CHAPTER VIII

STAGES IN THE CULTURAL HISTORY OF BANKURA

**Palaeolithic Stage**

The earliest form of culture is present in the sub-continent of India as well as in Bengal. In the micro-environment of Bankura within a unique anthropo-geographic setting, the earliest form of culture, that of foodgathering, collecting and hunting, is indicated by the tools of the Palaeolithic or Old Stone Age, such as chopper, handaxe, cleaver and scraper. As it has been pointed out by Allchins, "the Lower Palaeolithic is characterised by handaxe, cleavers, chopping tools, and related artifact forms. Middle Palaeolithic industries are characterised by smaller, lighter tools based upon flakes struck from cores, which in some cases are carefully shaped and prepared in advance; the Upper Palaeolithic by yet lighter artifacts and parallel-sided blades and burins". But in Bankura, due to lack of stratigraphic evidence, it is difficult to distinguish the three aforesaid stages in the Palaeolithic age.

The presence of Pleistocene Man in Bengal is known from that part of Bankura which forms an extension of the Chotanagpur plateau. The settlement pattern of the earliest man in Bankura may be determined on the basis of geographical distribution of the palaeolithic occurrences, the hill-slopes or foot-hills of the Guniada, Ranibandh, Jhilimili, Susunia and Biharinath, as well as the river valleys of the Kumari-Kansavati, Bhairab-banki, and Dwarakeswar. The beginning of the history of Bankura culture may be traced in the south, west and north-western parts of the district.
The tools and artifacts, discovered so far, suggest that at the earliest stage of the prehistoric age, temporary settlements of the people of migratory nature occurred in the areas in Bankura, which form the eastern fringe of Chotanagpur plateau. The people at this stage were not probably so equipped as to plan for an advance pattern of group-hunting. As it has been suggested by the anthropologists, the people at this stage did not settle down with permanent dwelling and as such did neither have the need nor ability to form an organisation based on firm social relationship.

The palaeolithic people had to face often dangers and difficulties in their day-to-day life in the background of hills and jungles. In their struggle for existence, it was but natural for them to develop their faith in the spirits, represented by the hills, forests, ferocious beasts, rivers and whatever they might see in and around them. Animism or the spirit worship, of which we have distinct anthropological evidence for the Austrics or Proto-Australoids, might have begun with the palaeolithic people.

Microlithic Stage

Microlithic industries are generally associated with the culture of the hunting people, fishermen, pastoralists, or people practising some primitive form of agriculture\(^2\). Some scholars\(^3\) have attempted to designate this stage of culture in Eastern India as Mesolithic. Again, others\(^4\) have referred to the microlithic industry as flake-blade industry. In Bankura, however, the transition from the Palaeolithic to the microlithic stage only signified a development or more refinement in the lithic industry without implying any major change in the economy and culture. Microliths comprising fluted core, obliquely blunted or truncated blades, unfinished
retouched blades, points, lunates, borers, knives, side scrapers, end scrapers, thumb nail scrapers, notches, denti­culates, burins, scalene triangles, etc., are found in association with palaeoliths, on the one hand, and with the neolithic assemblage on the other. Microlithic occurrences are sometimes found along with iron slags and potsherds of later date.

So far as the settlement-pattern of the microlith-using people is concerned, we have to take into account the geographical distribution of the microlithic occurrences in almost all the river valleys in the district and further eastward in the new alluvial region. It appears that the microlith-users did not make their penetration into the northern, north-eastern and eastern fringes of the district. The aboriginal communities and lower castes are found to have concentrated their habitation at present in the areas of microlithic occurrences.

Thinning of the forest-cover and extinction of Pleistocene mammals might have led to the specialisation in microlith-manufacture. An early Holocene status may be tentatively ascribed to the early microlith-users. In spite of a very early beginning of the stage of culture indicated by the microlithic industry, the evidence for cultural evolution among the microlith-using people through contact with more advanced communities is clear. It may be reasonably assumed that 'the microlith-using hunter-gatherer - pastoralists came into contact with metal and pottery using settled agricultural communities and borrowed from the latter traits like pottery, metal tools and stone beads'. If this hypothesis be valid, we may reasonably formulate a corollary that the aboriginal communities in Bankura may have continued with their primitive economy and culture till much later period. The cultural anthropological survey of the district might substantiate the contention.
Neolithic Stage

The economy of all the earlier neolithic cultures in the Gangetic Valley was one of subsistence agriculture including plant and animal domestication\(^7\). Of course, in some cases, the early farming communities received stimuli from outside contact and were influenced by neighbouring hunting communities\(^8\). The neolithic collection in Bankura includes celts, bar-celts, point-butted axes, broad axes, chisels, triangular shaped axes, ring stones, mullers, bolas etc. The changes in technology in the neolithic stage provide us, no doubt, with an indication of plant cultivation. But, if we take into our consideration the tool types found in Bankura and their sizes, we can hardly trace any plant-processing equipment. Besides, no flora of the age has yet been discovered in fossil-forms. It is difficult for us to ascertain the items which were cultivated by the people. On the other hand, the microlithic-neolithic relationship appears to suggest that the early farming communities in Bankura remained in close contact with the people belonging to the hunting - fishing - food gathering stage. The sites along the Bhairab-banki, the Kumari-Kansavati and the Silavati exhibit this particular situation.

The settlement of the early farming communities in Bankura has to be determined on the basis of the geographical distribution of the lithic occurrence. Besides the stray occurrences in the valleys of the rivers Dwarakeswar and the Silavati, we may locate the concentration of the neolithic tools in three microlithic zones, viz. the confluence of the Kumari and the Kansavati, the bank of the river Bhairab-banki and the sites around the Susunia hill. It should, however, be noted that the neoliths in Bankura are mostly surface-finds.
So far as the chronological position of the neolithic stage is concerned, it has been suggested that in the central-eastern region, the food-producing economy began in the last quarter of the second millennium B.C. and lasted for three to four centuries, while in the mid-eastern region, it had its beginning towards the first quarter of the second millennium B.C. with a time-span spread up to circa 1400 B.C. At Pandu Rajar Dhibi, the discovery of the polished neolithic celts in period III indicates the continuity of the neolithic economy till the period of Chalcolithic Black-and-Red ware. Again, the use of polished stone axes recorded from the stratigraphy at Sonpur in Bihar indicates their continuity till period V i.e. C 300-50 B.C. In case of Bankura also, the neolithic economy and culture appear to have continued till much later date. The neolithic culture of Bankura can hardly be studied in isolation without reference to the archaeology of Eastern India in general and of West Bengal in particular.

The neolithic community who had taken to agriculture as the means of livelihood did not perhaps permanently settle, as their migratory habit is indicated by the stray finds of their tools in Bankura, as in other parts of West Bengal. However, "when man first started to cultivate crops and to herd his own domesticated animals, an increased interest in fertility and in magical means of promoting it appears to have become an almost universal aspect of culture". It may be reasonably held that the belief in spirit worship, that might have been in vogue, at the Palaeolithic - Mesolithic stage, underwent remarkable changes due to this interest in the cult of fertility that gave rise to some of the most important new concepts in the whole of religion. The fertility rites, intimately associated with the sowing and harvesting of crops and the
breeding of cattle, are found to have been inherited by the folk-culture of Bankura.

**Stage of Transition: Metal**

In the context of West Bengal, the archaeology of Bankura indicates that the Black-and-Red ware should be regarded as the diagnostic pottery of the Chalcolithic culture that appears to have continued till at least 6th century B.C., if not later. If the Black-and-Red ware be supposed to be the connecting link, there occurred an overlap of copper with iron at the same level of culture.

The settlement-sites of this stage of culture may be traced on the banks of the rivers Dwarakeswar, Kansavati and Tarafeni. The excavated site in the Dwarakeswar valley has yielded at the level of the Chalcolithic Black-and-Red ware culture different types of ceramics like black ware, red ware and grey ware, structural remains, copper objects, terracotta objects, stone beads, antlers, harpoons and bone tools. Tulsipur on the Kansavati valley has yielded, in addition to other types of antiquities referred to above, iron objects in association with black-and-red ware. The nature of occurrence at Kumardanga in the Tarafeni valley is similar to that of Tulsipur. It appears, therefore, that the centres of metal-age culture were not distributed all over Bankura, but were limited within the settlement-sites found out at Dihar, Tulsipur and Kumardanga. The rate of progress in the cultural life of Bankura was not uniform in all parts of the district.

Although structural remains have been found out at Dihar, these can not be considered as symptoms of urbanisation. The people at this stage appear to have inhabited simple houses comprising floors of beaten earth with soling
of rammed terracotta nodules and limes. The simplicity is demonstrated by the presence of re-impressed clay daubs, burnt reed-impressed clay plasters and large quantities of charcoal. It may, therefore, be assumed that the culture of this age was rural in character and agriculture-based. The ceramics of different varieties, hand-made or wheel-made, furnish us with the domestic utensils used by the villagers in their day-to-day life. Urban amenities can hardly be traced among the antiquities of the Chalcolithic age discovered so far in Bankura. Therefore, the occurrence of black-and-red ware, either plain or painted, seems to underline the process of large-scale village activities in the agricultural zones lying on the bank of the Dwarakeswar, the Kansavati and the Tarafeni.

The metal age is characterised by the limited use of copper and is indicated by a discovery of some copper objects at Bhaktabanhd. The sporadic nature of the occurrence does not, of course, warrant any conclusion regarding the time when the copper-users made their advent in this part of the district. There is a controversy among the scholars regarding authorship of 'Copper-hoard culture'. There is no indication that the copper tool types were imported from the Ganges-Yamuna doab. Because, the copper hoard site of Bankura, along with those of Purulia and Midnapur, lies in close juxtaposition to the copper mines of the Chotanagpur plateau. Mention may also be made of an ancient copper-mine at Purnapani in Bankura itself. This copper mine is said to be 2000 years old. A few old quarries have been traced in Satnala and Chendapathar also. The local tradition ascribes to the Jainas all the copper-mining works, the traces of which have been found in Saraikela and Dhalbhum, lying not very far from Bankura. All these data taken together seem to suggest that the so-called 'Copper-hoard culture'
had its origin and growth in the territory where the copper objects are found.

While copper tool types generally represent very simple economy, based on rudimentary agriculture, jungle clearance and hunting, the iron age ushered in an advanced economy based on extensive and intensive agriculture. The chronological sequence between copper and iron has been more or less determined by the test-probings at Bahiri¹⁴ (Birbhum district) where black-and-red ware are associated with small copper fragments in Period I (1000 B.C. – C.500 B.C.) and black-and-red ware are found in a limited quantity along with the remains of iron-smelting industry without any trace of copper object in Period II (C.500 B.C. – C.200 B.C.). Period I of Bahiri has its parallel in the excavated Chalcolithic site at Dihar while Period II of Bahiri has its counterpart at the sites of Tulsipur and Kumardanga. It may, however, be pointed out that the finds of black-and-red ware are not limited in quantity at Tulsipur and Kumardanga, although they are found associated with the iron remains.

Whatever may be the dating of the Iron Age suggested by archaeologists, we can hardly overlook the ethnological data indicating that the iron-smelting industry was quite known to the aboriginal people of Eastern India. Dalton¹⁵ has brought to our notice: (i) the Mundari people found in their original settlement quantities of iron-ore and commenced smelting it; (ii) the Kols were generally aware of the technical know-how of the smelting of iron, as their country was pretty rich in that material; (iii) the wilder clans, the Khāriās, the Bīrhōrs, the Asuras and Āgariāhs chiefly devoted their attention to iron-smelting; (iv) the Korwās who were considered formidable bowmen, manufactured the barbed arrow-heads of iron they smelt in their own hills.
The tribal culture based on iron-smelting economy that had developed in Chotanagpur plateau naturally expanded with the tribal migration in the eastern extension of the plateau in Bankura and other adjacent parts of West Bengal. In spite of the iron-smelting industry, the tribal people did not, however, make any remarkable progress in economy and culture.

Early Historic Stage

The population in Bankura may be broadly divided into two elements: One consisting of the primitive tribes and the lower castes like Hari, Dom, Chandala, Bauri, Bagdi and others; and the other consisting of the higher classes of people which come within the framework of the caste-system. The former groups are representatives of the original inhabitants and the majority of them were descendants of the non-Aryan people, referred to as Nishādas in Vedic literature. According to the family to which their language belonged, they have been designated as Austro-Asiatic or Austric. Most probably these Nishādas with their lithic culture, formed the substratum of the population of Bankura, as of most other parts of Bengal. They lived for a long time with their own culture beyond the Aryan fold.

Jaina writers of the Āchāraṅga Sūtra described the land, the Lādhās (Radha) in West Bengal, as a pathless country inhabited by a rude folk who attacked peaceful monks. The Jaina text divides the land of Lādhā into two parts named Vajjabhumi and Subrabhumi. Vajjabhumi (Land of Diamond) has its capital at Panitabhumi (that is, Purushabhumi). This might have included parts of modern Birbhum, Burdwan, Hooghly and Bankura districts. It has been suggested that the "Bhūmij were probably the 'Vajra Bhūmi' (the terrible indigenes) who are described as abusing, beating, shooting arrows at, and baiting with dogs, the great Saint Viṣṇu, the
twenty-fourth Jina or Tīrthaṅkara of the Jains. It appears that Raḍhā came in contact with the culture of Aryavarta through the spread of Jainism. The most important Jaina locality connected with the memory of Pārśva, the Paresnath hill, is located in Bihar and its replica is also found in Bankura itself. It is, however, difficult to ascertain the date when Jainism first spread in Radha. In this connection, we may consider the list of sixteen Mahājanapadas as given in the Jaina Bhagavati Sūtra, which includes the name of Lāḍhā (Raḍhā). The 6th century B.C. may be tentatively regarded as the date when Raḍhā came to be recognised as one of the Janapadas lying within the fold of Jaina culture.

Buddhism perhaps followed Jainism in Raḍhā. The tradition recorded in the Divyavadāna and also by Hiuen Tsang makes it highly probable that Buddhism was known in Bengal during the reign of Asoka, the great Maurya emperor. In fact, Hiuen Tsang has located the Stūpas built by Asokarāja in Pundravardhana, Samaṭāta, Tamralipti and Karnasuvarṇa. The Janapadas of Karnasuvarṇa and Tamralipti, visited by Hiuen Tsang, might have formed parts of modern district of Bankura. Because, Karnasuvarṇa covered the greater part of West Bengal and Tamralipti formed the Janapada in south-west Bengal. In early times, the modern district of Bankura comprised the territory that was incorporated partly in Dandabhūkti and partly in Vardhamānabhūkti. While the former was bounded by Kaliṅga on the west, the river Dwarakeswar on the east and the river Suvarnarekha on the south, the latter embraced the valley of the river Damodar. As Royvidyanidhi has suggested, Kaliṅga was once located at Simlapal (Tuṅgabhūm) in Bankura. The closely juxtaposed borders of Kaliṅga and Bankura district might have occasionally overlapped in political circumstances that are hinted at in Mukundaram's Dharmamahgal Kāvyā. Whatever that might be,
there remains little scope of doubt that the influence of Buddhism had spread in Bankura as early as the Maurya period.

The contact of Bankura, lying in Rādhā, with North India in the 5th-4th century B.C. is attested by the discovery of cast copper coins at Dihar and Pakhanna and of silver punch-marked coins at Pakhanna, Govindapur and Giorda. It is interesting to note that cast copper and punch-marked coins have been found at Pakhanna along with the NBP ware which is dated to c.600-100 B.C. There is a controversy among scholars regarding the date of the earliest Indian coins. D. R. Bhandarkar (1921) assigned the mid-3rd millennium B.C., G. R. Sharma (1960) 800 B.C., J. Cribb (1986) 4th century B.C., M. Mitchiner (1973), and D. D. Kosāmbi (1956) 600 B.C. On the other hand, M. K. Dhavalikar (1975), P. L. Gupta (1969) and S. Roy (1959) have suggested the date of circa.500 B.C. which is supported by the stratigraphic relationship of coins and NBP ware, as it is known from Hastināpura and Atranjikherā.

The results of G. Erdosy's researches have shown the dating of the NBP ware from 480 B.C. to 50 B.C. at Ahichhatra, from 450 B.C. to A.D. 130 at Atranjikherā, from 100 B.C. to A.D. 80 at Ayodhya, from 400 B.C. to 350 B.C. at Besnagar, from 200 B.C. to A.D. 70 at Chārsadā, A.D. 80 at Chirand, from 360 B.C. to A.D. 70 at Hastināpura, and from 410 B.C. to 160 B.C. at Kausāmbi. According to him, the time-range of early NBP ware is 600 B.C. to 200 B.C. and that of late NBP ware from 200 B.C. to A.D. 150.

In Bankura situation it appears that the NBP ware found at Pakhanna should be placed in the earlier phase i.e. from c.600 B.C. to 200 B.C. This is mainly because, the Cast Copper Coins and the Punch-marked coins are associated with the ware. The authorship of the early Indian Coins
has not yet been definitely determined, although it has been suggested by some scholars that those might have been put into circulation during the Nanda-Maurya rule.

Although no epigraphic record of the Maurya-Sunga-Kushāṇa period has yet been discovered in any part of Rādhā, where Bankura lies, the cultural contact may, however, be established between this part of Bengal and the greater part of Northern India from the 4th century B.C. to the 3rd century A.D. The terracotta figurines having close affinity with the Maurya-Sunga idiom of art have been found at Pakhanna and Dihar. Again, the potsherds of the type of Śūṇa-Kushāṇa bowls have been found at Pakhanna. There remains little scope of doubt that a close liaison was maintained between the Gangā-Yamunā Valley on the one hand and the Damodar Valley on the other. It is, however, difficult to explain the cultural bearing of the antiquities found at Dihar in the Dwarakeswar valley. It is to be noted that at Dihar, the black-and-red ware indicating the Chalcolithic age is not succeeded by the Northern Black Polished ware which is associated at Pakhanna with the money economy, trade and commerce and urbanisation. In other words, the Black-and-Red ware Chalcolithic culture did not lead to the natural development from rural to urban culture. While the development of Pakhanna was co-eval with that of Mahāsthāṅgarh, Bāṅgarh, Tāmralipta and Chandraketugarh, Dihar appears to have lagged behind, in spite of the discovery of some antiquities having affinity with those of Pakhanna.

It was probably in the 2nd-3rd century A.D. that the imitation Kushāṇa Coins, generally known as Purī-Kushāṇa Coins, were put in circulation in Eastern India. The authorship of these coins is yet unknown, although alternative
speculations have been made by scholars that those were manufactured by some temple-authorities in Orissa, or by the mercantile community who devised the currency during the period of political turmoil following the decline of the Kushāṇa imperial authority, or by the Murundas who ruled in the Lower Gangā Valley in the 2nd-3rd century A.D. till the rise of the Imperial Guptas. Whatever that might be, the so-called Purī-Kushāṇa coins have been discovered so far at different places in Bankura district viz., Chiada, Rautara, Tilbani, Sarengarh, Sulgi, Brahmandiha, Harmasra, Kadamdeuli, Jiorda and Govindapur.

We may not overlook the concentration of the imitation Kushāṇa coins in the areas nearer to the Orissa border. It might be that the Orissans who had migrated to Bankura brought with them the household wealth in the form of such coins. During the reign of Śasāṅka, the south-western part of Bengal came into closer contact with the northern part of Orissa. The migration from Orissa to Bankura might have occurred sometime in the first part of the 7th century A.D. Therefore, the findspots of the so-called Purī-Kushāṇa coins discovered in Bankura might have some ethnographic explanation and hence be dated to the post-Gupta period, although the coins themselves should be historically associated with the pre-Gupta period.

The Gupta period witnessed the completion of the process of Aryanisation in Bengal. Vedic Brāhmaṇism and Purānic Hinduism made remarkable progress in their expansion in Bengal under the patronage of the Guptas. The earliest epigraphic record found in Bankura is dated on palaeographic grounds to the 4th century A.D. and testifies to the advent of the Vaishnava faith. It is the Susunia Rock inscription of Mahārāja Chandravarmā, son of Mahārāja Simhavarmā, lord
of Pushkaraṇā. Chandravarma is described as a devotee of Chakrasvāṁi (the 'Lord of the Wheel'), that is Viṣṇu. Among the kings of Āryāvarta, who were, according to the Allahābād Praśasti, uprooted by Samudragupta, we find the name of Chandravarman who may be reasonably identified with the king of that name mentioned in the Susunia inscription as ruler of Pushkaraṇā. Pushkaraṇā has been identified with the village named Pakharna, 25 miles north-west of Susunia, on the south bank of the river Damodar. But MM. H.P. Sastri has identified Pushkaraṇā with Pokharan in the Jodhpur state. Sastri’s view has been accepted by V. A. Smith and R. D. Banerji. But Pushkaraṇā or Pokharnā (Pakhanna) has yielded considerable quantity of antiquities belonging to the Gupta period, such as structural remains with the bricks of Gupta style. Chandravarma may, therefore, be regarded as the king of Rādhā by defeating whom Samudragupta paved the way for the conquest of Bengal. The impact of the Gupta rule in Bankura is not only demonstrated by the spread of Vaiṣṇavism but also by some stray occurrences of brick-structures at Thakurpur and Gahirhati on the bank of the Dwarakeswar and at Junbedeya and Bandeuli on the bank of the Silavati.

Due to the paucity of evidence, we are not in a position to ascertain the ancestry of king Simhavaran, father of Chandravaran or the duration of the rule of the Varman kings in Pushkaraṇā. However, it appears that with the rise of the Varman rulers to political power and authority sometime about the middle of the 4th Century A.D., if not earlier, a separate kingdom was carved out in Bankura with the seat of authority at Pushkaraṇā. This phenomenon indicates the origin of state without which the decentralised village economy would not be changed to organised urban economy. The surplus agricultural production was vouchsafed for by the irrigation system that is evident from the discovery
of a number of terracotta ringwells at Pakhanna. The finds of coins of the earlier period indicate brisk trade and commerce carried on by the organised mercantile class. At the background of such change in socio-economic-political spheres, the most important consideration was, no doubt, a technology of iron that might have been inherited from the Black-and-Red ware Chalcolithic level of culture.

Early Mediaeval Phase

From about the 7th century A.D. onward, the history of Bankura, especially in its political aspect, almost completely merged with that of Bengal. Because, Bankura, being included either in Danḍabhūkti Maṇḍal or in Vardhamāna bhūkti, formed a part and parcel of the kingdom of Gauḍa ruled over by different dynasties. It was not till the 11th - 12th century A.D. that any worth-mentioning powerful chief came to rule in Bankura independently. During the reign of the Pāla King Mahipāla I (c.988 - 1038 A.D.), the whole of Bengal appears to have been parcelled out into a number of independent kingdoms. This is attested by the Tirumālai rock inscription of Rājendra Chola where we find references to Daṇḍabhūkti, Dakshina Rāḍhā, Uttara Rāḍhā and Vaṅgāla ruled over by Dharmapāla, Ranasura, Mahipāla and Govindachandra respectively. Presumably, taking an opportunity of the weakness of the central authority, the feudal chiefs acquired independent status in different parts of Bengal. Among them Ranasūra of southern Rāḍhā and Dharmapāla of Danḍabhūkti might have shared between themselves the territories lying in the modern district of Bankura. The Pāla kingdom at that time was much in trouble due to the invasion of the Kāmbojas. The ruling chiefs, referred to above, fished in troubled water of Bengal politics. Again, it is known from the Rāmacarita of Sandhyākara Nandi that the last great Pāla king Rāmapāla (c.1077-1120 A.D.)
sought the aid of Viraguna, king of Kotātavi and Lakshmīsura, the lord of Apāra-Mandāra, among others, for regaining his authority in Varendrī by subduing the Kaivarta rebellion. Kotātavi has been identified with Koteśwara lying to the east of Vishnupur in Bankura district. Apara-Mandāra has been identified with Māndāran or Garh Māndāran in the Amabagh subdivision of Hooghli district. In this connection, it would be relevant to point out that Lakshmīsura has been described in the Rāmacarita as the "head of the group of feudal chiefs of the forest". Viraguna was, no doubt, ruling the forest kingdom, as it is indicated by the suffix Aṭavi appended to the name Koṭa. It has been suggested by some that Rudra-Sikhara, the ruler of Taila-Kampa, another feudal lord, whose military aid was sought by Rampala, according to the Rāmacarita, also ruled in parts of Bankura, because Tailakampa is identified with Telkupi in Purulia district, the region referred to in the Ain-i-Akbarī as Pargāna Shergarh, commonly known as Sekharbhūm or Sikharbhūm. Of the rulers referred to above, Viraguna was defeated by Vijaya Sena, as we come to know from his Deopārā Praśasti. It appears, therefore, that the rise of the Senas to power and authority put an end to the independent status of the feudal lords in Bankura.

The architectural and sculptural remains in Bankura have been dated by scholars between the 10th and the 13th century A.D. The remains of art are mostly religious and suggest the spread of Purānic Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism in different parts of the district. Purānic Hinduism in Bankura is known to us from the temples of Śiva at Ekteswar, Dihar, Bahulara, in addition to the temples at Sonatapol and Deubhira; images of Viṣṇu, Śiva, Sūrya, Gaṇesa, Śakti (Devi), Kārttikeya, Kubera, Indrāni and Manaśā found in all parts of the district. The spread of Jainism is attested by the discovery of the images of Tīrthankaras and Śaśānanadevatās.
mostly in southern and western parts of the district. In some cases, the Jaina antiquities are found mixed up with Brahmanical gods and goddesses. Buddhism does not appear to have gained much popularity, as the finds of Buddhist remains are few and far between. Some images of Bodhisattva and Mahāyāna goddess Mārīcī have been found so far. It is worth-mentioning that at Deulbhira (P.S. Indpur) there is a concentration of Buddhist remains.

So far as the architectural style is concerned, Bankura witnessed in the early mediaeval period the predominance of rekha deul type, most probably imported from Orissa, although bhadra or pijha, that is tiered type was not unknown. The rekha deul type which belongs to nāgara style of architecture was not only employed for constructing the temples dedicated to Hindu gods and goddesses but also for the construction of the Jaina temples. Although the Jaina temples are not found extant in Bankura, the miniature votive shrines known caturmukhas or caumukhas of rekha deul type are found to be dedicated to the Jaina Tīrthankaras. Such shrines belonging to the Sarvatobhadra type represent the four Tīrthankaras on four faces of it. In Brāhmanism an echo of the Jaina Sarvatobhadrikā has been recognised in the iconographic motif of Siva linga with four faces on four sides, commonly designated as caturmukha linga. Further, the miniature votive shrines of the Jainas provide us with the prototype of the rekha temples found in Bankura and other parts of West Bengal.

The sculptural art in Bankura flourished simultaneously with the development of the Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Art. The Hindu images discovered so far are interesting iconographically, as the divinities are represented symbolically, theriomorphically and anthropomorphically. Besides, some syncretistic images have come to light. The symbolic
representation of Viṣṇu is found in Chakra (Wheel) occurring in the Susunia hill by the side of Chandravarman's epigraph. The theriomorphic representation of the god may be traced in the independent image of Garuda. The anthropomorphic form of Viṣṇu is found in its Sthanaka and Sayana varieties, in addition to the images of incarnations of Viṣṇu and those of the Audhapuruṣas. Lokesvara Viṣṇu appears to be a syncretistic form in which Bodhisattva Lokesvara and Viṣṇu are represented in one. Again, the symbolic representation of Śiva in his linga form is more popular than his anthropomorphic form. Bull nandi represents the theriomorphic form of Śiva. Anthropomorphically, Śiva is represented both in his Saumya (peaceful) and ghora or ugra (destructive) aspects. While Uma-Mahesvara images stand for the Saumya aspect, those of Bhairava represent the ghora or ugra aspect. Naṭarāja or Naṭesā, represented in image form either independently or in a medallion, combines both the aspects, suggesting creation, preservation and destruction of the universe. The images of Uma-Mahesvara suggest a syncretistic tendency in the religious life that brought about an alliance between the Śaivas and the Śaktas. In a single specimen of Viṣṇu image we find dancing Śiva carved on the pedestal, thus suggesting an understanding between the Vaiṣṇavas and the Śaivas.

Śaktism in Bankura, as in Bengal, held the major position comparable to that of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism. While the images of Durgā-Simhavāhini stand for the Saumya aspect of the goddess, those of Chāmuṇḍā represent her ugra or ghora aspect. The images of Mahiṣamardinī combine her destructive attitude with that of benevolence. Chāmuṇḍā appears to be a concrete representation of the esoteric symbolism underlying the Tantric faith. The images of Sūrya, Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya do not show any worth mentioning iconographic peculiarity. The images of minor deities like Kubera, Indra/Indrāni and
Manasā are found in a small number.

The images of the Jaina Tirthankaras, found in considerable number, are distinguished by their lāñchanas or cognisances. The iconographic features of the Jina images are quite in accordance with the prescribed injunctions of the iconographic texts. The Śāsana devis or Yakshinis, associated with the Tirthankaras, are found only in two forms, viz. Ambikā associated with Nemiṇātha and Siddhayika associated with Mahāvīra. Besides, Lion, the cognisance of Mahāvīra, is found sometimes to be represented independently. A large number of Jaina images have been found in fragmentary, abraded or damaged condition, baffling their proper iconographic identification. However, the Jaina relics discovered so far in Bankura seem to suggest that Jainism remained confined to the tribal tract in the fringes of Bankura which formed the eastern extension of the Chotanagpur plateau.

If we attach any importance to the quantification of the relics discovered in an area, we may safely assume that Buddhism in its Mahāyāna form did not gain much popularity and was relegated to the position of secondary importance in the religious life of Bankura. Some scholars have traced the remains of a stūpa in a basement by the side of the temple of Bahulara. If this be accepted as a stupa, it may be held that the Hinayāna form of Buddhism preceded the Mahāyāna form of Buddhism. The images of Boddhisattva, attributed to Lokanāthāvariety of Avalokiteśvara are found. The images of Mahāyāna goddess Mārichi can be identified, while that of a female divinity holding bow and book in her two left hands is difficult to be identified, as most of the iconic features of the image are missing.

Bankura, lying between the Chotanagpur Plateau, the home of the aboriginal tribes, and the plains inhabited by
the civilized classes, exhibits in marked contrast a mixture of tribal religion and the higher religion of the elite. A very large portion of the population of Bankura consists of tribals whose religion is compounded of elements borrowed from orthodox Hinduism and survivals from the mingling of animism and nature worship upheld by the pure aboriginals. The Bagdis worship Śiva, Viṣṇu, Durgā, Dharma Ṭhākur and Manasa, while the Bauris worship Manasa, Bhādu, Barapāhāri, Dharmarāj and Ugrasini. Among the Sāntāls the great god is Mārāngburu (the Great mountain). The relics of primitive religion discovered so far are the images of snake-goddess Manasa and those of tortoise (Kurma) worshipped as Dharma Ṭhākur. Besides, there are innumerable terracotta figurines, male and female, which stand for the gods and goddesses of the tribal people and the lower castes.

EPILOGUE

Towards the development of the culture in Bankura district, contributions have been made by the original inhabitants as well as the bearers of Aryan culture coming from outside in course of conquests, trade and commerce, visits to the places of pilgrimage and religious missions. We should also keep in view the contributions made by the Orissans in particular. The settlements of the Orissan Brāhmaṇins are found in Raipur, Ranibandh, Khatra, Simlapal and Taldangra police stations. In these settlements we do find the occurrences of Hindu relics along with the Jaina antiquities. The circumstance in which the Orissans migrated to Bankura are not exactly known to us. It may, however, be surmised that in the 7th century A.D., when the Gauda kingdom of Saśānka included parts of northern Orissa, Ogra came in close contact with Raḍhā. Later, in the 8th - 9th centuries A.D., the Sulkis of Kodālaka maṇḍala might have paved the way for the maintenance of cultural contacts between the two ethnic groups, Raḍhās and Odras, as it is suggested by the liberal donation of land made by Ranastambha-deva to a
brāhmin from Rādhā. In the 12th century A.D. Anantavarman
Choḍagāṅga's military expedition as far as Mandāran (probably
Arambagh in Hooghly district) across Midnapur (Midhunāpura)
might have brought in Rādhā another wave of migration of the
Orissans. The ethnic migrations brought in Bankura the
Orissan culture which is quite evident in the Jaina relics
like Caturmukhas, Nāgara style of temple architecture,
characteristic modelling of the images of divinities and
some art-motifs.

Ecology, economy and culture are inter-related with
each other. Ecology of a place is determined to a great
extent by its geomorphological and geographical position,
which, in their turn, encourage or discourage the growth of
flora, fauna and human habitation. Economy is dependent on
the factor of this growth. Human intelligence and labour,
of course, go a long way in modulating, moderating and
exploiting what nature gives to man. The fruits of man's
intelligence are the means of production in the form of
tools and implements, either of stone or of metal. Those
tools and implements suggest how man makes progress from
the stage of food-gathering to that of food-producing, again,
from rural economy to urban economy. Economy basically
determines the material culture, and on the foundation of
material culture is constructed the superstructure of mental-
intellectual - spiritual culture.

In Bankura, we have found the dawn of savage culture
in the extended hill slopes, the development of barbarian
culture in the upper reaches of the rivers - the Tarafeni,
the Bhairab-banki, the Kumari, the Kansavati, the Silavati,
the Dwarakeswar, the Gandheswari, the Sali and the Damodar,
and the progress towards civilization in the valley of the
river Damodar, nearing the Lower Gangetic Delta. The
streams of higher culture continued to flow in and overpower
the culture of the aboriginal people. The higher culture found its expression in the way of life propounded by the Jainas, Buddhists and Brâhmanists. Religion, that is, a way of life, not only produces literature and philosophy but also art and architecture. For the period under study, we have a plethora of evidence having bearing upon the Hindu, Jaina and Buddhist art and architecture. Despite this progress made in the development of higher culture in Bankura, the aboriginal tribes and their descendants still maintain their primitive religious beliefs and practices, rites and rituals, which suggest the continuity of village-based farming economy. Urbanisation and sophistication of culture associated with it appear to have touched only the fringe of Bankura culture.
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