

GEOMORPHOLOGY OF EROSION IS AN ETHNIC SCULPTURE THAT HAS CROWD PULLING CAPACITY IN SANTINIKETAN KHOAI HAAT ENCAPSULATES THE SOUL OF THE REGION***Soumya Chakraborty and Prof. Dr. Dhrubo Jyoti Sen**

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ABSTRACT

Khoai Mela or Shonibarar haat is a weekly Saturday afternoon bazaar set up by local artisans in Santiniketan, Birbhum district, West Bengal. The Khoai Mela has now become a part of the culture of the Bengali people and has been taking place for over 20 years. The word khoy in Bengali means erosion. This Khoai region is a geographical formation of small canyons resulting from constant erosion caused by wind and water. This place is characterized by the Shyambati canal on one side and a Sonajhuri tree forest growing in red laterite soil on the other side. Erosion is the process where rocks are broken down by natural forces such as wind or water. There are two main types of erosion: chemical and physical. Chemical erosion occurs when a rock's chemical

composition changes, such as when iron rusts or when limestone dissolves due to carbonation.

KEYWORDS: Santiniketan, Khoai, Birbhum, Laterite soil, Iron oxide.

Overview: Shantiniketan is a neighbourhood of Bolpur town in the Bolpur subdivision of Birbhum district in West Bengal, India, approximately 152 km north of Kolkata. It was established by Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, and later expanded by his son, Rabindranath Tagore whose vision became what is now a university town with the creation of Visva-Bharati. Khoai in Bengali refers to a geological formation specifically in Birbhum, Bardhaman, and Bankura districts of West Bengal, India and some parts of Jharkhand, India that is made up of laterite soil rich in iron oxide, often in the shapes of tiny hills. This type of soil is rich in iron and aluminium.

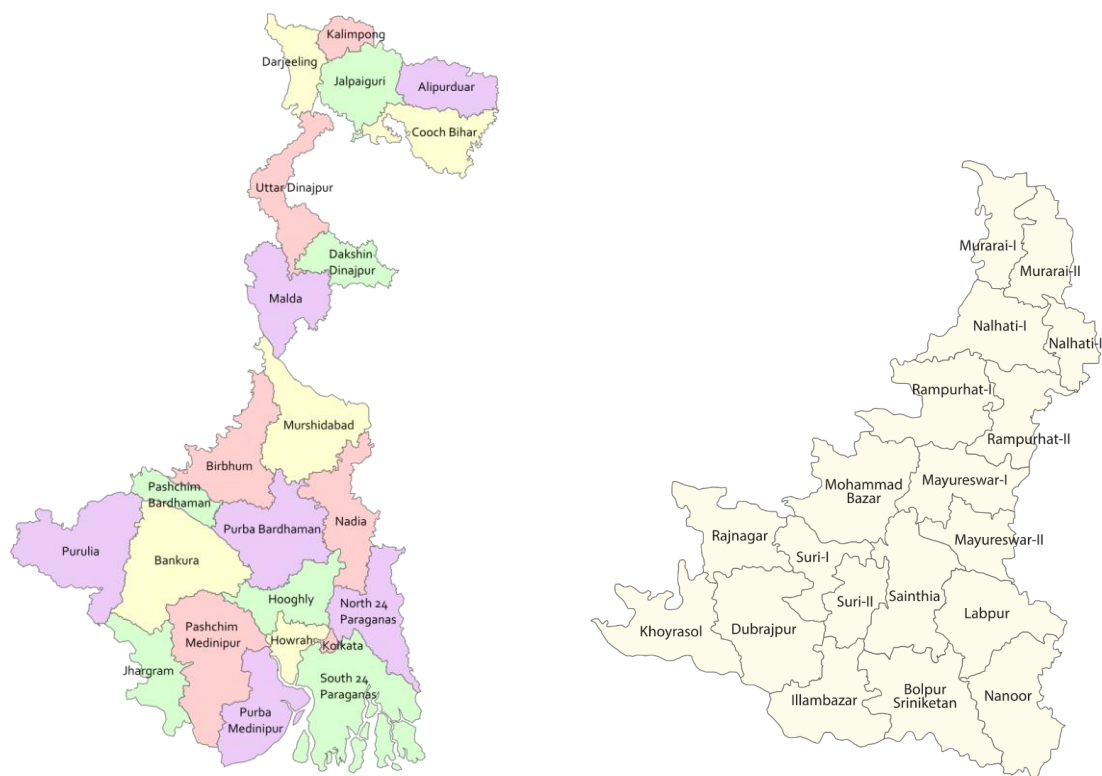


Figure 1: West Bengal State & Birbhum District.

They are usually formed in hot and wet tropical areas. These soils are red because of the iron oxide content; this mineral gave the soil a red colouration. Lateritic soils are rich in alumina (Al_2O_3), silica (SiO_2), and iron oxide in the form of hematite (Fe_2O_3). None of these components dissolve easily in water. However, when they are in the form of very fine particles that are not crystallized, ie, in amorphous powders, their surface area exposed to water will be large. The laterite soil is both soil and rock type and contains around 90% of Iron, aluminum, titanium, and manganese oxides. It has a lower content of nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, lime, and magnesia, which makes it less fertile. It has a rusty-red colour in appearance due to its high iron oxide content. Laterite is a soil type rich in iron and aluminium and is commonly considered to have formed in hot and wet tropical areas. Nearly all laterites are of rusty-red coloration, because of high iron oxide content.

Khoai at Shantiniketan: The Khoai can only support certain types of plants. It is a very poor soil for most types of agriculture practiced in the areas in which it is found. Yet often, a Khoai maybe situated adjacent to a naturally forested area. Although a large area in Birbhum is covered by laterite, the areas where the laterite is exposed is termed as Khoai. In some areas the laterite is covered by a layer of ordinary soil and can support normal vegetation. In

these areas, there are rice fields or mango groves or different varieties of plantations. These areas are not termed as Khoai. In Khoai areas there is no vegetation. Except for certain types of trees like Sonajhuri or Acacia, nothing grows on Khoai. The beauty of Khoai in and around Bolpur, Santiniketan enthralled Rabindranath Tagore and he immortalized Khoai in his numerous writings. Famous painters like Nandalal Bose, Ramkinkar Baij and Binodbehari Mukherjee painted Khoai in many of their creations and Khoai became a part of cultural heritage of Shantiniketan and Visva-Bharati. Popularly known as the sonajhuri haat its a shopping heaven every Saturday on the banks of Khoai river. Its an open air market where you can buy tribal items and many more stuffs while listening to wonderful baul songs, sung by some local bauls sitting aside.



Figure 2: Khoai.

The usual items include ethnic jewellery, showpieces, local artworks, garments and even local ethnic Bengalee dishes like pithey and payesh. The Haat starts to gather from around 03:00 pm and ends at around 06:00 pm. Toto is available at any point from Shantiniketan. It is weekly market and held only in Saturday. The haat is organized inside 'Sonajhuri' forest. Khoai Mela or Shonibarar haat is a weekly Saturday afternoon bazaar set up by local artisans in Santiniketan, Birbhum district, West Bengal. Popularly known as the sonajhuri haat its a shopping heaven every Saturday on the banks of Khoai river. Its an open air market where you can buy tribal items and many more stuffs while listening to wonderful baul songs, sung by some local bauls sitting aside.

Table 1: West Bengal Districts.

Malda Division	Burdwan Division	Jalpaiguri Division	Presidency Division	Medinipur Division
Malda District	Birbhum District	Alipurduar District	Howrah District	Bankura District
Uttar Dinajpur District	Hooghly District	Cooch Behar District	Kolkata District	Jhargram District
Dakshin Dinajpur District	Paschim Bardhaman District	Darjeeling District	Nadia District	Purulia District
Murshidabad District	Purba Bardhaman District	Jalpaiguri District	North 24 Parganas District	Purba Medinipur District
		Kalimpong District	South 24 Parganas District	Paschim Medinipur District

The Khoai Mela has now become a part of the culture of the Bengali people and has been taking place for over 20 years. It flows past such towns as Santiniketan, Bolpur, Kankalitala, Kirnagar and Labhpur in Birbhum district in the Indian state of West Bengal. It is a small river in dry season but overflows its banks during the monsoon. The Baul are a group of mystic minstrels of mixed elements of Sufism, Vaishnavism and Tantra from Bangladesh and the neighboring Indian states of West Bengal, Tripura and Assam's Barak Valley and Meghalaya. Bauls constitute both a syncretic religious sect of troubadours and a musical tradition. Bauls are a very heterogeneous group, with many sects, but their membership mainly consists of Vaishnava Hindus and Sufi Muslims. They can often be identified by their distinctive clothes and musical instruments. Lalon Shah is regarded as the most celebrated Baul saint in history. Sonajhuri is a small patch of forest in the Khoai region of Santiniketan in Bolpur. The origin of the word Baul is debated. Popular believe is that the term “Baul” comes from the Arabic word “Baur,” which means arbitrary, chaotic, or insane.

**Figure 3: Laterite soil in Khoai.**

The Khoai is a craggy landscape of small canyons formed by the constant erosion of wind and water on Red Laterite Soil. Sonajhuri literally means droplets of gold, because during the winter season the sonajhuri trees shed their tiny yellow flowers and the whole forest seems to have a downpour of gold. It is weekly market and held only in Saturday. The haat is organized inside 'Sonajhuri' forest. A weekly Saturday market set up in the forest. 3. The weekly Saturday market hours are from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. It flows past such towns as Santiniketan, Bolpur, Kankalitala, Kirnahar and Labhpur in Birbhum district in the Indian state of West Bengal. It is a small river in dry season but overflows its banks during the monsoon.



Figure 4: Khoai haat with Baul song.

Rental cars are easily available from the airport which will drop you off to Sonajhuri Forest. By Rail: The closest railway station to Sonajhuri Forest is Bolpur Railway station. Popularly known as the sonajhuri haat its a shopping heaven every Saturday on the banks of Khoai river. Khoai Mela or Shonibarar haat is a weekly Saturday afternoon bazaar set up by local artisans in Santiniketan, Birbhum district, West Bengal. The Khoai Mela has now become a part of the culture of the Bengali people and has been taking place for over 20 years. It takes place every Saturday on the bank of the Khoai or Kopai River. The Mela is named after this Khoai region and River. This Mela is also called Shanibarar haat (Saturday fair) due to its opening day. Khoai Mela is an outdoor event that starts every Saturday in the afternoon,

depending upon the heat and other weather conditions, and closes at sundown. It can also take place on Sunday morning. The Khoai Mela on Saturday is called full haat and on Sunday is called bhaya haat. An open-air stall and a buyer at Khoai Mela. Khoai Mela is an open-air Mela, without any covered stalls, on the red ground. The Mela is fully surrounded by Sal, Sagoon, and Eucalyptus trees. Most of the shop owners are women.



Figure 5: Khoai beauty.

CONCLUSION

Shantiniketan, located about 200 kilometres from Kolkata, has long been a popular weekend getaway for Bengalis. Maharishi Devendranth Tagore built this region of red soil and huge rice fields in 1863, and it is literally the ‘abode of peace.’ When you hear the word Khoai, what comes to mind? [গ্রামছাড়া ওই রাঙা মাটির পথ] “Gram chara oi ranga matir poth”. But have you ever wondered about the history of Khoai? Khoai is a geological formation found mostly in West Bengal’s Birbhum, Bankura, and Burdwan districts, but also in a few areas of Jharkhand. As a result of its exceptional characteristics, Khoai is a part of India’s natural heritage. Laterite soil covers a substantial portion of Birbhum’s landscape. At Santiniketan, the Sonajhuri woodlands, and Khoai Nodi all have stunning scenic views. The natural beauty, tranquility, and calmness of Bolpur and Santiniketan attracted Kobiguru Rabindranath

Tagore, and what he accomplished was even more remarkable. This resulted in Khoai becoming part of Visva-Bharati University's Cultural Heritage as well as Santiniketan's. Khoai is around 170 kilometres from Kolkata and is surrounded by enormous Sonajhuri trees, which are naturally arranged in rows and columns to create a spectacular scenic impression. The Saturday Khoai Haat is well-known across the globe. The laterite soil covered Sonajhuri woodland is home to this haat. This haat, which takes place every Saturday from 3 to 6 p.m., brings together Santhal communities, local artists, and Visva-Bharati students to offer local arts, handicrafts, and traditional Kantha-stitch, Khesh, Khadi sarees, purses, and jewellery. Local Bauls make their living by singing passionate Baul melodies. In traditional garb, the Santhal community performs its well-known tribal dance. To summarize, the ambience gets more tranquil.

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The outstanding creativity of the cream of essence of Khoai Haat is by Maharshi Devendranath Tagore [15 May 1817–19 January 1905]), and later expanded by his son, Nobel Laureate Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore [7 May 1861–8 August 1941] is the remarkable milestone of ethnic sculpture that encapsulated the soul of the region.

REFERENCES

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