

A Forgotten Shrine Steeped In History

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LESS THAN 50 km from Kolkata, there stands a forgotten but majestic 17th century terracotta temple which is a tribute to Bengal's famous art of burnt clay sculpture.

Antpur, the site of the Radhagobinda temple, was called Vishhari in early 17th century. Legend has it that king Bhuri Shreshtha used to rule this region and eight of his generals stayed in this place, covering eight villages. Later, these eight villages were joined to form a larger village with the name 'Aat Pur' or Antpur'.

In 1768, Krishnaram Mi-

tra, *dewan* of the royal state of Burdwan, took the initiative to build a Krishna temple here. It was a time when Muslim rule in Bengal was coming to an end and the foreign powers were fighting for supremacy. The initiative to build a temple was mainly to motivate the Hindus of Bengal, who were in very low spirits at the time.

By that time, terracotta was not just an exclusive art of Bankura and Bishnupur, but had started to influence architects everywhere. Antpur was no exception.

Clay from the Ganga was brought and burnt to erect the 100 ft high and 47 ft wide structure. The temple has

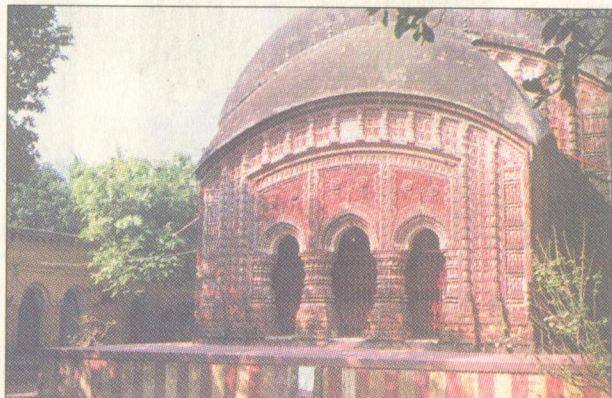


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The Radhagobinda temple of Antpur still retains its majesty

the signature architectural style of Bengal, i.e. the *aatchala*, with two sloping roofs. The real beauty of the temple is on its walls, which have marvellous carvings narrating stories from Hindu mythology and epics.

Travel information

Take any private bus from Howrah to Jangipara. It

takes less than two hours. From Jangipara, take a cycle-rickshaw to reach the Radhagobinda temple. One can also take a local train to Haripal from Howrah. From Haripal, it is a 30-minute bus journey to Antpur. A direct bus service to Antpur is available from the CTC terminus at Curzon Park. ■