

## About Tarapith Temple



Tarapith is considered a pithasthan because the third eye of Sati fell there. In the well-known scripture 'Guptachinacharkram' this pithasthan is considered this way. Once Vashistha wanted to know from Buddha where the third eye of Sati had fallen. In reply Buddha said, "In the north east side of Bakreswar and eastern corner of Baidyanath Dham, there is river Dwaraka and in the eastern side of the river there is a white Simul tree. Under that simul tree Goddess Tara lives as goddess Chandika in the form of stone.

..... To know about this story from of Goddess Tara from ancient to modern times please go through the book "Tarapith and our mother Tara' written by Debashis Mukherjee.

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### Episode of Merchant Joyadatta

After death of Sasanka, the king of Gour who reigned over Bengal for quite some time during 606-637 A.D, the state of affair in Bengal was miserable. Misrule prevailed everywhere. Since 638 A.D. till 749, during these more than hundred years came sharp decline in the Hindu religion. The vacuum was readily filled by the strong presence of Buddhism, specially by expansion and explosion of the Mahajan cult. According to Tibetan author, Taranath, in the absence of an able ruler in Bengal, forerunners amongst Brahmins, Khatriyas and feudal lords started forming their own territories to rule independently. During those days of pandemic turmoil Mother Chandi at Chandipur used to be worshipped by few Hindu Tantrics beneath the 'simul' tree in the burning ghat. Possibly that was the time Jayadatta, the merchant built the first temple at Chandipur and engaged priest for regular worship.

During reign of Pad dynasty (750 - 1097 A.D.), merchants sailing up and down the river Dwaraka faced miraculous incidents around its bank at Chandipur. Those were believed to be the handiwork of the deity Chandi and they worshipped to receive Her blessings. Like Manasa - Chand Sadagar of Chandi-Dhanapati Sadagar episodes, recorded in the poems namely 'Manasamangal' and 'Chandimangal', actually there is no verse depicting "Tara-Jayadatta Sadagar" episode. Whatever exists in myth. Accordingly, there was a merchant named Jaydatta in village Ratnagarh (now Ratgara) on the bank of river Dwaraka. He used to sail with his merchandise to North India by the Bhagirathi through the Dwaraka. Once he was sailing back to Ratnagarh with his only son Dhananjoy along with rich proceeds of merchandise from North India. Enroute he had to anchor at a place surrounded by dense forest at sunset. The place was known to him, an ideal site for tantric meditation. Out of curiosity, as a devotee of Maa Chandi, Jayadatta tying his boats with riverside trees set forth for the hermitage of saints, located in dense forest to be in their company overnight and decided to set sail nextday. Meantime an accident occurred. A venomous snake from the forest

bit Dhananjoy, only son of Jayadatta and disappeared. Immediately Dhananjoy collapsed on the lap of his father. It was second half of the dark fortnight, the Moon was not in the sky, though stars appeared. River Dwaraka was flowing at its high. Barks of the dogs and vixens' cries were tearing the serenity and silence apart Human bones and skulls were strewn everywhere. Jayadatta remained dumb founded. His heart became heavy, tears rolled down his cheeks making droplets falling on his dead child's corpse. He was encircled by a few members. Jayadatta was totally outwitted at this unprecedented event, demise of his only son. He was dozing in bereavement.

Once the boat was anchored, a group of crew members went to a nearby village Raghabbati (now Karkaria) on the river bank to fetch articles to cook their supper. There some one caught a 'shol' fish from a narrow ditch for the feast. But while the cut it into pieces and went to a waterbody nearby to cleanse, the pieces got enjoyed and came to life to sneak into the water. They came back hastily to apprise their master of the unique and miraculous incident. Alas! they noticed him with dead son on his lap and lamenting lambasting with strokes on his chest. After the narrative was told, they took the corpse of Dhananjoy on a banana-stem-raft and floated it on that water body (now Jibitkunda). All through the night the corpse floated on the water and next morning before sunrise Dhananjoy regained consciousness. Jayadatta was amazed at this unnatural phenomenon. He became sure of the presence of some divine favour of any goddess behind this supernatural development. All day long he remained absorbed in the thought of the unknown deity. At night in sleep he heard the divine message - 'I am Maa Chandi. As there is predominance of misrule every where, I am not getting offerings regularly. In the stone from I am buried under the 'Panchamundi Asian' beneath the 'simul tree'. Rescue me. Help me settle in the temple and arrange for my regular offerings and worship. It is me who took and later brought back life to your son'.

Next day Jayadatta sent his son and the crew to Ratnagarh. He stayed back. Later, he built the temple and set up the 'idol'. He brought a priest from village Mahula and entrusted him with regular worship. There after, he resorted to tantric meditation on the seat of pancha-mundi' and finally, attained the divine grace of Goddess Tara. A memorial tomb of Jayadatta now exists on the eastern side side of the cremation ground at Tarapith. Though, 'Jibitkunda' no longer transforms dead to live but still the water is considered sacred. Devotees with firm faith touch the water to recover from incurable diseases and women giving birth to still born babies hope to give birth to live ones. The day Jayadatta introduced the worship of Maa Tara was the fourteenth day of moonlit fortnight, preceded by the day of 'Kojagori Lakshmi Puja'. From then on the day is celebrated as "Arrival Festival" of Mother Tara every year with pomp and glory.

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