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An Archive of Cultural Heritage of Bengal

PASCHIM MEDINIPUR

Directorate of Culture,
Department of Information and
Cultural Affairs,
Government of West Bengal

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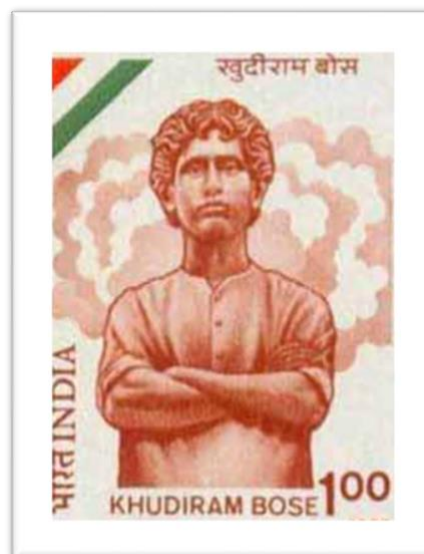
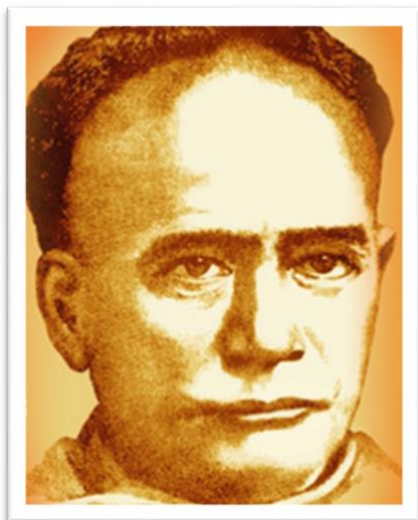
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PASCHIM MEDINIPUR

Land of Reformers and Rebels

A) People and Eminent Personalities:

1. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar: Social reformer, educationist, academician, philanthropist, writer and linguist – multi-faceted luminary Vidyasagar was born Ishwar Chandra Bandyopadhyay, on 26 September, 1820 in Birsingha village of Midnapore district. He is remembered for revolutionising the education system of Bengal, refining the Bengali language and making it accessible to the common strata of the society. He led a movement for making remarriage of widows legal and fought against child marriage and polygamy. He was a keen advocate of education for women.



2. Khudiram Bose: One of youngest freedom fighters of India, Khudiram was born on 3rd December, 1889 in Habibpur, Keshpur in Midnapore district. In 1905, during the first Partition of Bengal, he became active in freedom movement. In 1908, Khudiram joined the revolutionary group Anushilan Samiti, headed by Aurobindo Ghose and his brother Barindra Ghose. Khudiram, along with another youngster Prafulla Chaki, was sent to Muzaffarpur to kill British officer Douglas H Kingsford, known for harsh treatment of swadeshi activists. However, a bomb that Khudiram hurled hit the wrong carriage, carrying a British barrister's family. Khudiram was sentenced to death and hanged on 11th August, 1908.

3. Biplobi Pradyot Kumar Bhattacharya: Born in November 1913 in Daspur, Pradyot Bhattacharya joined Bengal Volunteers group and led an attack in 1932 on Midnapore Magistrate Robert Douglas who was involved in a horrific strike on prisoners in Hijli detention camp. The camp shooting evoked widespread condemnation and caused death of two freedom fighters. Bhattacharya was tried in the murder case and was hanged at the age of 19 on 12th January, 1933

4. Biplobi Bimal Dasgupta: He too was a member of Bengal Volunteers and was involved in several incidents of attacks on British officials and associates.

5. Biplobi Hemchandra Kanungo: A member of the Anushilan Samiti, Kanungo travelled to Paris in 1907 and he learnt the technique of assembling bombs. Kanungo was one of the co-accused with Aurobindo Ghosh in the Alipore Bomb Case (1908–09). He was sentenced to transportation for life in the Andamans, but was released in 1921

6. Rani Shiromani of Karnagarh: Rani Shiromani, the queen of Karnagarh during the British rule in India. played a key role in Chuar rebellion in Midnapore. a series of peasant movements between 1769 and 1809 in Midnapore, Bankura and Manbhum against the rule of the East India Company. The rebels rose in revolt due to the exploitative land revenue policies of the company, which threatened their economic livelihoods. The Rani refused to pay revenue to the British East India Company. The rebels also planned an attack on Midnapore in March 1798, but refrained after rumours of the British was soon despatching a large force there. The company troops actually launched an attack the next month and captured the Rani. She was exiled to Abasgarh and kept incarcerated within her house for years. She died in 1812.

B) Events & Festivals

Karam Parab: Karam Parab is one of the major festivals celebrated by diverse groups of people, including: the, [Santal](#), [Munda](#), [Kudmi](#), [Baiga](#), [Bhumij](#), [Oraon](#), Lodha and many more. It is the festival that celebrates the grandeur of Mother Nature and good harvest. Nine types of seeds are planted in a basket, such as rice, wheat, corn etc, which is called Jawa. Girls take care of these seeds for 7–9 days..On festival day, community girls fast throughout day. People go to the jungle accompanied by groups of drummers and cut branches of the [Karam](#) tree after worshipping it. The branches are usually carried by unmarried, young girls who sing in praise of the deity. Then the branches are brought to the village and planted for ritual activities. Women of the village dance to the beat of folk songs. The dance is accompanied by dhamsa, madal and other musical instrument played by men. After puja, in the next morning, the karam branch is immersed.

Tusu Parab: Tusu Puja, also called the Tusu Festival, is an important festival in the rural areas of West Medinipur. It is a celebration of a bountiful harvest season involving worship of the Goddess Tusu. It is basically performed in the month of Pausa, during the Gregorian months of December and January. Tusu dance is basically the celebration of the arrival of an auspicious

and pleasant season. On the day of Makar Sankranti, people gather at the riverside to worship the clay idol of Goddess Tusu.



Tusu Parab

Baha: Baha is an important festival in the rural areas of West Medinipur. In Santali language Baha means 'flower'. It is also considered the holiest festival of all and celebrated in the month of Falgun, the first month of Santal calendar. The festival celebrates man's communion with mother nature. In Falgun, common trees, like Mohuwa, Peepal, Polash, Sal etc. bear new leaves, flowers or fruits. This is the time, Santals believe, when the trees should not be disturbed by plucking or cutting off their buds, flowers, leaves and branches. Women do not use Sal flowers in their hair for decoration and trees are not cut for firewood at this time. The main *puja* of the Baha is held at the 'Jaher Than', the sacred grove outside the village. Various tribal sports, folk dances are organized on the occasion of Baha.



Baha Parab

Makar Sankranti: Makar Sankranti is a major harvest festival celebrated in rural areas of the district. It is also known as Poush Sankranti. Makar Sankranti marks the end of winter as well as the beginning of longer days on account of the sun's northward journey, this period is also known as Uttarayan on this account and is considered to be very auspicious. On the occasion of Makar Sankranti people take a dip in the rivers with the expectation of prosperity and peace. There is a tradition of making different types of “peethe” and “puli” – homemade sweetmeats -- on this occasion.

Badhna Parab: During Dipwabali and Kartick Purnima, tribal festival Badhna Parab is held in villages. It is also known as “Goru Khutan” in some rural areas. Villagers decorate their houses with colour and worship cattle and livestock which form the backbone of these communities’ livelihoods. This is a harvest festival observed by the agrarian Kurmi, Koda, Bhumij, and Santhal communities. With this festival they actually prepare to welcome the new harvest season. The most striking part of the festival are the Ahira folk songs, mainly sung in Kudmali, which is the local dialect. These songs recall folk tales of the tribal communities and their deep philosophical approach to living a life in harmony with their land, and animals, the importance of their cattle. The catchy beats of madal, the tunes of Ahira songs and the warm and sweet flavours of the pitha, a homemade delicacy, mark the beginning of the festivities.



Badhna Parab

C) Cultural Tradition & Art Forms

The folk dances of West Bengal are a reflection of the rich [cultural](#) heritage of West Bengal. The various folk dances of this state are known for their enthusiasm and beauty. Each region of West Bengal has something different to display. Dance is a part of the tribal lifestyle. Various folk dances performed in different parts of Paschim Medinipur District during different occasions. The folk dances in this district are initially either devotional or agricultural or related to nature. The major folk dances of the districts are as follows:

Pata Naach: Pata Naach is a famous dance shape of Paschim Medinipur District. The dancers carry out this dance in a line. The village girls dance in same dress of “Kacchi” Shari

and leaf and flowers in the hair. The men accompany them with dhamsa, madal, flute, and so forth.



Pata Nach

Tusu: Tusu Puja is a celebration of a bountiful harvest season involving worship of the Goddess Tusu. It is basically performed in the month of Pausa, during the Gregorian months of December and January. Tusu dance is the celebration of the arrival of an auspicious and pleasant season. Groups of girls go to the riverside or big water side of the locality every evening, in the Pausa month, to sing and perform. On the day of Makar Sankranti, they gather together at the riverside, to worship the clay idol of Goddess Tusu.

Sarpa Dance: Sarpa dance is a tribal dance form of Jangalmahal area of West Bengal. Generally tribal women of the village dance with an instrument made up of wood and rope known as Sarpa, which sounds in a rhythmic bit with the rhythm of dance and songs. The men accompany them with dhamsa, madal and flute.



Ranpa: Ranpa is a special kind of dancing phenomenon observed in this district which has its roots in martial arts. In this dance the artists walk and dance, perform mock fights and exhibit complex skills. The artistes stand up on a ladder to dance and show their art of huge balance and concentrations. Only the male artists take part in this dance, accompanied by musical instruments like 'madal' and 'dhamsa,

Raibeshe: Raibeshe finds many admirers in Paschim Medinipur District of West Bengal. The martial art form was used by “Lathiyals” deployed by the feudal lords to defend them. Traditionally, this dance involves vigorous and manly movements of the body along with the acrobatics. This dance is accompanied by [dhols](#) and Kanshis.



Ranpa



Raibeshe

Karam Dance: Karam dance is basically an [agriculture](#) related festival and is performed by Munda, Santal and others. This ceremony supposedly summons the spirits of nature to ensure an abundant harvest. They have the belief that by the blessing of the [God](#) "Karam" they will get plentiful [crops](#) and their family will be saved from evil. The Karam dance is performed on the night of "Bhado Ekadasi" which usually falls in the month of August. This is a group dance where both male and female dancers participate enthusiastically. Karam dance is the rhythmic representation of the pastoral dance which is characterised by graceful postures and melodious notes. The songs are composed of few notes of close interval signifying the unconscious and slow progress of crops in the fields. The men and the women are divided into separate groups who participate in the dancing festival.

The dance is accompanied by dhamsa, madal and other musical instruments.

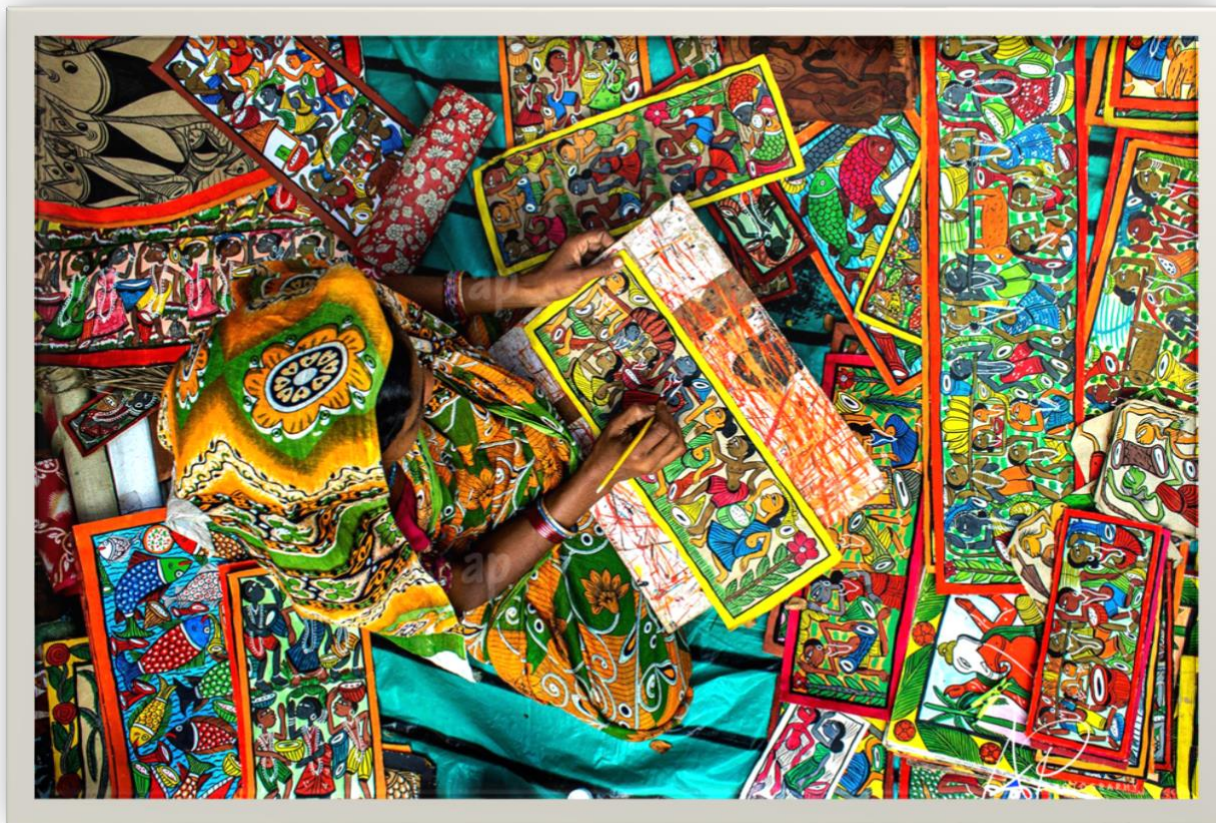
Chhau: *Chhau* is a popular form of tribal dance that incorporates elements of martial arts into its movements. According to certain literary scholars, the word *Chhau* is derived from the Sanskrit word '*Chhaya*' which essentially means masks, shadow or image while other scholars believe that the word is derived from '*Chhauni*' which means military camp. This form of dance is a means to portray stories to the audience, which is why elaborate masks and headgear associated with battle and war are worn during the performance. The stories revolve around the two great epics of mythology such as Ramayana and Mahabharata. These performances are predominantly put up during the *Gajan* Festival, which takes place to honour Lord Shiva. This dance is accompanied by dhamsa, banshi and other musical instruments.



Chhau

Art forms of Paschim Medinipur:

Patachitra: Patachitra is a unique folk tradition visual story telling accompanied by songs of Paschim Medinipur District. In Patachitra stories are printed as frames on long scrolls and patuas gradually unfurl them while presenting story through their songs. The word “Pata” comes from the Sanskrit word Patta that means a piece of cloth and “Chitra” means painting. The songs are known as Pater Gaan, which is passed down from generation to generations. Patachitra paintings of Bengal have drawn the attention and interest of artists, art connoisseurs, and researchers. Traditionally, the Patuas would travel from village to village singing and displaying the scrolls. Naya village of Pingla Block under Paschim Medinipur District is famous for Patachitra. This unique folk culture not only enlivens the traditional mythological stories but is also used to communicate the social issues. Its bold colours, lines, and strokes are really unique in nature. The raw materials used to make a piece of traditional Patachitra paintings are Papers, cloths, natural adhesive and natural colour extracted from flowers, vegetables, leaves and mud. Natural glue collected from acacia, wood apple and other trees and it mixed with natural colours. Then it kept in the bright sunlight to darken. Outlines of the painting are drawn on paper with paint and brush. Then, the line drawings are filled with colours. After that a layer of recycled soft fabric is pasted on the reverse side of the paper to make the scroll stronger. The paintings are then dried naturally. Naya village of Pingla Block under Paschim Medinipur District is a village of artists where residents use the term ‘chitrakar’ as their surname. Also called Patuas, these artists are truly special. Information & Cultural Affairs Department of Government of West Bengal is providing economic benefits to the Patuas through Lok Prasar Prakalpa and this folk media is also using in different social awareness campaigns.



Patachitra

Madur crafts: West Bengal is traditionally a state of artistic crafts. Mat weavers, specialized in weaving of varieties of mats constitute a section of such folk art. Mats of different kinds and are produced in different parts of the state. However, the finer variety of mats, especially manufactured from madur grass (*Cyperus tegetum*) is concentrated in south-eastern part of the district of West Midnapore, especially in the Sobong Block. District Level Society has been formed by Government of West Bengal containing the all artisans engaged with Madur activity for better development & marketing. Efforts are also on for exploring opportunity of women empowerment and expressing their artistic skills. Some women of West Bengal's Paschim Medinipur District has been given the National Handicrafts Award in recognition of their outstanding contribution to the development of crafts. In order to promote sale of handicrafts products in and outside the state, the MSME Department of government of West Bengal is also implementing a Scheme for providing financial assistance in the form of grants for reimbursement of travelling allowance, daily allowance and carrying cost to the handicraft artisans for participation in different Exhibitions/ Expos/Fairs, organised and participated by the Department of MSME&T.



Madur crafts

Bell and Brass Metal Crafting: Petol in Bengali means brass (an alloy of copper and zinc) ; whereas Kansa is bell metal. Bell metal is a variety of bronze with a higher proportion of tin. Brass metal handicrafts bear a long tradition of excellence and unique craftsmanship. West Bengal has a rich heritage of handicrafts. It carries international repute for carving and exquisite craft of bell and brass metal engraving. Bell and Brass Metal crafting has socio-cultural and religious importance over centuries. The uniqueness of this handicraft is that the technique of production is purely traditional and hereditary. In Paschim Medinipur District Bell and Brass Metal crafting is mainly found at Kharor and Daspur area of Ghatal Sub-Division. Government of West Bengal has taken various indicatives for development and promoting Bell and Brass Metal Crafting through Department of MSME&T.

Crafts of Indian Cork or Shola: Along with other part of West Bengal some areas of Paschim Medinipur such as Keshiary is popular for craft of Indian Cork or Shola. Shola work is mainly used in decoration, preparation of showpiece and idols and even in traditional Hindu Bengali wedding, the bride and the groom wear special headgears made of shola. There are much folklore associated with the origin of the shola plant and the community of artists who use it to make the products. According to one story, Lord Shiva requested Vishwakarma, the god of creative power, to bring him a pure white crown and garland to be worn during his wedding with Goddess Parvati. But when Vishwakarma failed to deliver, Shiva plucked a lock of his own hair and flung it in a pond, which immediately sprung a special reed. Shiva flung a hair off his arm into the pond from whence emerged a young man. This young man used the pure white core of the plant to make Shiva's crown, garland and other ornaments. Shiva named the youth 'malakar' or the garland maker, a name that the traditional shola craftsmen are still known by.

D) Historical, Anthropological and Heritage sites

Karnagarh Temple & Rani Shiramoni Garh : Bhagavati Mahamaya Temple at Karnagarh is a famous and popular temple of Paschim Medinipur district. The group of temples of 17th century are almost same height and are placed side by side separated by a fence. The temples are dedicated to Mahamaya and Mahadev. This temple is famous for its scenic view and architectural beauty. Karnagarh is famous for Chuar Revolt led by Rani Siromoni in 1798. The place has been envisaged as a historical cum eco-tourism spot by District Administration and welcomes the tourists to Rani Shiramoni Garh Eco Resort, surrounded by the temples of Karnagarh keeping with rich history of the place.



Rani Shiramoni Garh

Moghalmari: Moghalmari is located on the left bank of Subarnarekha River in the district of West Medinipur. Moghalmari has brought light to the largest Buddhist Monastery. Moghalmari is 40 Km from Kharagpur on NH60 and 1 km of express way of Dantan area. The structure consisted of decorative bricks along with stucco work of Nalanda of Bihar and partly with the Raktammthika Mahavihar of Bengal. Some terracotta tablets, seals bearing post-Gupta Brahmi scripts have been found at Moghalmari.



Moghalmari

Gongoni: Gongoni is celebrated as “Grand Canyon” of West Bengal. It is located in the small town of Garbeta, this fascinating wide gorge of red soil stands on the banks of river Silabati. Locally known as “Gongoni Danga” or “Gongoni Khola”, the gorge is a handiwork of nature through years of soil erosion coupled with some assistance from the river. The water body flows through the gorge during monsoon. In the plain lands of Bengal such a landscape is uncommon and exceptional, which is why this gorge is often referred to as Grand Canyon of Bengal. Recently a Stair case has been built by the West Bengal Government, so that one can easily walk down into the Canyon. The beauty of the green nature is really attractive.



Gongoni

Pathra : Outstanding terracotta temples has made Pathra as Mandirmoy Pathra. It is a few kilometres from Medinipur town, on the bank of Kasai River. Hundreds of small temples dating back into antiquity are located there. The main complex is maintained by Archaeological Survey of India, where as beatification of the entire project area has been undertaken by Paschim Medinipur District Administration under the financial assistance of Department of Tourism.

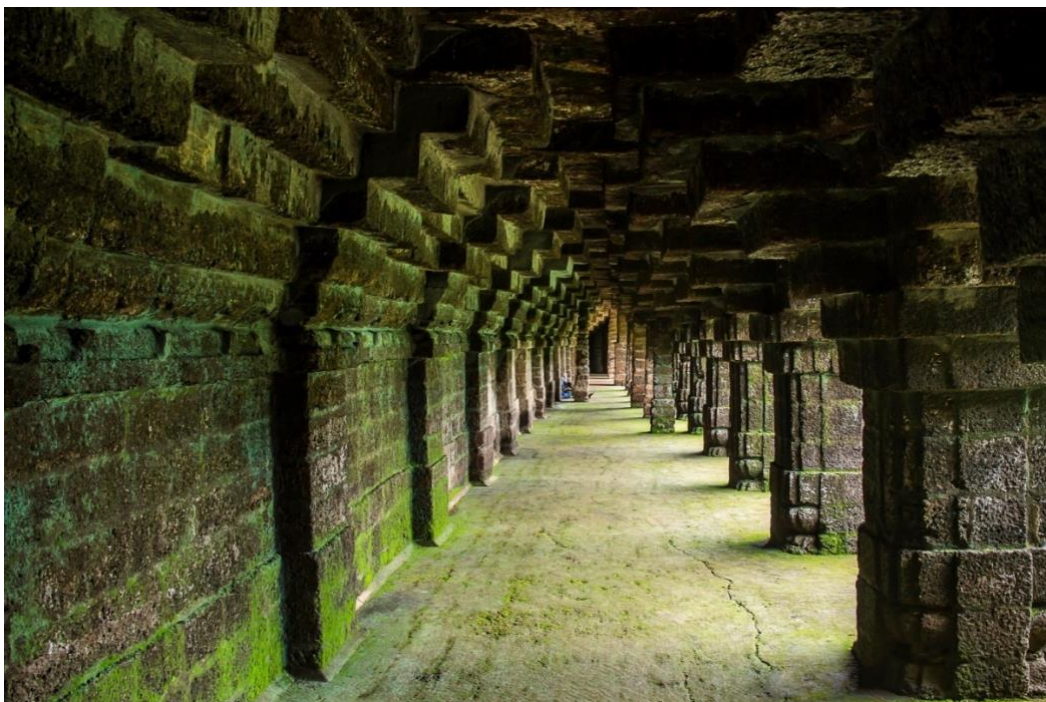


Pathra

Birsingha: Birsingha village is located in Ghatal Sub-Division of Paschim [Medinipur](#) district in [West Bengal](#) . Birsingh village is about 6 km from Ghatal town. Birsingha village is famous for the birth place of the great Bengali social reformer and the author of “Varna Parichay” Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was born in a Hindu Brahmin family to Thakurdas Bandyopadhyay and Bhagavati Devi at Birsingha village in the Ghatal subdivision of Paschim [Midnapore](#) District on 26 September 1820. It also has a small museum containing items used by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar.

Kurumbera Fort: Kurumbera Fort is a fascinating example of a quilt in the history of Bengal. It is situated in the village named Gaganeshwar. It is 30 km from Kharagpur and well connected by bus service. With its small quarters and temples, the fort is a protected monument under the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the Ancient Monuments Act. There is a huge courtyard bordered by a pillared corridor and three spherical domes and some kind of an altar in the middle of the fort. The long Verandah made by Khilan of laterite stone is remarkable piece of structure.

Chandrakana Gurdwara : This Gurdwara has a great peaceful scenic beauty. This situated at Ramgarh, at Chandrakona town under Paschim Medinipur District. This is a historic place where Sri Guru Nanak Sahib Ji came during his pilgrimage. It is believed Guru Nanak while going to Puri in the year 1510, rested here for a few day under a tree. He met the villagers there and also met King Chandraketu. Around this tree the Gurudwara was established later.



Kurumbera Fort

Naya Pata Gram: Patachitra is an ancient folk art of Bengal. It is appreciated by art lovers over the world for its unique natural bold colours, lines, and strokes. In Patachitra stories are printed as frames on long scrolls and patuas gradually unfurl them while presenting story through their songs. The painters are called Patuas. Patuas do not just paint, they also sing as they unfurl the printing scroll. Those songs are known as poter gan. It is around 20 km from Balichak railway station.



Naya Pata Gram

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