



PHOTO: SOMEN SENGUPTA
The unique open-air temple
at Mukutmanipur

Enchanting Mukutmanipur

Somen Sengupta

IF YOU have become an asphyxiated soul in the bustle of this overcrowded city, Mukutmanipur is what you have been looking for. This small village in Bankura is a gem on Bengal's tourist map. A massive lake with fantastic blue water, an open-air temple in a very different style and a small forest with rare birds and deer, all make it a perfect weekend destination.

Situated on the confluence of two rivers, the Ku-

mari and the Kangshabati on the border of Bengal and Bihar, Mukutmanipur first came into the spotlight in 1970, when the Government to West Bengal decided to build a dam here. It is Asia's biggest earthen dam, made to control the two rivers.

The lake's clear water is so tempting that you have to take a boat ride on it. On one side of the lake is the Bongopalpur Reserve Forest, housing the deer. This picture postcard setting is perfect for a honeymoon or a romantic holiday.

The dam is perhaps one of the best places to relax completely. There is a road over the dam, making it easily accessible. Dotted with small rocky hills, the view is definitely not to be missed. You have to obtain permission from the irrigation department to get on the dam.

A unique temple is also situated on the dam. The rocky surface on which this temple stands is known as the Parshwanath Tila. This open-air temple has a shivlinga, a statue of Parshwanath and a statue of a bull excavated at the time of constructing this dam.

How To Go

Take Rupashibangla or Purulia Express from Howrah, or by road it is a seven-hour bus ride from Esplanade.

Where To Stay

The Peerless Hotel is the best place to stay. Book the rooms from Kolkata. Rates start from Rs 600. Budget hotels also available. ■