

# The Trail of Omkari

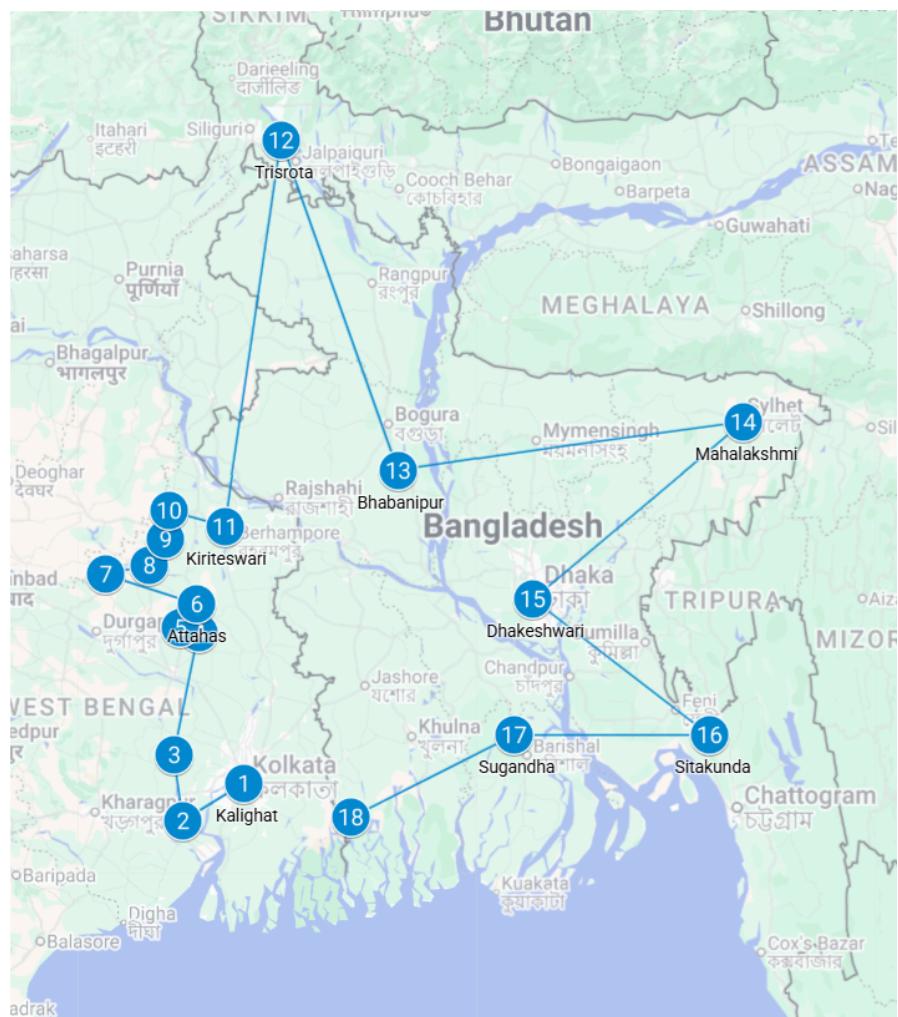
## *A Spiritual Corridor of Bangla Shaktipeeths*

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In the sacred weave of Hindu cosmology, nowhere does the constellation of Shaktipeeths blaze more radiantly than in Bangla, where fragments of Ma Sati's luminous form are said to have descended onto the firmament, sanctifying soil and spirit alike. Here, across rivers, fields, and skies, the Mother dwells in manifold forms—tender and terrible, veiled and resplendent—her presence shaping both daily life and the soaring poetry of devotion. Born of Sati's self-immolation at Daksha's yajna and Lord Shiva's cosmic dance of grief and fury, these shrines are not mere temples but living wells of Shakti, where the veil between mortal and eternal thins, and the finite merges with the infinite. In Bangla, each shrine, each whispered mantra, each stone sanctified by her presence becomes part of a corridor of spirit—flowing beyond borders, carrying centuries of saints, poets, revolutionaries, and seekers into her infinite embrace. To walk this corridor is to walk not only through sacred geography but through states of being, where love and sacrifice, grief and transcendence, reveal the Divine Mother as the very pulse of creation, ever-present, ever-awakening, and ever-returning us to the source. Among Bangla's sacred Shaktipeeths, Kalighat in Kolkata shines as a luminous fountainhead of spiritual power, where time itself seems to pulse with the heartbeat of the Divine Mother. Tradition holds that the toes of Ma Sati's right foot descended here, sanctifying the bend of the Hooghly River with a force both fierce and infinite. The temple that arose on this ground is no mere structure—it is a living crucible of Shakti, where the mortal city and the eternal cosmos meet in fiery embrace. Here the goddess manifests as Ma Kali, radiant darkness incarnate, her scarlet tongue a flame of ecstatic power, her many arms a symphony of destruction and blessing. She dances upon Lord Shiva's chest, annihilating ego yet enfolding the devotee with maternal tenderness. Known as Dakshina Kali, she is compassionate yet uncompromising, her fierce gaze at once terrifying and liberating. The Hooghly flows at her feet like a river of consciousness, carrying pilgrims into a cosmic rhythm where all boundaries dissolve. Kalighat has never been simply a temple; it is the crucible of Bangla itself. Poets, saints, mystics, and revolutionaries alike have found strength in her presence, discovering in Kali's gaze the fire that illuminates the soul.

Beyond Kolkata, the sacred triangle of Birbhum's three Shaktipeeths—Nalhateshwari, Tarapith, and Bakreswar—offers pilgrims a layered communion with Shakti. At Nalhateshwari, where Sati's throat is said to have fallen, the goddess embodies speech and sound, the cosmic articulation that sustains creation. Pilgrims seek not mere eloquence but the power to give voice to the ineffable. At Tarapith, where her eyeballs are believed to have descended, the goddess shines as Tara, the all-seeing star. This shrine, a center of Tantric practice, dissolves dualities and awakens consciousness; here saints like Bamakhepa embodied fearless devotion. Bakreswar, sanctified by Sati's forehead, blends divine presence with the earth's power: its hot springs, revered for healing, symbolize renewal and union of terrestrial and celestial forces. Together, these three sites form a spiritual map that guides seekers from the clarity of sacred speech to the piercing gaze of awareness, and finally to the embodied transformation of earth and water. Across Bangla, other shrines deepen this web of Shakti. Attahas resounds like a cosmic chuckle, where devotion swells in song and drumbeat. Bahula offers a gentler refuge of compassion and counsel, while Kiriteswari, crowned in Murshidabad, reveals the goddess's sovereign majesty. Ratnavali shimmers with contemplative insight, Trisrota hums with Bhramari's thousand-voiced vibration, and Nandikeshwari burns as a clarifying fire of transformation. Ujaani evokes the goddess in wind and leaves, Vibhash in coastal light, and Jogadya in seasonal ritual where the goddess rises from sacred waters. Each shrine is more than a point on a map—it is a living tone in the hymn of Shakti, where the invisible becomes palpable. Though politics redrew borders, Bangla's sacred skeleton endures across West Bangla and Bangladesh.

- 1 Kalighat
- 2 Vibhash
- 3 Ratnavali
- 4 Jogadya
- 5 Ujaani
- 6 Attahas
- 7 Bakreswar
- 8 Nandikeshwari
- 9 Tarapith
- 10 Nalhateshwari
- 11 Kiriteswari
- 12 Trisrota
- 13 Bhabanipur
- 14 Mahalakshmi
- 15 Dhakeshwari
- 16 Sitakunda
- 17 Sugandha
- 18 Jeshoreshwari



**Figure:** The proposed spiritual corridor of Bangla Shaktipeeths

Jeshoreshwari, Sugandha, Bhabanipur, Dhakeshwari, Mahalakshmi Griva Peeth, and Sitakunda remain luminous nodes in this transnational web. Bhabanipur whispers intimacy and vastness; Jeshoreshwari stands sentinel in Satkhira's marshlands; Sugandha breathes sanctity through fragrance and ritual. At Mahalakshmi Griva Peeth in Sylhet, sound itself is sacrament, while Dhakeshwari in Old Dhaka persists as a civic and spiritual heart. Sitakunda, beneath Chandranath Hill, merges pilgrimage with mountain and sky, each ascent a confession and awakening. Despite shifting administrations, devotion continues in households, festivals, and diaspora kitchens, proving that the Mother's presence belongs to people, not states. This geography culminates each autumn in Durga Puja, when Bangla blossoms into a vast theatre of devotion. Pandals rise like palaces, Ma rises in her glory, and music, chants, and street processions weave the sacred into daily life. The festival embodies the principle underlying an *Shaktipeeth*: the Mother's power is inherently democratic, accessible to all, flowing through every lamp lit, every song sung, every heart opened. The *Shaktipeeths* of Bangla—both in India and Bangladesh—are not reliques but living heartbeats of culture, art, and identity, sustaining a civilization's deepest truth: that the Divine Mother is ever-present, fierce and tender, transcendent yet near.

Bangla literature, from the *Mangalkavyas* to the songs of Ramprasad Sen, resounds with Ma Shakti's presence. Ma Kali appears not as abstraction but as living force—dark, ecstatic, all-embracing—guiding, protecting, and answering her children. Poetry and song become acts of communion, vibrating with her power through syllable and rhythm, both intimate and cosmic. This devotion shapes inner life and outer society alike. The Divine Mother inspires courage and transformation; during the independence struggle,

revolutionaries saw in her fierce gaze the mirror of righteous wrath and the living symbol of motherland, calling them to act, resist, and serve. In Bangla's Shaktipeeths, the sacred and social, spiritual and political, intertwine. The Mother pulses through rivers, soil, lamps, and human hearts, uniting prayer and courage. To walk these temples is to move through Bangla's living poetry, where devotion flows as both fire and water, destruction and creation, all emanating from the eternal Shakti. Pilgrimage to the Shaktipeeths is thus more than distance; it is a journey of heart and consciousness. Pilgrims purify through fasting, meditation, and prayer, aligning themselves to receive her grace. Each ritual channels direct encounter: hibiscus and pradakshina at Kalighat, Tantric rites at Tarapith, offerings and mantras everywhere attuned to her presence. Pilgrimage is communal, dissolving barriers of caste, class, and region in shared fellowship. Here shines the democratic heart of Shakti devotion: her grace flows to all sincere seekers. The vision of a spiritual corridor linking Bangla's Shaktipeeths is more than infrastructure; it is a call to map devotion itself, tracing the goddess's living energy across rivers, plains, and hills. Connecting these sites would reveal the unity beneath her many forms, with shared routes, coordinated festivals, and cultural programs weaving devotion into a visible tapestry. Education must be central: interpretive centers and cultural initiatives could illuminate history, art, and spirituality, deepening devotion for pilgrims and opening understanding for seekers worldwide. Sustainability, too, is vital. Rural communities should flourish through careful tourism that honors tradition, supports crafts, and sustains local knowledge. Protecting the ecologies around rivers, forests, and hills is itself an act of devotion, ensuring the goddess's presence is honored in nature as well as shrine. Bringing this vision to life requires courage and care: sensitive coordination among temple authorities, diverse financing, and balance of preservation with accessibility. Above all, it depends on people—guides, administrators, and local communities—embodying its spirit through knowledge and devotion. The true measure is not numbers but transformation: awareness awakened, identity deepened, harmony fostered.

The *Bangla Shaktipeeth* spiritual corridor would be a celebration of the *Divine Feminine*, a living testament to Ma Shakti's enduring power—where the self meets cosmos, even as devotion becomes liberation.