnima, Sāradīyā Durgā Puja, Maghi Purnima and Dol Purnima, people belonging to different castes and communities attend and take part in the adoration. During the festivals, specially on the annual festival, people not only from the neighbouring villages but also from the distant areas of the different districts, namely Hooghly, Burdwan,
24-Parganas and Calcutta, come to offer 'Pujas'. Every year, nearly fifteen thousand people gather to attend the annual festival, amongst which the devotees belonging to Mahishya, Brahman, Teli, Kayastha, Sadgop, Karmakar by caste are numerically strong.

The most remarkable feature is the slaying of goats. In good old days, during the annual festival in Baisakhi Purnima, more than 300 goats were slain, though at present the number has been decreased yet it reminds the time of yore. The animals are slain by a person, Karmakar by caste, who is paid either in cash or in kinds like the head of the victimised animal plus one seer rice and sometimes a 'dhuti' or 'sari'. Animal slaying is done as a part of the fulfilment of desired vow.

Mela (Fair):

Large fairs are held on the auspicious days of Baisakhi Purnima, Maghi Purnima and Saptam Dol. Innumerable shop-keepers and people attend the fair.

On the occasion of 'Saptam Dol' display of fire-works during the night time is an essential feature and these fire-works are made by the 'Mal' communities of local-born. These people are belonging to low-caste, jal-achal hinduised community.

Here also one may find the bond of friendship and the sense of equality at the shrine of Melai Candi, specially during the festival time.
Dwarhatta is a prosperous and large-sized village in the district of Hooghly under the jurisdiction of Haripal P.S being J.L No.45).

The nearest Railway station is Haripal, on the Howrah-Tarakeswar Section of Eastern Railway. The village is also connected by a road with Atpur and have the facility of bus services with Haripal, Rajbalhat and such other places of interest.

In the early part of 19th Century A.D., there was a sub-division named after Dwarhatta, but in 1845 A.D. the said sub-division was re-named after Serampore.

The very name of 'Dwarhatta' originated from the tutelary deity 'Dwarika Candi'.

The Legend:

'Singha Roy' family (Rajput-Kshatriya origin) of Dwarhatta is much famous in the area under review for their deeds and donations. An eminent ancestor of 'Singha Roy' family have a vision in a dream and he finds out the image of 'Dwarika Candi' from a tank near his residence, and from that period the deity is being worshipped at Dwarhatta. The incidence was happened nearly 250 years ago.

The Icon:

It is stated that the deity Dwarika Candi was found to be
seated on a lion having two hands in a pose of *Barabhayadatri Murti* (i.e., grantor of boon and saviour from danger) and was also associated with Kartick, Ganesh, Lakshmi and Saraswati. The icon was made of 'astadhatu' (eight-metalled), but the said image of the deity was stolen a few years ago. Afterwards, the deity is being worshipped in a 'devi-ghat' (i.e., god-pot). The shrine of the deity is styled as 'āt-chālā' having terracotta decorations in the faced, which bears the reminiscent of Ramayana war. The said brick-built temple was erected in the year 1764-65 A.D. A terracotta date-plaque was firmly set above the gateway of the temple bearing a inscription in Bengali script: "Subhamastu Sakabda 1686" that is, in 1686 Saka (corresponding to 1764-65 A.D.) the temple was erected.

**People's Participation and the Festival:**

The village Dwarhatta is inhabited by the following hinduised castes and communities, namely Brahman, Chattri (Rajput Kshatriya), Mahishya, Kumbhakar, Tanti, Malakar, Kansakar, Subarnabanick, Sunri, Hadi, Dhopa and Muchi. A few members of the Santal community also reside here.

Chattris (Rajput Kshatriyas) came to Bengal from the Northern and Western India in between the period of late 17th Century A.D. and the early part of 18th Century A.D. In this period Bengal was turned into an ill-governed state and the Marhattas, Rajputs, Kanouji Brahmins including some saivite sects invaded the region under study.
and settled permanently in many parts of this region. The ancestors of the aforementioned 'Singha Roy' family came on that period and gradually accepted the norms and customs of deltaic Bengal with the variation of local tone and colour, rites and rituals.

The deity Dwarika Caṇḍī is annually adores on the auspicious days of 'Śāradīyā Durgā Puja', that is, from Mahā Sasthī to Vijayā Dasamī, following the manners of Śākta rituals of Durgā puja.

The deity is worshipped by a brahmin-priest, whose surname is 'Batabyal' and the 'gotra' is 'Sandilya'.

Sacrificing of animals is an essential feature of the annual propitiation and during this period at least one goat is offered to the deity. It is a prevalent custom that on the auspicious day of Maha Navami, the performance of 'Balidan' (sacrificing of animals) shall be started at first before this deity (i.e., Dwarika Caṇḍī) and the different Durgā mandapa of the neighbouring villages will follow the custom afterwards.

The slaying of animals on the Mahā Navamī day, offered by Singha-Roy family are usually done by the brahmin-priest himself. On the Mahā Navamī hinduised people belonging to various castes and communities offer pujas with sun-dried rice, sweets, fruits and sometimes even an animal, as a part of the fulfilment of their heart's desire. In some cases, a person, Karmakara by caste perform the act of slaying and he is remunerated either in cash Rs.5/- or in kinds like
the head of the victimised animal and one seer rice and a plateful of prasad.

The persons belonging to Muchi by caste act as the drum-players during the puja and at the time of slaying of animals. Their remunerations are paid by both in cash and kinds like rice, dhuti, sari and prasad including meals and tiffins for the five days.

Bond of friendship and sense of equality and unity appear in the puja-mandapa during the vestive period.
Jaynagar-Mazilpur, though once upon a time, was covered with dense jungle but now turned into a municipal area, situated nearly thirty miles southwards of Calcutta, having more than 15,000 population according to 1971 census. It has a railway station on the Sealdah-Lakshmi Kantapur section of Eastern Railway. It is, at present, under the jurisdiction of Jaynagar P.S. The sites Jaynagar and Mazilpur bear separate boundaries and they have some distinct features in the sphere of history and culture of the district of 24-Parganas.

This area has been mentioned by the poets of the famous 'Mangal Kavyas' composed during the period 16th and 17th century A.D. The poet Krishnaram Das in his famous composition 'Raimangal' (C.1686 A.D. – 1608 Saka) made a vivid description of Jaynagar on the bank of 'Adi Ganga' (i.e., old tract of Ganges river).

The Legend:

During the times of yore, Jaynagar was an integral part of Sunderban and there was no permanent human habitation in this area. People used to go by boats and the rivers were almost navigable throughout the year.

Once a person, Gunasindhu Motilal by name and his companion Tunu Pandit, had to cross this site by boat, during the morning time.
Gunasindhu and Tunu, both of them marked that a beautiful maiden was wandering in the area covered with jungle. On seeing this, Gunasindhu and Tunu made a halt there and entered into the deep jungle in search of the maiden, whom they saw. But till evening, they found no trace of the beautiful maiden. With broken heart, both of them came back to the boat. On that particular night, Gunasindhu had a revelation through dream and he came to know that the beautiful maiden, whom he saw at the day-time in the deep jungly area, was Jai Caṇḍī, the guardian deity of that area. According to 'Her' directives, Gunasindhu found out a piece of stone placed under a 'Bakul' tree (Mimusops Elangī) which was nothing but the symbol of the icon of the deity Jai Caṇḍī. Afterwards, the site, where from Gunasindhu found out the icon of Jai Caṇḍī, named after the deity as Jaynagar.

The Shrine and the Icon :

The shrine was originally a thatched roofed mud-hut. Some Mahendra Sreemany of Calcutta built up the present flat-roofed shrine for the deity. The mandapa (assembly hall) in front of the shrine was constructed by Nityahari Motilal in the year 1950 A.D.

The image, which is now worshipped, is made of wood. The deity stands on a full-blossom lotus, having three eyes, wearing a red-coloured sari and various types of ornaments including a coronet on her head. The deity poses 'Barabhayapradayini' that is, grantor of boon and saviour from danger. The height of the image is about
30" (thirty) inches and is placed on a wooden throne. The stone-symbol which was found by Gunasindhu is also kept by the side of the image.

Propitiation and Participation of the people:

The deity is being worshipped daily by a brahmin-priest engaged by the sevait family, i.e., the descendants of Tunu Pandit, who are also belong to Dakshin Rariya Brahman.

During the worship at day time 'Annabhog' consisting of cooked rice, vegetables etc. are offered and in the evening Sital Bhog consisting of milk, curdled milk, sweets etc. are usually offered.

The annual festival lasts for the fifteen days, which starts from 'Jaistha Purnima tithi' (full-moon day of Jaistha/May-June). During this period, the image of the deity Jai Candi is dressed in a fashion of some brahmanic-puranic goddesses, namely, Bhubaneswarī, Kātyāyanī, Brahmani, Mahā Lakshmi, Manasā, Rāi-Rājā, Vaishanavī, Indrānī, Janhavī, Annapurnā, Durgā, Bāsantī and Rājrājeswarī. The Rājrājeswarī dress lasts for three consecutive days.

People belonging to various hinduised castes and communities, rank and status assemble at the mandapa (assembly hall) in front of the shrine and offer pujas. They come from the different parts of the district of 24-Parganas and Calcutta.

The devotees, belonging to different castes, namely, Poundra-Kshatriya, Brahman, Mahishya, Kayastha, Karmakar, Kumbhakara are numerically superior.
During the annual festival, brahmin-priest attend the devotees irrespective of caste and creed, rank and status to receive the offerings and sometimes till mid night the devotees come to offer puja.

Except the annual festival on the auspicious days of Maha Astami in Aswin (September-October) and the Annapurna Puja in Chaitra (March-April), devotees come to propitiate the deity in a special manner. In the full-moon day of Asada (July-August) arrangement of special 'Annabhog' is done by the members of local 'Bandopadhaya' family, by caste brahmin, who have a mythical link with the deity Jai Canḍī.

Sacrificing of animals was prevalent, but this system has now been abandoned.

A large fair is held every year during the annual festival.
(xvii) Deity: Sri Sri Candimata at Barisha (Calcutta):

Barisha is now under the municipal corporation of Calcutta situated on the south-west direction and may be treated as the gate-way of south-west 24-Parganas.

Ancient history of Barisha and the famous "Sabarna-Choudhury" family are closely inter-related with each other from the Mughal period and onwards. Originally Barisha was a part of the landed property of 'Sabarna-Choudhury' family, whose real surname was 'Majumdar' and they settled down at deltaic Bengal during the time of Adi Sura and are belonging to 'Pancha Brahman' group. During the reign of Murshid Kuli Khan in Bengal Subah, some Keshabram of Sabarna-Choudhury family obtained a title 'Roy-Choudhury'. Obviously, they are belonging to Brahmin by caste, whose 'gotra' is 'Sabarna'.

History of the 'British Raj' in India at its very inception period, that is, obtaining the right of the lessee (lease-holder) of the three mouzas, namely, Sutanutty, Kalkata and Govindapur from the 'Sabarna-Choudhury' family, by the then directors of 'East India Company' is also an interesting matter. A deed was made between the said two parties on 10th November, 1698 A.D. by which the aforementioned three mouzas were transferred in favour of the 'East India Company'; the said deed is now kept under the custody of 'British Museum' at London (U.K.).
The Legend:

Like the prestigious 'Durgotsava' in the residential houses of Bengal Zemindars, the purpose of propitiation of 'Śrī Śrī Caṇḍī Mātā' for the first-time at Barisha by some Mahesh Chandra Roy-Choudhury belonging to the said 'Sabarna-Choudhury' family, was to highlight his social status aristocracy, influence and family prestige. The said Caṇḍī puja was started during the year 1200 B.S. (Bengali Sana/Bengali Calendar Year) in the month of Agrahayana, corresponding to 1792 A.D. (November-December).

Harish Chandra Roy-Choudhury, son of said Mahesh Chandra Roy-Choudhury was really a devotee of Caṇḍī and he had a vision in a dream that a copper-made 'god-pot' (Devi-ghat) was hidden in a tank near his residence and Harish found it accordingly. The said 'god-pot' made of copper, is still kept by his descendants and is used at the time annual propitiation.

The Icon:

The icon of Caṇḍī is much impressive and very peculiar in appearance. Perhaps it has no parallel instance within the geographical boundary of the region under study. The icon is quite different from the narratives of "Saptaśatī Caṇḍī" --- the age-old religious scripture. Practically, the idea of the present image was given by a band of Pandits (i.e., scholars in religious texts and iconography) residing at Bhattapalli (alias Bhatpara) of 24-Parganas.
The deity sits on a 'Panchamūndi' asana, that is, the seat on which devi sits is made of human skulls, five in number. The 'asana' is almost circular in appearance and the colours of the said five human skulls are deep chocolate, pink, bush-green, yellow and blue respectively from left to right, that is, anti-clockwise in direction. 'Devi' has four hands, two in each side — right and left. She holds a book and a 'aksha-sutram' (i.e., garland made of rosary) by her lower and upper left hands respectively. Simultaneously, She poses a 'barābhayādatri murti', that is, granting a boon and saving from danger, by her upper and lower right hands respectively. She wears a red-coloured sari, various types of ornaments and a coronet on Her head. Apart from the ornaments, She wears a garland made of human skulls.

The image of the deity is made of clay.

The Annual Festival:

The deity is worshipped once in a year during the 'Śukla Astamī tithi' of Agrahayana, that is, the eighth day of full-moon in the month of Agrahayana (December-January). Her worship lasts for the three days, that is, Astamī, Navamī and Dasamī. On the Dasamī (i.e., 10th day of full-moon) immersion of the deity is done in the holy water of Ganges.
People's Participation:

Though the propitiation of Candi at Barisha was started by Mahesh Chandra Roy-Choudhury, belonging to famous 'Sabarna-Choudhury' family just to throw light on his social status and prestige, influence and aristocracy, but for the last fifty years or more, the deity is being worshipped jointly by the local inhabitants of Barisha and the descendants of Sabarna-Choudhury family; they have practically made it a "Barowari Puja Utsav", that is, propitiation and festival are maintained by the general public committee with the help of the donations and subscriptions. At the present moment, it becomes a prestigious issue of the inhabitants of Barisha instead of the 'Sabarna-Choudhury' family.

The deity is being worshipped by the brahmin priests following the religious scriptures in true to the sense.

Subscriptions are raised from the devotees and the donations are collected from the traders and different mercantile firms of Calcutta. Rents are collected from the shop-keepers.

A 'Barowari Puja Committee' is formed every year by the local people and obviously the members of the said 'Barowari Puja Committee', are belong to the different hinduised castes and communities, whose members are almost influential, hold rank and status in the present-day society.
On both the 'Astamī' and 'Navami' days, innumerable devotees attend the puja ceremony and offer pujas with the objects like Atap rice, seasonal fruits, sindur (vermillion), green coconuts, sweets and flowers. 'Prasad' is distributed amongst the devotees irrespective of caste and creed, rank and status.

On the 'Navami' day, 'Annabhog', that is, cooked rice, pulses and vegetables etc. are accepted by the devotees sitting side by side, ignoring the prevalent 'Jal-chal' and 'Jal-achal' concept, at the puja-mandapa.

The sacrificing of animals like goat are done by a person 'Karmakar' by caste. Sacrificing of buffaloes was also prevalent, but this system has now been abandoned.

The drummers belonging to 'Muchi' by caste play on drums including the other musical instruments during the pujas.

The people belonging to 'Kumbhakar' by caste prepare the clay-made image of the deity.

The Barowari Puja Mandapa (assembly hall and shrine) is constructed by the people belonging to different hinduised caste. People, brahman by caste, help in the propitiatory methods strictly followed according to the scriptures. Incantations are read by the Brahmanas from 'Mārkandeya Purana' as well as 'Saptaśatī Capi'.

The Fair:

A large fair is held every year and is attended by numerous people irrespective of caste and creed, rank and status.
5.2) **Common Religious Bond**

The villagers belonging to various castes and communities strictly follow a number of restrictions during the ceremonial worship of the Candi to show due honour to the deity. It is surprising to note that there is a trend of relationship amongst the different nature and extent of restrictions that are observed over a vast area and in inaccessible villages. The Table No.V:8 depicts the clear picture of the type of restrictions as mentioned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of deity</th>
<th>Place of special worship</th>
<th>Restrictions to be observed on village level</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Makar Candi</td>
<td>Makarda, Howrah</td>
<td>Ploughing; washing of garments with soap and soda water.</td>
<td>On the day of annual worship in the month of Phalgun (Feb.-Mar.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Taking meals with rice as staple food.</td>
<td>One day in the month of Poush (Dec.-Jany.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gad Candi</td>
<td>Raspur, Howrah</td>
<td>Fasting observed by the females of the locality</td>
<td>Every Tuesday in the month of Jaistha (May-June)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vegetarian diet (Bhog)</td>
<td>On the eve of Janmas-tami in Bhadra (Aug.-Sept.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ploughing; washing with soap and soda water</td>
<td>On the day of the annual worship in the month of Aswin (Sept.-Oct.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balai Candi &amp; Khadim Candi</td>
<td>Khadimpur, West Dinajpur</td>
<td>Washing of garments with soda water; frying of rice and paddy, etc.</td>
<td>On the day of annual worship in Aswin (Sept.-Oct.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd..
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of deity</th>
<th>Place of special worship</th>
<th>Restrictions to be observed on village level</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bhagawati Canḍi</td>
<td>Pauli, Murshidabad</td>
<td>Washing of garments with soda water; frying of rice</td>
<td>Annual worship in the month of Aswin (Sept.-Oct.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulai Canḍi &amp; Dhelai Canḍi</td>
<td>Kagram, Murshidabad</td>
<td>Ploughing; frying of rice; washing of garments with soda water</td>
<td>Annual worship in the month of Ashad (June-July)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulai Canḍi</td>
<td>Debagram, Nadia</td>
<td>Frying of rice; washing of garments with soda water</td>
<td>Annual worship in the month of Jaishtha (May-June)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhap Canḍi</td>
<td>Brahmatatal Para, Jalpaiguri</td>
<td>Washing of garments with soap and soda water; frying of rice and paddy; boiling of paddy; thrashing and husking of paddy and foodgrains</td>
<td>Annual worship in the month of Aswin (September-October)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balluk Canḍi</td>
<td>Ballukhat, Midnapore</td>
<td>Boiling of paddy; shaving washing with soda water</td>
<td>Annual worship in the month of Aswin (September-October)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangal Canḍi</td>
<td>Balageria, Midnapore</td>
<td>Husking and thrashing of paddy; boiling of paddy; washing of garments with soda water</td>
<td>Annual worship in the month of Aswin (September-October)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canḍi</td>
<td>Asada, Midnapore</td>
<td>Washing of garments with soap and soda; frying of rice; boiling of paddy; thrashing and husking of paddy</td>
<td>Annual worship in the month of Ashad (June-July)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwarika Canḍi &amp; Jai Canḍi</td>
<td>Dwarhatta, Hooghly</td>
<td>Washing of garments with soda water; frying of rice</td>
<td>Annual worship in the month of Aswin (September-October)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd..
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of deity</th>
<th>Place of special worship</th>
<th>Restrictions to be observed on village level</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mahula Canḍī</td>
<td>Mahula, Birbhum</td>
<td>Boiling of paddy; frying of rice; washing of garments with soda water; abstention from cooking of foods</td>
<td>Annual worship in the month of Aswin (September-October)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belai Canḍī</td>
<td>Belai, Birbhum</td>
<td>Ploughing; boiling of paddy; frying of rice; washing of garments with soda water</td>
<td>Annual worship in the month of Aswin (September-October)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangal Canḍī</td>
<td>Dabuk, Birbhum</td>
<td>Washing of garments with soap and soda; boiling of rice</td>
<td>Annual worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marak Canḍī</td>
<td>Metellya, Birbhum</td>
<td>Abstention from cooking of foods; washing of garments with soda and soap; boiling of paddy</td>
<td>Annual worship on the 3rd day of Magh (January)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangal Canḍī</td>
<td>Khairadi, Birbhum</td>
<td>Washing of garments with soap and soda water; boiling and frying of paddy and rice respectively; specially taking of salt at meals, which is commonly known as Numpala</td>
<td>Third Tuesday in the month of Chaitra (March-April)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canḍī</td>
<td>Lauberia, Birbhum</td>
<td>Washing of garments with soap and soda; frying of rice, abstention from cooking of food</td>
<td>On the last day of Sravan (August-Sept.) and Poush (Jany.-Feb.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kantā Canḍī</td>
<td>Maliara, Bankura</td>
<td>Washing of garments with soap and soda; boiling of paddy; frying of rice</td>
<td>Second day of Magh (January-February)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canḍī</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Washing of garments with soap and soda; ploughing; taking of non-vegetarian meals</td>
<td>On the full-moon day of the month of Jaishtha (June-July)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd..
From the above Table it has been noticed that in all the villages, where the worship of the deity Candi is performed and She has been accepted as the tutelary deity, the village folk observes some taboos and refrains from some common activities during the period of annual worship. In these cases the question of caste either does not arise at all or minimises its influence, and on the other hand, the people occupying the highest position in the social rank and the people occupying the lowest position are tied up with a common religious bond and ritualistic understanding. Religion plays a uniform and dominant role in the life of the village folk of West Bengal and helps to create tradition and culture keeping aside the caste and class distinctions.

5.3) Role of Candi in the naming pattern of the Village:

The villages in India and elsewhere are identified by distinctive names which signify many events of the society and culture. Every
village name bears some meaning and in some cases it bears the name of the founder, sometimes the village name reflects the caste or profession of the first inhabitant group and in some cases it bears the reminiscence of old history of the locality and also in some other cases it bears the name of the guardian deity of a particular area or locality.

Although the bulk of the modern place-names of Bengal is of Aryan origin, yet there are thousands of names which are Prakrit and non-Aryan words (or we may better call them as names of doubtful origin and obscure in meaning also) as their components. Further, we find that there are again some names which can be explained most satisfactorily, when we approach them from the standpoint of non-Aryan Dravidian, Kol and Tibeto-Burman language and grammatical analysis (Goswami : 1943).

In general, place-names of Bengal can be classified in the following way:

(Please see Table No. V:9 in page-304.)
Like the Semantic group, Morphological place-names can also be sub-divided in the following manner:

### II. Morphological

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Simple</th>
<th>B. Compound</th>
<th>C. Disguised compound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aryan</td>
<td>Non-aryan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(i)</th>
<th>(ii)</th>
<th>(iii)</th>
<th>(iv)</th>
<th>(v)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Names with common initial</td>
<td>Names with common second initial</td>
<td>Names with common suffix</td>
<td>Hybrid Names</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Modern | Early
In Group 1.B(ii) of the above Table, that is, under the heading 'Name of Local Deities', we find that the place-names are closely connected or almost identical with the names of the local deities, popular village deities or the guardian deities of the villages.

In some cases, the affinity of 'Sanskritization' which is found in village names, falls under the category 1.B(iii). As for example, Jai Candi - Jaipur (Howrah), Bileswari - Bilwagram (Nadia), Kalyan Candi - Kalyanpur (Murshidabad); Jai Candi - Jahanagar; Dwarika Candi - Dwarhatta (Hooghly); Jai Candi - Jai Candipur (Hooghly); Rudra Candi - Candipur (Birbhum); Kalyan Candi - Kalyanpur (Howrah). In Sanskrit, the word 'pur' or 'pura' means room or house and it also indicates the village, town or even a city. Like 'pur' or 'pura', 'nagar' means town or city.

Similarly, the existence of non-Aryan languages, specially the Kol and Dravidian elements may be found or traced in the Bengali place-names. As for example, Jot Candi - Jot Candi (Hooghly); Makad Candi - Makada (Howrah); Khukur Candi - Khukurda (Midnapore). Here the word 'da' or 'daha' originates from the Sanskrit word 'hrada', which means the 'sayar', that is pond or lake. According to S.K. Chatterjee, the (late) National Professor of Humanities, the word 'daha' derives from the Sanskrit word 'hrada' in a way, daha - hada - Hrada. But some other experts opined that the very word 'da' or 'daha' originated from the Kolarian word 'dakh' (da'a) which means water (in Koushiki, S.K. Bhowmick, S. K. Chatterji, and Hahn : 1903 : 92).
Water is the most essential thing to the human beings. Usually in the bygone days, the primitive human habitations formed on the banks of the lakes and rivers, etc., wherefrom adequate and steady flow of water may satisfactorily be acquired. However, the word 'da' or 'daha' is closely connected or related with 'water', that indicates the village or the place is (or was) situated on the bank of a river, lake or pond. This proves that human civilization was mostly dependent on water.

Further, the words 'daha' or 'da' found as common second part or suffix (especially in the place-names) are also of Austric origin. One thing, however, is to be noted in this connection that the 'tadbhava' (originated and derived from the Sanskritic words) form daha - hrada may have extended some semantic influence on the Kolarian word 'da'.

Furthermore, it is seen in some cases that the village names have been derived from the names of the deities either directly or through anabrahmsa (the degenerated form of a Sanskritic word). As for example, Belai Candi - Belai or Beli (Birbhum); Mahula Candi - Mahula (Birbhum); Balluk Candi - Balluk; Baroj Candi - (Uttar) Baroj (Midnapore); Atbai Candi - Atbai Candi (Bankura); Polash Candi - Palashi (Bankura); Kareya Candi - Kareya (Murshidabad); Jai Candi - Jaipur (Howrah); Bileswar - Bilwagram (Nadia); Jai Candi - Jayanagar (24-Parganas); Dwarika Candi-Dwarhatta (Hooghly); Lalateswar - Nalhati (Birbhum); Singheswar - Singh/Singi (Birbhum), etc.

In some few cases, the village names are same or almost same as the name of the guardian deity. As for example, Pagla Candi - Pagla Candi (Nadia); Atbai Candi - Atbai Candi (Bankura); Bulbul Candi -
Bulbul Caṇḍī (Malda); Subha Caṇḍī - Subha Caṇḍitalā (Halisahar/24-Parganas); Singhabāhini - Singhabāhinitaḷa (Nijbalia/Howrah), etc.

From the detailed study of the village names which are closely connected or directly related with the names of the guardian deities of the villages or the locality, reveal the fact that the village deities, like the chieftains or powerful persons and administrators exert their influence and power over the common folk from the period of time immemorial.

National Professor S.K. Chatterjee, in his famous thesis 'Origin and Development of Bengali Language', stated that "Place names in Bengali have not been studied in detail, although individual writers have occasionally touched upon the topic. The study of the Bengali Toponomy is rendered extremely difficult from the fact that old names, when they are not Sanskrit, have suffered from mutilation to such an extent that it often impossible to reconstruct their original forms; especially when they are non-Aryan" (1970: pp. 64-65).

Though well-acquainted with the limitation of facts, yet an attempt for the first time has been made to trace out the importance of the village names in the study of a particular deity, who bears dual character, that is, the Aryanized or Brahminical-Sanskritised character in one hand and folk character on the other hand.

In Table No.V:10 districtwise list of the village names having resemblance with their tutelary deity Caṇḍī is mentioned below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the deity</th>
<th>Place or Village-name identical with the Guardian Deity</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>P.S./J.L.No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kalyan Candi</td>
<td>Kalyanpur</td>
<td>Murshidabad</td>
<td>Baraenya/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haldai Candi</td>
<td>Haldi</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;/28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaya Candi</td>
<td>Maliyandi</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;/51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jakhin Candi</td>
<td>Jakhni</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Bharatpur/36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swarna Candi</td>
<td>Sonarundu</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;/96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanka Candi</td>
<td>Kagram</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;/104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kareya Candi</td>
<td>Kareya</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;/79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singhabahini</td>
<td>Sumuti, Swarnabati</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;/54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singhabahini</td>
<td>Indrani</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Khargram/40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bileswari</td>
<td>Bilwagram</td>
<td>Nadia</td>
<td>Nakashipara/52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulai Candi</td>
<td>Ulabirnagar/Birnagar</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Ranaghat/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangal Candi</td>
<td>Candipara (Birahi)</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Haringhata/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pagla Candi</td>
<td>Pagla Candi Rly. Station</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalyan Candi</td>
<td>Kalyanpur</td>
<td>Howrah</td>
<td>Bagnan/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makar Candi</td>
<td>Makarda</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Domjur/34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betai Candi</td>
<td>Betaitala</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Shibpur/H.M.Corp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gajai Candi</td>
<td>Gaja</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Udaynarayanpur/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jai Candi</td>
<td>Jaypur</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Amta/105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singhabahini</td>
<td>Singhabahiniitala/Nijalia</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Jagatballavpur/46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basudhabasini</td>
<td>Basua</td>
<td>Hooghly</td>
<td>Dhania khali/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibaichandi</td>
<td>Sibaichandi</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;/181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of the deity</td>
<td>Place or Village - name identical with the Guardian Deity</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>P.S./J.L.No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwarik Candi</td>
<td>Dwarhatta</td>
<td>Hooghly</td>
<td>Haripal/45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jot Chandl</td>
<td>Jot Chandl</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Goghat/40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jai Chandl</td>
<td>Chandinagar</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Jangipara/76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jai Chandl</td>
<td>Chanditala</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Chanditala/85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandl</td>
<td>Khamar Chandl</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Haripal/72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mashan Chandl</td>
<td>Masunda</td>
<td>24-Parganas</td>
<td>Amdanga/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandl</td>
<td>Jai Chandpur</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Bishnupur/42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subha Chandl or Sa Chandl</td>
<td>Subho Chanditala</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Halisahar Municipality - P.S.Bijpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jai Chandl</td>
<td>Jai Nagar</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baroj Chandl</td>
<td>(Uttar) Baroj</td>
<td>Midnapore</td>
<td>Bhagabanpur/341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khirai Chandl</td>
<td>Khirati</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Daspur/54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kadua Chandl</td>
<td>Kultikri</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Sankrail/230(905)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marich Chandl</td>
<td>Marichya or Marcheya</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Ghatal/57</td>
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<td>Khukur Chandl</td>
<td>Khukurdaha</td>
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<td>Daspur/150</td>
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<td>Balluk</td>
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<td>Tamluk/16</td>
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<td>Rautmani Chandl</td>
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<td>Kharagpur(Local)/618</td>
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<td>Atbai Chandl</td>
<td>Atbai Chandl</td>
<td>Bankura</td>
<td>Indpur/192</td>
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<td>Palash Chandl</td>
<td>Palash</td>
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<td>Indais/90</td>
</tr>
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<td>Dhap Chandl</td>
<td>Dhapgunge</td>
<td>Jalpaiguri</td>
<td>Jalpaiguri/8.11.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chandl</td>
<td>Chandijhar</td>
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<td>Alipurdwar/104</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jai Chandl</td>
<td>Jaipur</td>
<td>Midnapur</td>
<td>Keshpur /61</td>
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The above discussions clear the point that the deity Candi has been exerting her tremendous influence on the life of the people from the remote past. The naming pattern of the huge number of villages indicates that the deity concerned has penetrated into the
very recess of the life of the people. She has been accepted as the Guardian Deity or the tutelary deity in the 'janapadas' (that is the human settlements) in the remote past. This fact could easily be identified from the place-names bearing resemblance with Her name. More than one hundred villages found in West Bengal, which have the reminiscent of the most popular folk deity Caṇḍī in their naming pattern. Even after a great length of time, the reminiscence of the influence of the Mother Goddess Caṇḍī over the masses of the people is not mutilated or at all eradicated. The Deity Caṇḍī exerts Her influence over the act of uniting the common people under the canopy of the religious bond and creates a new path in the fields of brotherhood by diminishing the caste feelings prevalent in the rural society. On the other hand, the people feel that the 'janapada' bearing the name of Caṇḍī has got a special appeal and they think it is glorified to be associated with her sacred name and thereby her sweet existence.