

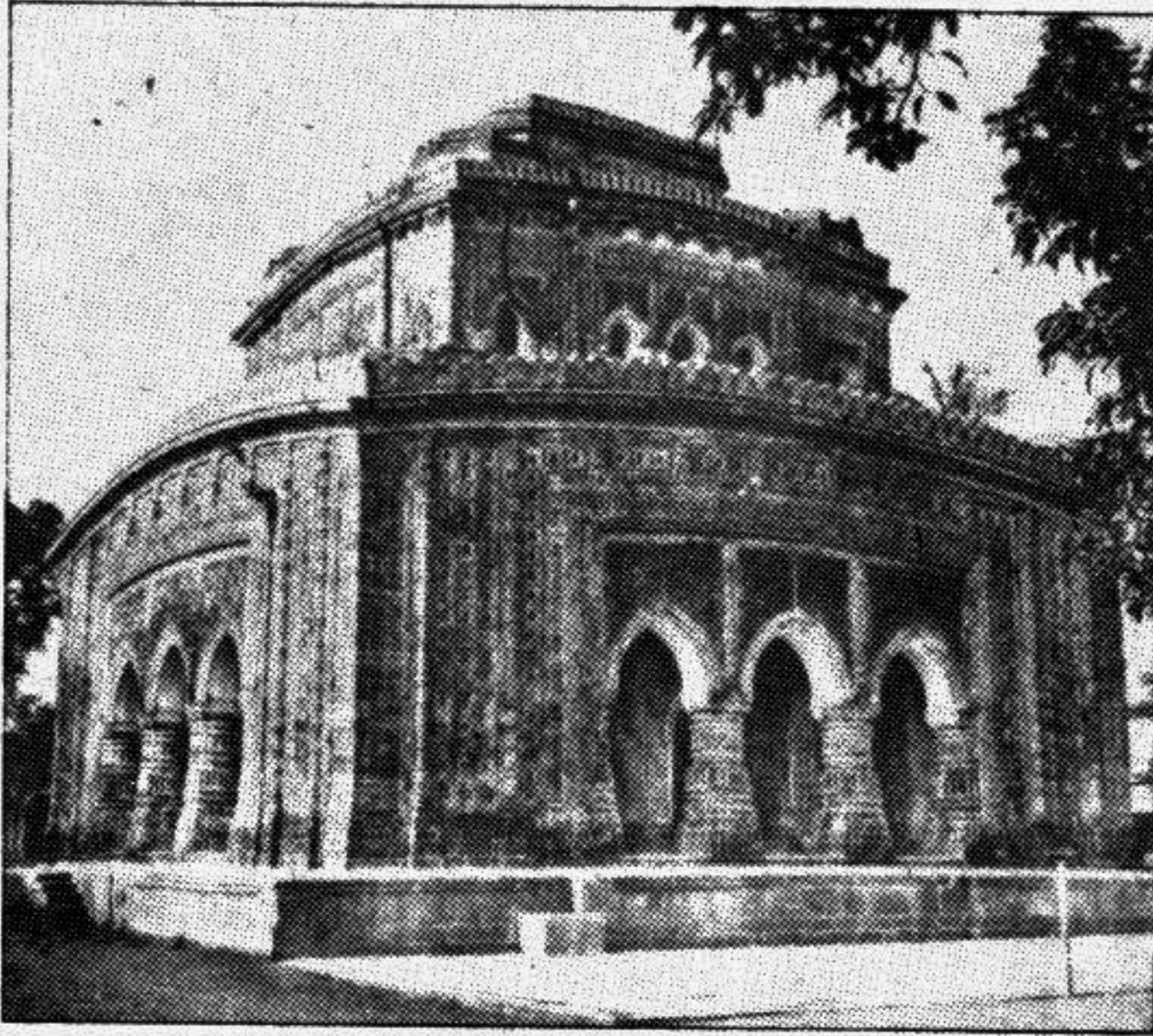
A Hindu temple is not a congregational prayer house. It is a 'deva-laya', dwelling place for the god or goddess. An ancient temple was always a small chamber of a particular deity, a little dark square room with only one opening as the entrance doorway.

There is hardly any remains of most ancient temples in Bangladesh. An idea, however, of their general features can be obtained by a careful study of literary and epigraphic records, illustrations in old manuscripts and reliefs on stone sculptures. In early stone reliefs the deity is often shown installed in a temple whose outline is carved around the divine figure. From these representations it is evident that most early temples in Bengal as a whole were based on the 'Nagara' or northern-style of temple architecture, not on Dravidian or southern styles, which differ from the former in 'shikhara' pillars, capitals, mouldings etc. We find two distinct forms even in Nagara style: the older one is an offshoot of the early medieval Orissan style which bears an affinity to the famous Bhubaneswar group, while the other represents a distinctly indigenous, generally called Bangla style.

The Nagara style is subdivided into three or four different types, according to the forms of the roof over the sanctum. The earliest type appears to be composed of a number of horizontal tiers tapering upwards with a recess between each stage. In its more developed form, the horizontal tiers are compressed into a pyramidal shape. It is known as 'pida' or 'bhadra deul'. There also existed the 'rekha' or the 'shikhara' type distinguished by a lofty curvi-

Part of Our Heritage : The Temples in Bangladesh

by Syed Amirul Islam



Kantanagar Temple, Dinajpur

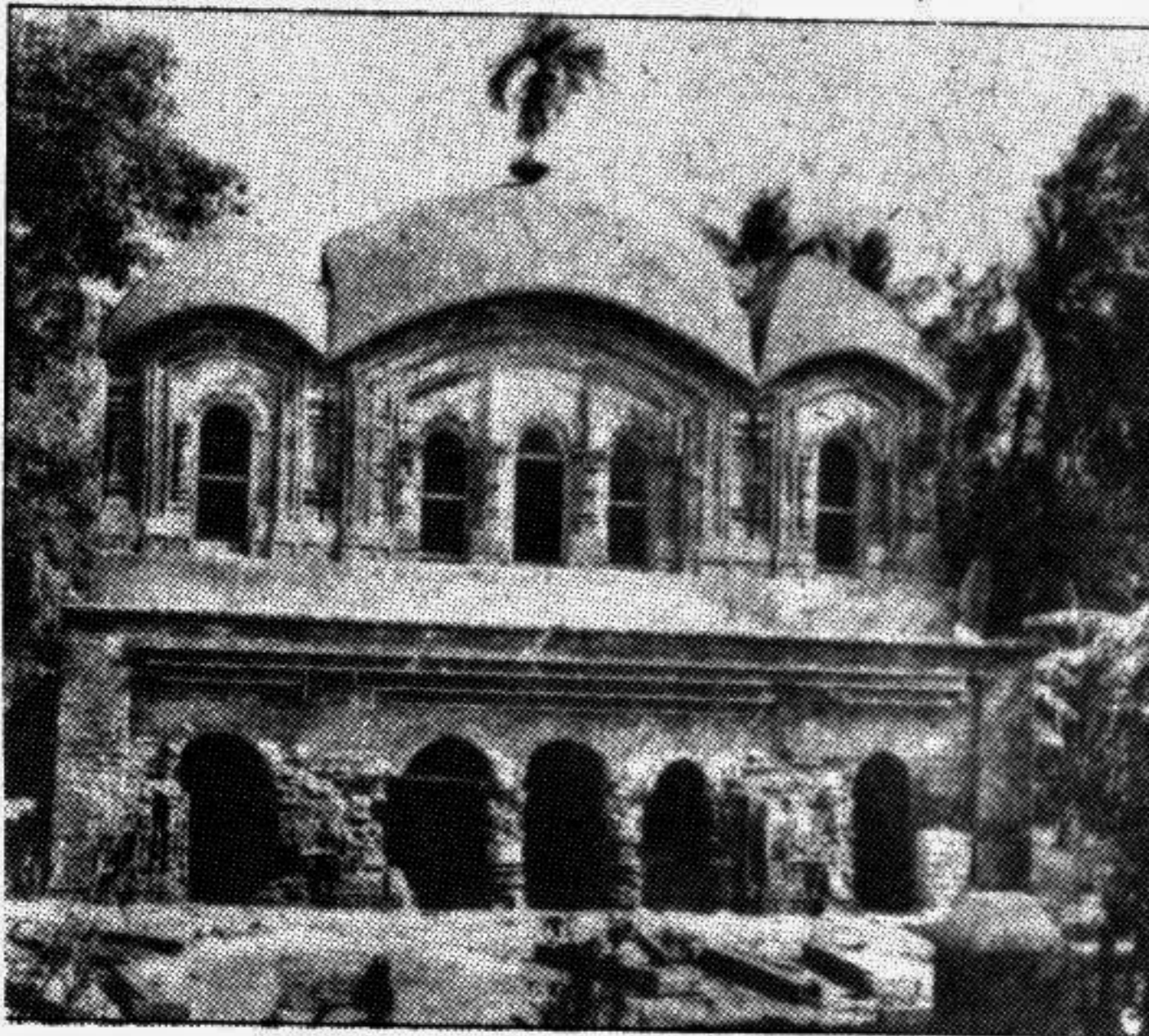
Dhakeswari group of temples in Dhaka, from which a popular legend ascribes the origin of the city, is a composite type of pida and rekha style.

The Bangla style is constructed mostly in bricks and rarely in stone. Originating obviously from the timber or bamboo thatched huts commonly met with in rural Bengal, the style is characterised by a sloping roof with curved eaves and exceptionally stunted pillars, beautifully carved or relieved with intricate figural or geometric patterns in continuous panels.

No surviving monuments of Bangla style in Bangladesh can be dated earlier than 16th century AD. This style was de-

veloped under the patronage of landlords — maharajas and zamindars. A single hut of this type is called 'ek-bangla', while the two together are known as 'jor-bangla'. A four-sided roof with curved eaves on a rectangular sanctuary is designated as 'chau-chala', and when a miniature duplicate is repeated on top of the roof, it forms an 'aat-chala' or eight roofs. Sometimes the receding series of roofs are triplicated making it 'bara-chala' or twelve roofs.

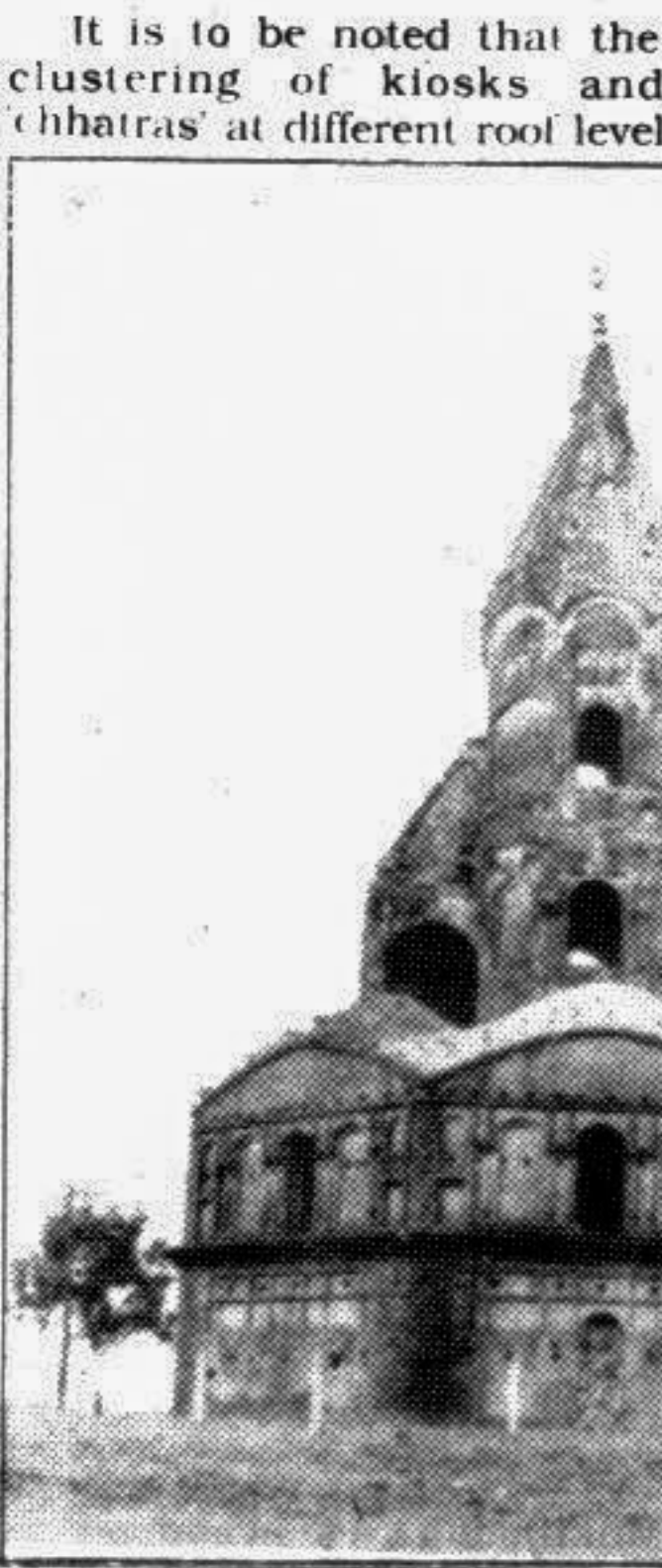
The above Bangla type of temples are scattered all over Bangladesh, the most important of which are 18th century ek-bangla temples at Puthia, Rajshahi, jor-bangla temple at



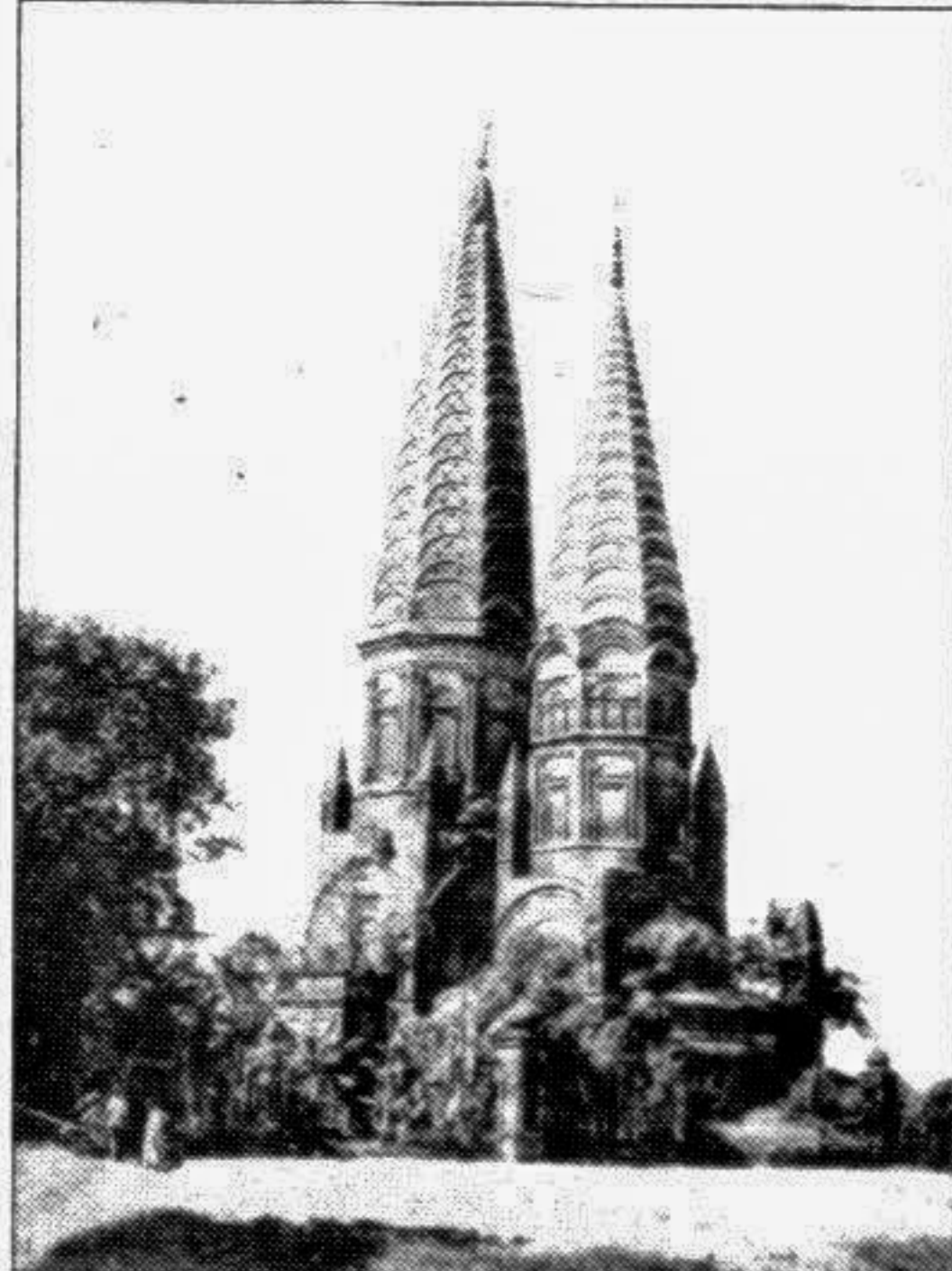
Rajaram Temple, Madaripur

Dakshin Raghabpur in Pabna town, ek-bangla and chau-chala temple ruins in Naldanga in Jessore and Bardhankuthi in Rangpur, integrated bangla and chau-chala Rajaram temple in Faridpur, aat-chala Shiva temple in Jessore etc.

It should be mentioned here that there are a few temples in Bangladesh where the two elements of the shikhara and the Bangla styles are combined. The lower part of such temples has all the features of the curvilinear cornices and the stunted decorated columns, while the roof is crowned by a short conical spire. This style is further heavily decorated with the introduction of 'ratnas' or kiosks i.e. by adding decorative towers on these. Clusters of between four and twenty-four kiosks are added at different roof levels in multiples of four, plus the central spire or shikhara, creating a wide variety of differing shapes. The variation of the ratna forms are known in different names such as 'pancha (five) ratna', 'nava (nine) ratna' etc.



Shataratna Temple, Comilla



Sonarang Temple, Munshiganj

was a common Muslim architectural practice. The Bangla chau-chala hut design is also found on the mosques and other Muslim monuments of Bangladesh like Shat Gambud Mosque at Bagerhat, Mausoleum of Fath Khan at Gaud, on the roof of Audience Hall in Lalbagh Fort etc.

Of composite style, mention may be made of the Chanchra Shiva Temple at Jessore town, Khelaram Datar Temple at Nawabgonj, Dhaka, Gopala Temple at Puthia, Rajshahi, Jagannath Temple at Handial, Pabna etc. Examples of pancha-ratna or five spire temple can be found in many temples like Govindapur Temple at Jessore, Prana Gopala Temple at Gopalganj, Dinajpur etc. Of the best examples of nava-ratna or nine towered temples are Kantangar Temple at Dinajpur, Hati-Kumrul Temple in Pabna, Sonabaria Shyam Sundar Temple in Khulna etc. There are also rarely found trayodasha (thirteen) ratna temple, saptadasha (seventeen) ratna temple e.g.

Jagannath Temple at Comilla town, Ekavimsa (twenty-one) ratna temple e.g. Laksmi Janardhana Temple at Kishoreganj, Panchavimsa (twenty-five) ratna temple, e.g. Gopalpur Temple at Dinajpur etc. The Chandi-Bhairab Temple of Iswaripur at Jessore, built by the renowned Maharaja Pratapaditya of 17th century, is a class by itself with flat roof and triangular shape having apparently no entrance on any side with only windows.

The most remarkable feature of the late medieval temples in Bangladesh is their superb surface decorations with endless panels of sculptural terracotta plaques, depicting figural and floral motifs, and representing the popular folk art of the period as well as the tales from the great epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata. It is to be recalled here that this art is not new to this region as the tradition goes back at least to Pala-Chandra period of 8th-9th centuries, but the most interesting feature is that these represent a highly sophisticated and mature form of artistic quality admired by art connoisseurs of all time.

Pure Drivel Up to its Kneeballs and Wrapped in a Big Tent

Everyone has at one time been left scratching their head over jargon, gobbledygook or some other opaque use of the English language. Gemini News Service reports on a British group having fun with the language while trying to get people to make better use of it.

Daniel Girard writes from London

THE British Member of Parliament brought down the House: "It is a myth that women get pregnant in order to have children."

The chess player made a wrong move: "I think I had an advantage today because I only noticed I was completely winning just before the end."

The campaigner for simple English got things muddled: "It's as black as the ace of diamonds."

Three examples of drivel. Unfortunately for the activists of the Plain English Campaign (PEC), enough similar material exists for them to write a book. Okay, make that two books.

Ten years after releasing their first publication of misused and confusing English, the group from the north of England has produced a sequel — *Utter Drivel — A Decade of Jargon and Gobbledygook*.

Like its predecessor, the book is filled with good examples of bad English. From politics, religion, sports, bureaucracy and many other fields come pages of jargon, wordy explanations, euphemisms, misnomers and convoluted comments that leave readers scratching their head.

And as with the previous volume, PEC members hope another will be unnecessary.

Active since 1979 on behalf of people they describe as "the victims of gobbledygook and small print," PEC, an independent organisation, lobbies all levels of government and pressures industries — particularly the financial and legal sectors — to "communicate clearly and therefore fairly."

Reading the second book.

Campaign founder Chrissie Maher must think nobody listened to a word the group said. "Despite all our efforts, the problem of gobbledygook never went away," she says.

In addition to the two books, extensive lobbying and production of various publications spreading the word on plain English. PEC funds itself through its professional services including training to governments and companies on editing and writing simply.

"If we can encourage civil servants to communicate clearly with each other, then this change will be reflected in the way they write to us, the public," says Maher.

Looking at things from the reader's standpoint is a particularly personal thing for Maher. Illiterate until she was 16, the Liverpool native, now 56, founded England's first newspaper for adults with reading difficulties and launched the Plain English Campaign in 1979 by shredding hundreds of government forms in front of the Houses of Parliament in London. Over the past three years the Plain English Campaign, recognising that gobbledygook knows no borders, has taken on the world.

Similar groups have sprung up in countries around the world including Canada, the United States, France, South Africa, India, Hong Kong and Indonesia. PEC's third international conference will be held in Washington in October.

"It's got to be an international campaign," says Maher. "We've got to be able to com-

municate in simple language. With trade barriers continuing to fall, that will become even more important."

If the satisfaction of being understood is not enough to get bureaucrats, politicians and companies around the world communicating in clear English, the savings that can be achieved might get their attention.

According to British government estimates, about £500 million has been saved since 1979 in staff time, stationery, filling cabinet space and other services associated with scrapping useless forms and redesigning others so they are easily understood by the public. For the past five years, the Campaign has honoured various British government departments and agencies with Inside Write Awards for clear internal communications. The event coincides with National Plain English Day.

The unnamed bureaucrats from the Welsh office of Britain's National Health Service should not expect a nomination for clarity. In a glaring illustration of what the Campaign is trying to stamp out, the department used 167 words to define that most common of sights in a hospital — a bed.

And every year since 1979 PEC has also presented awards for "the good, the bad and the downright ugly" in communications by governments, celebrities and the media.

The year-end ceremony recognises organisations and media providing the public with clear and well-designed information, but it is the

drivel, jargon and misinformation that steal the show.

At last year's event, it was former England cricket boss Ted Dexter's attempted explanation of his side's defeat by Australia that bowled people over: "Maybe we are in the wrong sign. Maybe Venus is in the wrong juxtaposition with something else. I don't know."

Not surprisingly, Dexter is immortalised in the pages of *A Decade of Drivel*. It should also come as no surprise that the book includes excerpts from the former United States Vice-President who spelled potato with a final "e" while judging a spelling bee. Dan Quayle summed up his political philosophy: "We offer the party as a big tent. How we do that (recognise the big tent philosophy) within the platform, the preamble to the platform or whatnot, that remains to be seen. But that message will have to be articulated with great clarity."

Despite all the efforts, awards and successes, Chrissie Maher realises she and the other PEC personnel have a long way to go to make the world of English a simpler place. As she is quoted for all to read — no doubt much to her dismay — in the new book: "I am up to my kneeballs in work."

She would be the first to admit there is only one way to describe that comment: drivel.

Utter Drivel by the Plain English Campaign (Robson Books £6.99).

DANIEL GIRARD is a reporter with *The Toronto Star* Newspaper.

Rani Bhabani's Sri Sri Gopinath Deb Mandir

by Mohammad Amjad Hossain

RANI Bhabani whose name was a household word for a philanthropist and good administrator in those old days had built a big mandir (temple) at Khorshedpur. A small mouza of Shelaiddah estate in early seventeenth century following the transfer of ownership of Zamindary to the Natore Raj from Maharaja of Nadia. The history of the founding of Natore Raj goes back to the period when Murshid Kuli Khan assumed power as the first Nawab of Murshidabad. He was earlier known as Jafar Khan, the Subedar of Murshidabad. After the suppression of the rebellion of the Zamindars of the north bengal spearheaded by Raja Udaynarayan, Sitaram Roy and others, the extensive Zamindary of Rajshahi, as constituted at that time, was presented by (then Nawab) Murshid Kuli Khan to his favourite Raghunanda. This Raghunanda in fact was the founder of Natore Raj family. Pargana Birahimpur which also included Shelaiddah estate was a part of the Rajshahi Zamindary belonging to Natore Raj. This pargana remained with Natore Raj family till 1800 when Prince Dwarka Nath Tagore purchased the estate. This estate was finally transferred to Bhagyakul Zamindar family when it was purchased in mortgage sale in 1937 by Sreemati Shyamrangini Roy Choudhury on behalf of the estate of Babu Nandalal Roy and Babu Pulin Krishna Roy of Bhagyakul family which Lord Carmichael, Governor of Bengal, described as "great in

the darbar held at Munshiganj. The name of the village where this temple is located is, however, derived from Muslim saint Khorshed Faquir. The temple became popularly known as Sri Sri Gopinath Deb's Mandir. There is an interesting story as to how this temple gained prominence.

Kalyan Roy, a wealthy weaver installed two Bigraha (idol) in the temple which he bought from Benaras. According to legend, Kalyan Roy was fascinated by the beauty of the image of Sri Sri Gopinath and Sri Sri Gopi Rani in a sculptor's shop while he was on pilgrimage at Benaras. Kalyan Roy placed an order for similar pair of Bigrahas and went to Brindaban. When he returned he found that the work on Bigrahas was not finished. The sculptor gave him

the idols that were made for the Maharaja of Benaras. Kalyan Roy came home with the bigrahas and placed them in the temple. On the other hand, the sculptor handed over the Maharaja of Benaras the other pair of Bigraha intended for Kalyan Roy. After some time, the Bigraha appeared in a dream before Maharaja of Benaras and told him that the images must be sent to Kalyan Roy for whom these were intended. Accordingly, the other pair of images were sent by the Maharaja to Khorshedpur and they were also placed in the same temple with Sri Sri Gopinath and Sri Srimati Gopi Rani bigraha. The new pair of images were called Sri Sri Radhanath and Sri Srimati Radharani.

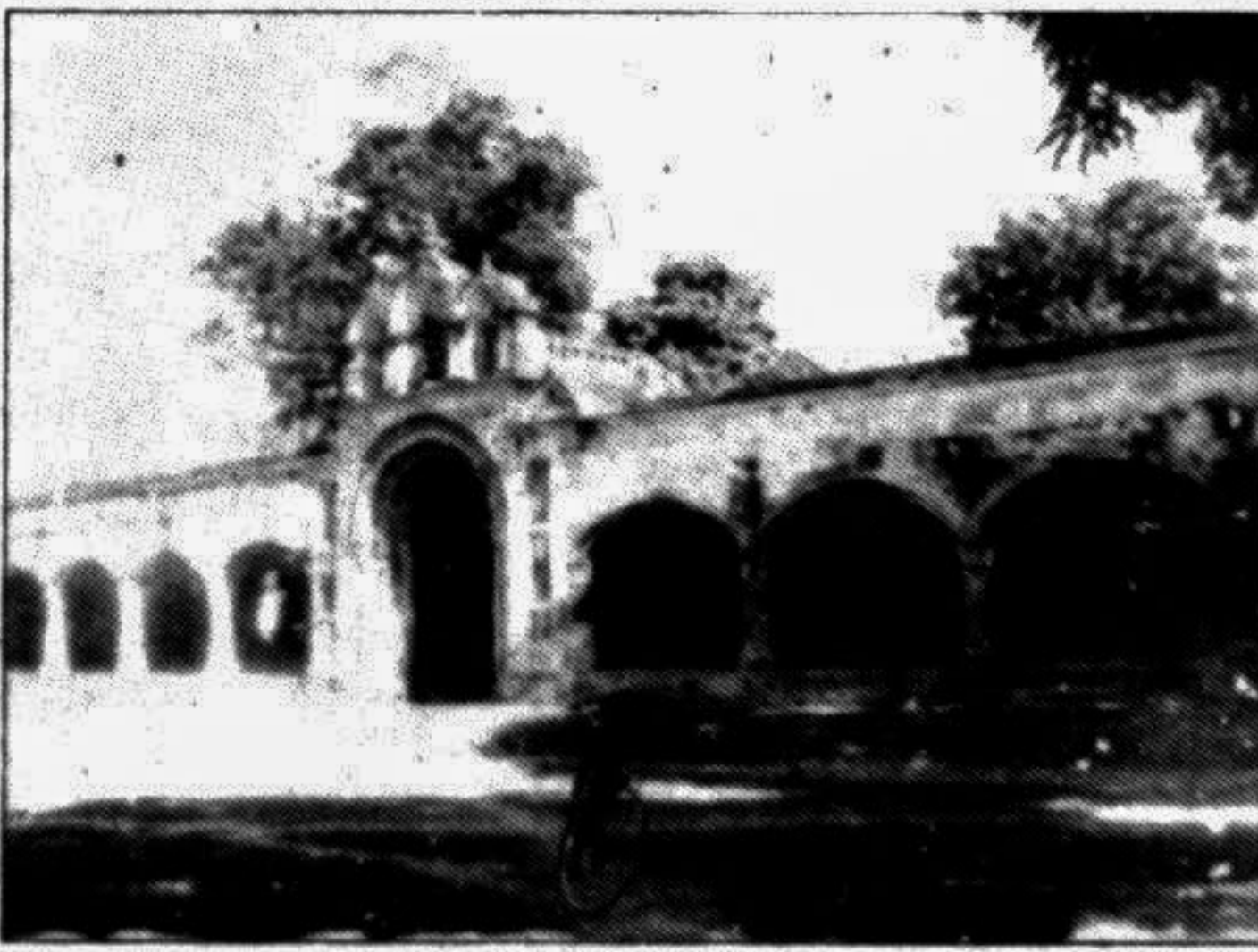
Kalyan Roy and his wife died without any issue. His

nephews (sister's sons) performed the worship of the Bigrahas after Kalyan Roy's death. During the tenure of Tagore estate also proper provision was made for the performance of worship and ceremonies of the dieties although Tagores were Brahmos, and worshippers of one God.

This temple, which is presently known as Sri Sri Gopinath Jew Mandir, became a place of pilgrimage. During Snan Jatra (bathing procession), is performed on the same day as that of Sri Sri Jagannath Deb at Puri, Orissa, a large number of people took bath in the Gopinath tank attached to the temple. The number of pilgrims that used to gather there on this occasion was estimated between 5000 to 10,000 before the partition of British India. A mela (fair) was also held during Snan Jatra occasion for a day.

In the temple, there were 31 Bigrahas including Shiva Lingam, Krishna and Sri Kali. Apart from Snan Jatra, Rash Jatra, Dole Jatra, Rath Jatra (chariot procession) were also performed. There was a big wooden chariot there. According to a report compiled by Sita Nath Das, Manager of Shelaiddah estate during the administration of Bhagyakul Zamindar, the annual income of the mandir was Rupees 2778 and Rupees 629 went to the estate after meeting all the expenditure.

The mandir which is in a bad shape now, needs proper and immediate repair to preserve a part of our history as well.



Sri Sri Gopinath Deb Mandir, Khorshedpur

Vanishing Town

by Arjuna

Forty-seven South Tangra Road in Calcutta will take you to a colony of some 15,000 people. This is the city's Chinatown. It is spread over five square kilometres and has been developed by sheer hard work of Chinese traders.

They have turned Calcutta into India's first tanning centre. India's booming leather exports, with some assistance from the United Nations Development Programme, owe quite a bit to Chinese enterprise.

Put in the City of Joy the Chinese are not exactly rich. At least not now although they

were once upon a time.

The first settlers arrived in Calcutta in 1788 when 110 Chinese labourers were brought by trader Yong Tai Ehao from Guangzhou to set up the first sugar mill in Bengal.

Since then the Chinese community has grown. It remains the only China-town in India and is famous for its cooking.

But the main activity still is the leather industry. There are 267 tanneries and, of course, hundreds of eating houses in narrow lanes.

The multi-national Pata, which sells shoes all over the

world, depends heavily on these tanneries for hide shavings.

The common address of the Chinese community in Calcutta continues to be 47 South Tangra Road. At one time the Chinese evolved a unique way of sorting their mail. The mail used to be sorted out to the students at the Pail Mel Chinese school in the vicinity and then forwarded, through them, to their parents at their factories, restaurants, laundries and clinics.

The system still functions — except that the Lees get their post from the Chinese Tannery Owners' Association and the Lius from the Calcutta Leather and Allied Marketing Cooperative Society Limited.

Both the associations of the

Continued on page 10

