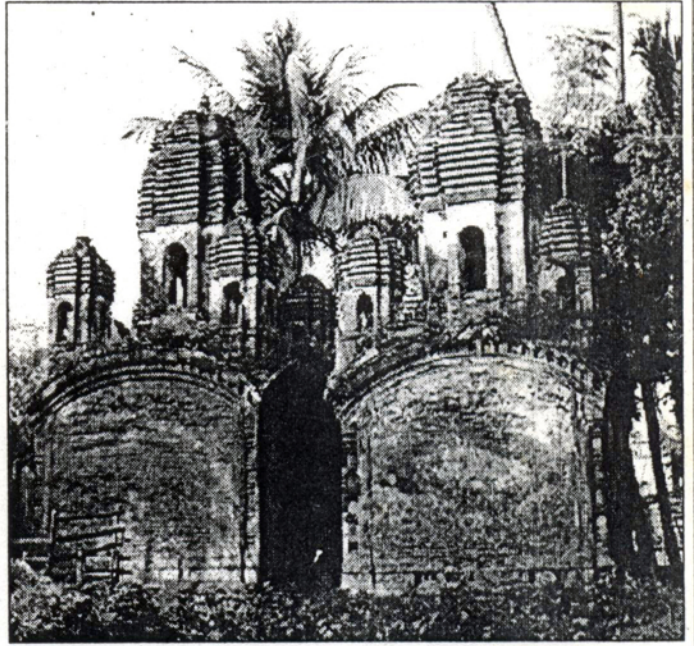
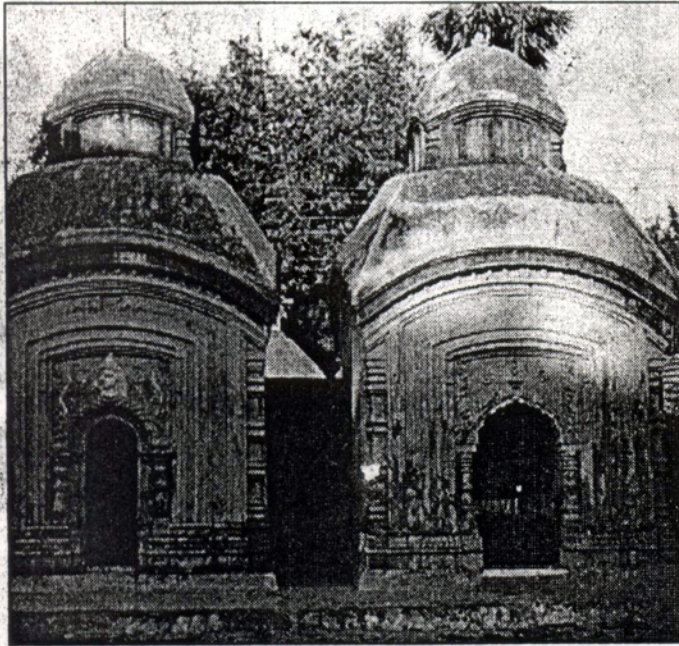


THE ASIAN AGE

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HISTORY LIES HERE: Shiva temples of Banerjee family (left) and Pancharatna temples of Das family in Ilsoba village. Ilsoba, a small village in Hooghly, is unknown to all but is historically important. It is seven kilometre from Pandua. The village is dotted with old temples some of which are in a shambles. The Banerjee family is one of the richest families residing in this village for the last 500 years. This family owns an important place in Bengal's history. Hiranya Bandopadhyay was the royal poet in Burdwan *Raj Durbar*.

In 1790, when Warren Hastings set up the Queen College in Varanasi, another man from this family Ramprasad Tarka Panchanan was requested to join as the principal of the college.

This family had spent money on building various Shiva temples in this village. In 1650, Hiranya Bandopadhyay established three temples. Legend has it that Rama Das the guru of the great Maratha king Shivaji had asked him to establish the temples. However, no historical evidence is found to support this.

Two more such temples were established in 1790 by Ramprasad Bandopadhyay. *Durgotsov* was introduced here 420 years ago and the puja is still celebrated. In the same village there are two more temples owned by the Das family. These temples are Pancharatna temple built in the 17th century. One temple belongs to Shiva and other to Vishnu. Although these temples are in bad shape, excellent terracotta works are found on its wall. Both the temples are crafted with excellent perfection illustrating the stories of Hindi epics and Bengal's social life. But neither the Das family nor the Archaeological Survey of India has taken any initiative to preserve the temples. The temples today are on the verge of ruin. Text and photographs BY SOMEN SENGUPTA