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Tripura As The Abode Of Shiva And Shakti

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Abstract

This paper describes Tripura as the abode of Shiva and Shakti. Tripura, a state in North-East India, has a distinct heritage and history, which is documented in Rajmala. In this study Unakoti is viewed as an important site for Shaivite tradition in Tripura. There are rock-cut reliefs of Lord Shiva and other gods and goddesses here. This paper also includes Captain R.C.B William's thoughts on his excursion to the Unakoti Hills. This paper highlights Tripura Sundari Temple as a Shakti worship site in Tripura. This paper also mentions the Kasba Kali Temple in Kamalasagar as a Shakti worship site. As a result, this paper sheds light on significant historical sites associated with Lord Shiva and manifestations of Shakti.

Keywords: Tripura, Lord Shiva, Unakoti, Tripura Sundari Temple, Kasba Kali Temple

1.0 Introduction

Tripura has a rich history. Tripura is a lovely state ruled by several rulers. The Rajmala Chronicles, written in 1450 under the reign of Dharma Manikya with the assistance of two Brahman pandits called Sukhreshwar and Baneshwar, shed light on the history of Tripura kings. Rajmala described Maharaja Dharma Manikya's reign as follows:

“ত্রিলোচন বংশে মহামাণিক্য নৃপতি
তান পুত্র শ্রী ধর্মমাণিক্য নাম খ্যাতি
বহু ধর্মশীল রাজ্ ধর্ম পরায়ণ
ধর্ম শাস্ত্র ক্রমে প্রবাদ করিছে পালন
এক কালে মহারাজা বসি ধর্মাসনে
রাজ বংশাবলী কীর্তি শ্রবনেচ্ছা মনে।“

Tripura's people have been devoting themselves to God via diverse ways and customs since ancient times. Tripura has a plentiful supply of water in the form of lakes, rivers, and so forth. Water is the primary source of life in every culture. Brahmana talks about water in the following way:

“Water is the elixir of immortality.

From the water is this universe produced.

In the waters, O Lord, is your seat, that is in the waters O Lord, is your womb...

The waters are the foundation of all this universe.”

– Shatapatha Brahmana, VI.8.2.3. – 13

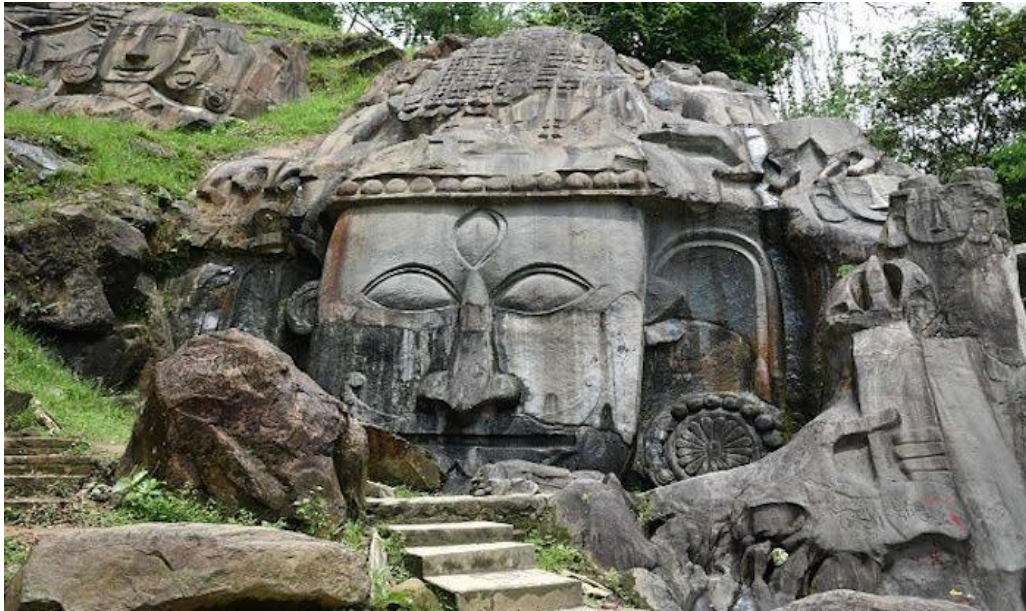
1.1 Lord Shiva and the lengthy history of devotion to Lord Shiva

The Unakoti hill has shown us the evidence of Shaivism in Tripura. Unakoti is Shaivite place of worship which has huge rock reliefs. It is a pilgrimage of ancient wonder, dating back to 7th-8th century. The first thing that one notices here is the large stone and rock-cut sculptures of different gods and goddesses. Accordingly, to legends, lord Shiva had spent a night here with 99,99,999 gods and goddesses on his way to Kashi. These 99,99,999 gods and goddesses are one less than a crore, hence the name Unakoti, meaning one less than a crore.

It is said that, after a night's rest here in the Unakoti hills, only Lord Shiva woke up in the next morning but the other gods and goddesses were still asleep. As a result, Lord Shiva got angry and gave curse to all the gods and goddesses present there saying that they will be turned to stone. That's how the Unakoti site came to existence.

Captain R.C.B Williams, who was the Political Agent of Hill Tipperah had mentioned in his tour report of 1913 that "lower down the hill is the Unakoti gorge, a place of much natural beauty, where a stream forces its way through a cleft in the rocks and in which is situated a sacred pool where the pilgrims went to bathe. At the head of the gorge the rock carvings are found. The particular spot seems to have been devoted to the worship of Shiva has together with three sacred bulls. The following sculptures can be noted –

- a) A rock carved with triangular, rhombic and semi-circular pattern.
- b) The figure of a woman with naked breasts. The figure is about 15 feet high and three points is on the head. The face is much obliterated. The arms are broken. The legs- are broken and are ornamented with angular and dotted patterns.
- c) A male figure of which only the head and breast are visible. The remainder of the body is covered by a landslide.
- d) A large figure of Shiva. The left nostril is broken away, the right foot is buried in a slide of rock and one of the left arms is rather damaged. The figure is some 15 feet high and represents a man with four arms taking a long stride with the left foot and in the act of shooting an arrow. The upper right arm is brandishing a heavy club. The lower right arm grasps the arrow head and bow strings. The upper left arm flourishes a Trishul or Trident and the lower left arm is holding the bow. He wears a bracelet on both right arms. Across his left shoulder is a string of beads. His waist is very small and he wears a sort of dhoti. The whole carving is in a very bold relief and in some places is over twelve inches deep.
- e) A rock carved with very rough shallow carvings of – i) a man with a bow and arrow and wearing a sort of feather-head dress, ii) a woman, and iii) two birds. F) In the immediate vicinity of the sacred pool there are – i) the carvings of an enormous head ii) three bulls of Shiva, and iii) four small heads."



1. Lord Shiva

1.2 Shakti Worship in Tripura

Shakti worship in Tripura is discussed below.

1.2.1 Tripura Sundari Temple, Udaipur, Gomati District

Parvati or Uma is the Hindu goddess of power, called Shakti. She is the main goddess of the shaktism. Paravati is a form of Shakti. In Rigveda, the names of Shakti are found as Ambika, Rudrani etc. In Kena Upanishad, Verse 312, we find a goddess names Uma-Haimavati, which is a very common alternate of Parvati.

The Tripura Sundari Temple in Udaipur is a Hindu temple dedicated to the Goddess Tripura Sundari, a manifestation of Shakti. Matabari is another name for Tripura Sundari Temple. The temple is one of the 51 Shakti Peethas; tradition has said that Sati's little finger from her left leg fell here. Shakti is worshipped as Tripura Sundari, while Bhairava is known as Tripuresh. The main shrine, a cubical edifice with a three-tier roof and a finial, was built in the Bengali *Ek-ratna* style by Maharaja of Tripura Dhanya Manikya in 1501 CE.



2. Matabari



3. Maa Tripura Sundari

1.2.2 Kasba Kali Temple, Kamalasagar, Sepahijala District

This renowned Shakti Shrine is located 31 kilometres from Agartala, on the international border with our neighbouring country, Bangladesh. The tranquil lake in front of the temple adds to the mystical allure of this location. Although Maharaja Kaliyan Manikya initiated the construction, it was completed in the late 15th

century by Maharaja Dhanya Manikya. The reputation and popularity of this Shakti shine attracts a large number of religious travellers from all over the world. The goddess Durga is venerated within the temple, however because the foundation platform bears an image of Shiva, the ten-handed Durga slaying the buffalo monster Mahisasur is worshipped as goddess Kali. The neighbourhood around the temple is also known as kasba, which is a Farsi term for "town." The area was known as Kamalagarh or Koilagarh in the past. After conquering Surja, the then-ruler of Bengal, Maharaja Kalyan Manikya constructed this fort to better fortify Tripura's princely realm. The township of Koilagarh eventually grew around the fort, and the name Koilagarh faded into obscurity, being replaced by the name Kasba.

Maharaja Dhanya Manikya (1940-1520) excavated a big pool of water in front of the temple and called it Kamalasagar after his wife Kamala Devi. The Durga temple of Kali Manikya evolved into a Kasba kali temple throughout time. According to legend, Nawab Hossain Shah of Bengal attacked Kasba but was defeated by the army of Maharaja Dhanya Manikya and fled to save his life. Currently, an Indo-Bangla Border Hut has been erected here, which serves as a distinctive attraction for travellers. Every year in April, a large fair is held near the temple, and hundreds of devotees' flock to perform puja in the temple.



4. Kasba Kali Temple

1.3 Conclusion

Devotees of Lord Shiva and Shakti may be found almost everywhere in India. Tripura is no exception; we find similar things here as well. There are several Shiva temples in Tripura, as well as temples dedicated to various types of Shakti. We can see signs of Shiva and Shakti worship in Tripura at Unakoti, Tripureswari temple, and Kasba Kali temple.

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