

# “Let’s Go to Khejuri (West Bengal), to Learn and Understand the History and Architecture in Indian History”

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## ABSTRACT

Khejuri-Hijili and Tamralipta are basically the coastal areas of Purba Medinipur, located on the right side of the Hugli River’s mouth. Old Tamralipta Bandar, a seaport in eastern India, used to be situated close to where the Rupnarayan and Hugli rivers meet. This port, Tamralipta, was a well-known historical hub for trade and commerce right up until the eleventh century, sitting near the Bay of Bengal. It was the starting point for trade routes from the Mauryan Empire heading to South and Southeast Asia, as well as other parts of the world. Later on, the Tamralipta port started losing its importance from the early 1300s because the river became much harder to navigate. Because of this, around the 1500s, the Khejuri-Hijili port became prominent due to its prime location where the Bhagirathi-Hugli river meets the Bay of Bengal. Following this, Hijili Island gradually appeared from the estuarine landscape around 1400-1500 AD. Khejuri eventually developed into a fully functional seaport around 1679 AD. Ships would arrive in Khejuri by boat or sloop, and from there, they would set sail for international destinations. Khejuri-Hijili and Tamralipta were both formed from the typical alluvial deposits of the Gangetic delta. This region slopes gently towards the southeast, with a subtly rolling surface shaped by the waves of the Bay of Bengal. In the early stages of its formation, this landmass was just slightly above sea level in the deltaic floodplains of the Hugli estuary and was crisscrossed by many tidal creeks. Today, this area is considered very well for farming because of the large amounts of fresh sediment deposited on the Gangetic plain. However, waterlogged conditions are common, especially in the southern part of the region. The locations of these old ports were heavily influenced by the long history of boat traffic on the Hugli River and the river's constantly shifting channels.

**Key Words :-** Coastal, River, Port, Landmass, Delta, World,

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## INTRODUCTION

In the early 16th century, the combined sedimentation of the Ganges and Bhagirathi gave rise to two islands called Khejuri and Hijli. Later, the two islands merged and the entire area became known as the Khejuri Island. After the formation of this region, various settlements were established and in the later stages, it was destroyed several times due to the influence of various natural forces and the town was established again. In total, its estimated age is not more than five hundred years. In 1514 AD, the Portuguese, advancing along the coast of Orissa, first came to Hijli and established a trading center. Hijli's glory increased during the reign of Masnad-Ie-Ala, who built the Taj Kha. The reign of the descendants of Taj Kha was from (1627 to 1661) AD. He attained Maha-samadhi in 1951. Later, his son Bahadur kha and son-in-law Jain kha took over the governance of Hijli. After Bahadur Kha, the last emperor of the Masnad-Ie-Ala was Taj Kha.

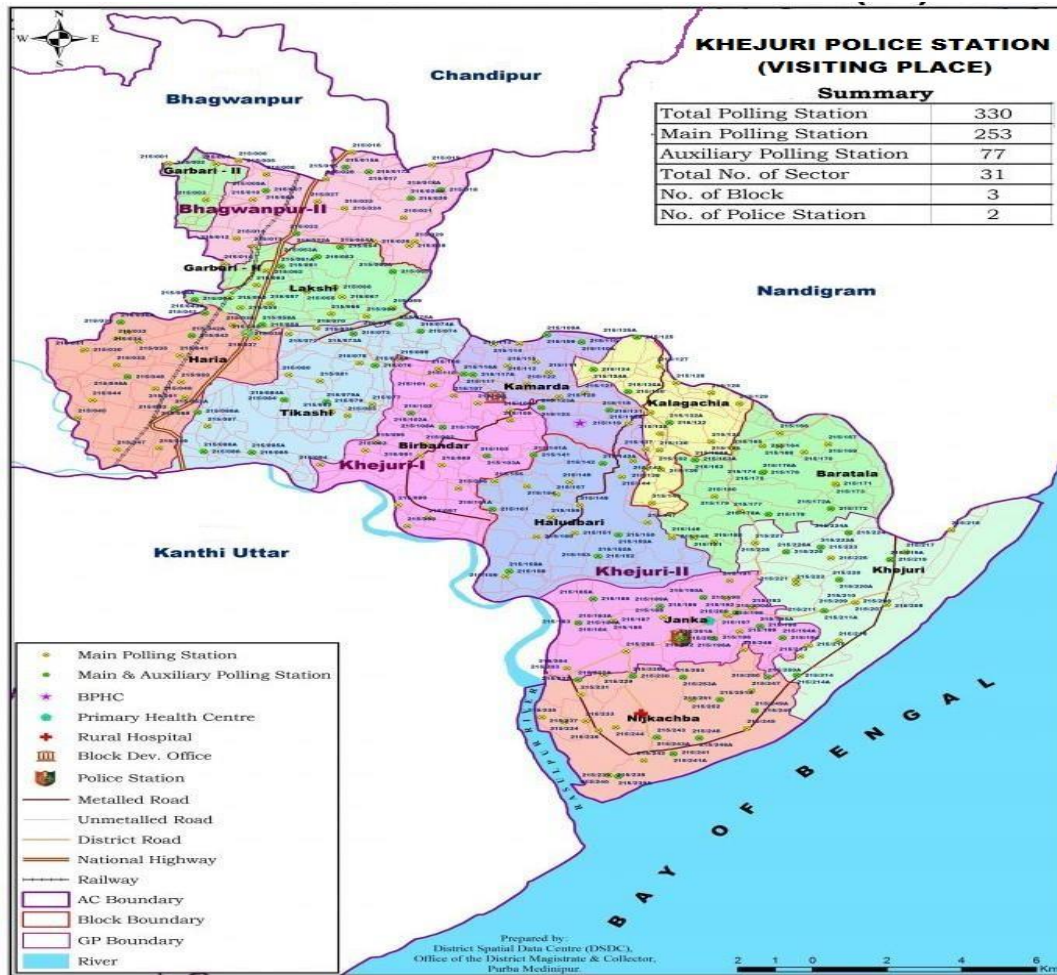
## LOCATION

The location of the study area is mainly situated in Khejuri police station. But major visiting places are situated in Khejuri-II block. The Khejuri-II block is located on the banks of the Hooghly River. This region is under Khejuri police station in Contai sub-division of Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal.

## STUDY AREA

Basically, the visiting spot of Khejuri is located under the Khejuri-II panchyat Samity of Purba Medinipur district in West Bengal. We can find the Masnad-Ie-Ala in Nijkasba village, Khejuri port in Khejuri village, Post office in Khejuri village, Light house in Kaukhali village, Nil factory in Khejuri village, Anukulchandra Satsang in Khejuri village, Nilkumari

Temple in Bhupatichak village, Fishing harbor in Nijkasba village, Pata fair in Meidinagar village, Tufan Gazi fair in Medikhali village.



## VISITING PLACE

### MASNAD-IE-ALA

Hijli, the capital of Masnad-Ie-Ala, was then an island and Khejuri Island was also within the walls of this capital. Not only that, there was a fort of Masnad-Ie-Ala in Khejuri with a thatched roof and earthen walls. Since Khejuri Island is surrounded by a natural river, it is believed that this fort was built here to protect the capital Hijli. There were two cannons in front of that broken fort. Later, a magistrate of Contai took those two cannons and placed them in front of the government bungalow in Digha.

In 1687-1688 AD, during the battle of Hijli between Aurangzeb's general Abdus Samad and Job Charnock, the Kunjapur Canal, which separated the islands of Khejuri and Hijli from the mainland, was a wide and deep flowing river, which now lies as a dry ravine.

The mosque of Taj Khan Masnad-i-Ala is located in the present-day village of Hijli or Nij Kasba. Portuguese missionary Sebastian Manrique wrote in his account - "About nine miles (about 15 kilometers) of the capital of Masnad-Ie-Ala has disappeared into the sea - with it almost all the parts identified as the capital have disappeared into the sea". Only the mosque he built along the shores of the Bay of Bengal and the Bhagirathi estuary is the only faint trace of the memory of Masnad-Ie-Ala. Where even now, twice a year, on the first and third Saturday of 'Chaitra' month, a huge gathering of devotees from far and wide, called 'Jalsa', is held, religious discussions continue all night long. In addition, many devotees gather here every week, even every day. Devout Muslims, regardless of men and women, come to fulfill their vows with goats (khasi) and chickens. In their village, the tomb and mosque of Taj Kha Masnad-Ie-Ala, Indara, Ashabari, etc., still inspire millions of visitors and devotees of all religions to achieve their desired results.

### **KHEJURI PORT**

In 1672, Captain James of the East India Company first anchored at Khejuri to unload the cargo of a large cargo ship named 'Rebecca'. Later, large ships started coming to this Khejuri. Due to the regular arrival of ships, Khejuri started to be transformed into a port by 1679. However, Khejuri, which is part of Hijli district, came under British control only when the company took over the civil service in 1765. Therefore, from this time onwards, Khejuri started to become the workplace of the East India Company. During the company's tenure, the forests of Khejuri, which were devastated by the oppression of the Portuguese and the pirates, were cut down and made suitable for human habitation. Gradually, Khejuri took the form of a picturesque port-city.

After the death of sailors and other high-ranking English officials who came to Khejuri for health, they were buried with due dignity in that cemetery. We find a total of thirty-three tombs in this area. These memorials were built and epitaphs were also established from 1800 to 1865. Today they no longer exist.

Their office built by the East India Company, which was still intact as the bungalow of the Irrigation Department, on which the water level of the sea floods was marked, and above all it was the only intact evidence of the prosperous city of the Khejuri port period - along with the removal of the Irrigation Department office, the valuable furniture including doors and windows are also being looted by looters during the day, only the brickwork remains.

### **POST OFFICE**

Due to the exchange of letters containing news from foreign sailors and passengers, the East India Company started a postal department under them in the late eighteenth century (1772). A two-story building was built to manage its operations, accommodate the postmaster and employees, with twelve rooms on the first floor for the employees. That first post office and telegraph office in India has almost completely disappeared due to lack of maintenance and the ruthless intervention of looters - only the beautiful winding staircase still survives.

### **LIGHT HOUSE**

There was a bell tower for signaling ships, iron wagons, and cannons for signaling. Most of its original bricks have been looted. Only the tower still remains.

Feeling the usefulness of the waterway or 'Hall', the Kaukhali Lighthouse or Lighthouse was built in 1810 AD. This landmark of the sea route called Kaukhali Lighthouse was the oldest among the lighthouses under the jurisdiction of the Calcutta Port Commissioners. It is an 80-foot-high, five-story brick pillar. The rooms in it were spacious and habitable. Its light could be seen from the lowest floor at its highest height - except on cloudy and foggy nights, sailors and common people could see this light from a distance of 22-23 kilometers every day. The light of various colors changed at different times. For more than a hundred years, this lighthouse has been a guide for sailors. In 1915, the light was temporarily turned off for a few days during the German war. Many people used to earn a living by working in this lighthouse. Then the light was lit again until 1925. After that, the light was turned off as it was considered unnecessary because the river and sea route had moved far away due to natural disasters. But the lighthouse stood in its own glory. Just before the devastating flood of 1942, during World War II, due to the fear of a Japanese attack, the British completely destroyed this beautiful lighthouse with dynamite. Even today, in that abandoned forested place, piles of colorful glass, metal pieces, and bricks and sand can be seen.

### **NIL FACTORY**

The ruins of the indigo (Nil) factory in Balibasti still stand as a sign of the oppression of the indigo (Nil) farmers.

### **ANUKULCHANDRA SATSANG**

Sri Sri Thakur Anukulchandra's Satsang Ashram is located in a beautiful environment on the eastern side of Khejuri. Every year, on the occasion of the 1st Phalgun Vasantotsav, a large gathering of devotees is held - moreover, devotees gather almost every day. Guests are also entertained.

### **HALEM SAHA DEGHI**

There was a huge lake in Khejuri called 'Halim Shah's Dighi' or 'Halamsha's Dighi'. The size of the lake has decreased a lot. The banks of the lake are covered with jungle, the water of the lake could not be seen. It seemed like huge grassland. Many stories are heard from people about the name of the lake.

### **NEEL KUMARI TEMPLE**

Regardless of its antiquity, the temple of Goddess Neel Kumari in Janaka Challatlia will definitely attract devotees. Once a year, grand puja, festivals and fairs are held. Apart from this, the daily puja are like daily puja at home.

### **FISHING HARBOR**

There is a huge fish farm in Panchuria. You can reach this farm by going three kilometers south from Khejuri Battala along the coastal highway. How are the fishermen living their lives, abandoning the illusion of life and leaving their homes for an insecure livelihood and relying on nature?

### **PATA FAIR**

In this Panchuria, after the Bhimeshwar Shiva temple disappeared into the sea, another Shiva temple was built. Here, a bathing fair is held on the occasion of Makar Sankranti during the sea. It is called the 'Pata' fair or perhaps the bathing fair. A huge crowd gathers. In fishing harbor, a bustling fair is also held on the occasion of Ganga Puja, and entertainment is provided for a few days through Jatra Pala etc.

### **TUFAN-GAZI FAIR**

After the Paush Sankranti, on the first Sunday or Thursday of the month of Magh (whichever comes first), the largest fair of this police station is held in Medakhali village of Khejuri No. 2 block - where a meeting place for Hindu-Muslim communal harmony has been established for a long time. The name of this fair is popularly known in various ways. Tufan Ghazi, Tafar Ghazi or Dafar Ghazi etc. are among the names. During the reign of the king, a cavalry soldier came to Medakhali village in a tired and exhausted state and took shelter. Before his death, a fisherman-woman of the village took care of the devout soldier. At the time of his death, he gave his royal panja. Since then, people of all classes worship at Tufan Ghazi's tomb to fulfill various desires. When the wish is fulfilled, the idol of the horse rider Gazi Sahib is worshipped with a rolling or clay horse, milk, and sweets. Small-scale worship is held every day of the year. A five-day fair is held once a year, after Paush Sankranti. Lakhs of people gather at that time.

### **OTHERS VISIT PLACE**

Apart from this, the places of religious deities like Haldemuri's Than in Haludbari, Bashuli Temple in Birbandar, Vishnu Temple, Buribaguli in Jahanabad, Hajiburi's Than in Thakurchak, Kamardar Burashiv, Prasaddas Babaji's Astana in Sarveshwarchak, Rajbari in Krishnanagar, Krishnagopal Temple, Gandhi Pond and the blessed place where Gandhiji set foot, Khabar Rudrabhairab Shiva Temple, Radhakanta Temple with its wonderful terracotta sculptures in Mohati, Bashuli Temple and the archaeological remains found in the pond in Tikashi, archaeological remains in Lakshi, Netaji Subhash Chandra's footprints in Subhashpalli (Jarnagar), Suneshwari on the banks of the Sunia river, etc. will attract different categories of tourists to the Khajuri route.

In addition to Khejuri College in Baratala, Kalagechia High School (Jagadish Vidyapeeth), the first national school established in undivided Bengal based on Gandhiji's ideology of non-cooperation, Sanskrit College in Kalachak, the fruit garden adjacent to Khejuri-1 Block, and the fruit garden adjacent to Irinchi Bridge in Krishnanagar will attract garden lovers along with curious people of all classes, and you can also buy fresh nutritious fruits at a fair price to satisfy your taste buds.

### **MEMORABLE INCIDENT**

The question of developing Khejuri as a tourist attraction and tourist center is very important and potential, focusing on the historical and archaeological wealth of Khejuri. Keeping that in mind, it is very important to renovate the tourist attractions of Khejuri, and in some cases, to radically rebuild them with the help of the Archaeological Department - which will restore the past glory of Khejuri. The Indian explorer Raja Rammohan Roy sailed to England from this Khejuri port, Prince Dwarkanath Tagore, the grandfather of Rabindranath Tagore, also sailed to England twice from here and both of them spent a night in the port's rest house. Not only that, many people including Prince Dwarkanath Tagore had salt houses and the Nonapota area of Khejuri was an important place for salt trade. The first post office and telegraph office in India was established here long before the establishment of the General Post Office in Kolkata. A postal museum can be established as a memorial to the old post office and telegraph office. Forests can be rehabilitated. Commercial herb gardens can be established. Kheuri can be made welcome and attractive to the outside world by renovating, reconstructing and maintaining every important tourist spot, and it is definitely necessary to do so.

### **SUGGESTION**

For this, the initial need is to completely renovate and expand the paved road from Henria to Khejuri-Boga. So, foreign tourists can come easily and comfortably whenever they want. Secondly, a shelter or 'resort' is needed for foreign tourists to stay for 2/4 days. Otherwise, they will not be able to realize the potential of Khejuri after coming back on the same day, let alone research.

In this context, there is a lot of unused land in Khejuri in a very beautiful environment belonging to the Irrigation Department and the Forest Department. The government does not get any income from it. However, if tourist lodges, resorts, etc. are built on that land and 'on the spot booking' is arranged, the government has the potential to earn a lot of money. At the same time, if a 'shopping complex' is built and hotels and restaurants are built, the local youth and women of the self-help group will also get the opportunity to earn a living. Tourists do not want to come to Khejuri due to lack of accommodation. If accommodation is provided, there will never be a shortage of tourists in such a beautiful and secluded environment.

Similarly, numerous visitors come to the Masnad-Ie-Ala shrine area every day. Since they do not have good accommodation facilities, they come with their families or relatives by renting cars and return the same day. There too, tourist lodges, resorts, hotels, restaurants, shopping complexes can be built there, making many people of the area work-oriented, and the socio-economic situation can be strengthened.

In the areas of the road from Boga to Khejuri and Vidyapith to Henria, well-equipped shopping complexes and row stalls can be built in government places and rented out at affordable rents for the purpose of employment of educated unemployed people - so that they can attract outsiders by working on their innovative skills. The youth must be trained in food processing and fish processing and become self-reliant.

Drinking water, sanitation facilities, and lighting must be available at all sites. These are the basic conditions for making Khejuri an attractive place to attract visitors and tourists.

### CONCLUSION

With the current Panchayat system, the area development fund of MLAs and MPs, the development fund of the Zilla Parishad and the support of the state and central development funds, it is not difficult to renovate this historical and historical Akar Khejuri as a national income-generating tourist center. Rather, by awakening hopes and aspirations, we can bring back the heart and glory of our adorable Khajuri and make it famous in the country. Let us move forward hand in hand. The rest of history will no longer cry in the abyss of darkness for the shape of freedom. Like a flock of bright doves, it will spread its wings in the sky with the joy of freedom. We welcome inquisitive people of all backgrounds to Khajuri - discover the unknown history.

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