
Recasting the Religious Shrines of Maynaguri (Jalpaiguri District)

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Abstract: *The temples of the early medieval Bengal have nearly all disappeared, but the few that remain standing and excavated or tumbled remains of others. From the evidence of miniature replicas or representations on images, historians have classified a number of different architectural styles on the basis of different regions of India. Evolution of Nagara-style temples which were influenced by the Orissan Rekha Deuls, followed by the development of Muslim architecture. This paper intends the early Saiva temples of Maynaguri, to be precise the temple of Jalpeswar, Jatileswar and Bateswar have immense archaeological and architectural importance. Some other religious centres like the Sodorkhai Temple, which is mostly ruined, but from the structural remains of the temple, it has similarities with the Jatileswar and Batesvar temples respectively. Besides that, the idol of a goddess such as Petakati, is assumed as the symbol of Buddhist Bajrayana tantric worship. The ruins of these temples silently described the historical importance of Maynaguri.*

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Introduction

The early medieval period is marked by remarkable development in the spheres of art, architecture and also archaeology which have fairly been institutionalised in the form of religious shrines down the ages. In this trend, not only distinct regional temple architecture but also sculptural development has emerged in different areas of India. Its exclusiveness, however, excelled the gravity in the world of culture and tradition. The entire region of North East India vis-a-vis down the land lying as border called at present North Bengal drew attention for the development of religious centres conspicuously in some particular areas of Pragjyotisha Kamrupa, came to the limelight of history in terms of various political events and religious developments. By the way, the religious life of the people of Pragjyotishpura-Kamrupa in

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general and ancient North Bengal, in particular, cannot easily be known except for the nature of the religion of the region as a whole. It can be construed from the religious activities of the rulers of different reigning dynasties. Perhaps the relics of the early temple and the existence of some ancient temples indicate the fact that the people of ancient North Bengal, as well as their rulers, have faith in Lord Siva. Because while Yuan Chuang visited North Bengal in the 7th century A.D., he saw a large number of Saiva temples in the region.¹ Religious establishment of Maynaguri, to be precise the temple of Jalpeswar, Jatileswar and Bateswar have immense archaeological importance. Some other religious centres like the Sodorkhai Temple, which is mostly ruined, but from the structural remains of the temple, it has similarities with the Jatileswar and Batesvar temples respectively. When Yuan Chawan visited Kamrupa he mentioned that, “The people have no faith in Buddha, and adored and sacrificed to the Deva. There were about 100 Deva temples of the Buddhist Sangha’s there were none. The King was a Brahman by cast, Bhaskar Varman by name and had the title of Kumara.”² What is worth noting is that these three temples were specifically constructed in the same period which brings to us some possible speculation that during the period, when these temples were constructed (around Circa 800 AD), there seems to have been some kind of religious changes which led to the changing faces of archaeological styles. The archaeological ruins and monuments located in the vicinity of Maynaguri (District Jalpaiguri, West Bengal) on the left bank of the Tista and right bank of the Jaldhaka also bear evidence to justify an extraordinary religious sentiment of the people which in the long run found its expression through institutionalised archaeological remains.

The materials used for the construction of those religious sites were bricks, bamboo, cane, wood etc. which can be the reason why at the present day, most of these religious Shrines are in dilapidated condition. Bricks and large stones were used by the Kings and some cases a few rich people of the region for construction. Most of the religious sites in these places are destroyed and broken into pieces with remains still left. In one or two places half broken temple, still stands, for example, Batesvar Temple at Gartali, Sodorkhoi temple and so on. There is also a different opinion about the destruction of the temple. Some historians prefer to conclude that the destruction of these religious centres happened on the eve of the Muslim invasion in this part of India.³ On the other hand, a group of scholars emphasized natural calamities behind the present condition of these religious centres.⁴ But it is said that King Prana Narayana of Princely state Coach Behar took the initiative to reconstruct at least two temples namely Jalpeswar Temple and Jatileswar Temple during his reign.⁵

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As far as a popular legend we come to know a story that, during the 800A.D, there was a series of temples or religious establishments by a king Jalpa or Jalpesh.⁶ At that time King Jalpesh or Jalpa of Kamtapur has been surprisingly taken as the first independent king⁷ and he is still remembered by the posterior generations. He is said to have ruled sometime over the major areas of North Bengal and it is likely that during that time he actively dedicated himself to building temples which still exist in decayed position. He tried to buttress their authority by extending patronage to the major pilgrimage places; large scale grant for temple establishment and the construction of imperial temples and royal patronage was important in the case of the specific shrine and reflect the close relationship that kings sought to establish with certain deities and temples. With the emergence of the temple, the king was trying to increase the number of *pariharas*,⁸ signifying the further increasing oppression of peasantry and growth of feudal agrarian relations. In another way, the temples were gradually turned to be symbols of the sovereignty of the king and quite surprisingly the temples became the centres of political activities and public relations. However, it is clear that, the relationship between kings and the temple was not one of rivalry but that of alliance.

Patronage to the temple was a major means of acquiring, proclaiming and maintaining political supremacy. At first, all these temples were similar in their architectural design. Jatileswar temple was designed in the Sikhara style⁹ of architecture which suggests that there was certainly a North Indian religious influence in the area of Maynaguri of North Bengal. Some distinctive denatures can also be found in the renovated Jalpeshwar temple. The dome of the temple was made according to the Islamic style of Architecture. The series of religious establishments suggest that, King Jalpeshwar Varman, who seems to be the founder of three main temples, the Jalpeshwar temple, the Jatileswar Temple and the Bateswar temple.

Jalpeswar Temple

The Jalpeswar temple was built during c.800 AD and the temple at present a conflux of Hindu and Islamic culture had an immense archaeological as well as religious importance. This Siva temple is situated in western Dooars to the eastern side of the river Tista and on the bank of Jotda¹⁰ River at Gartali Village of Maynaguri, 7km away from the Maynaguri town and 24 km distance from the eastern side of the Jalpaiguri town. The word 'Gar' meaning 'fort' and 'Toli' meaning 'suburbs' i.e., it is a land about a fort.¹¹ The famous Jalpeshwar Siva temple of North Bengal exists in this village. According to the report of D.H.E. Sunder, "It is possible that a fort existed in the taluk years ago and that the taluk was named after it."¹²

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But the significance of the sacred meaning of Jalpeswar Siva or Jalpesh is Lord of Jala or water or the lord of the falling Ganga or the water-goddess symbolising life, purity and liberation from all bondages of life itself, which are inherent in the God-head of Siva.¹³

The Jalpesh *Mahapitha* is one of the important spiritual places of North Bengal. According to the *Skanda Purana*, this *pitha* was situated in the Mahakal forest where there was an *Anadilinga* which was worshipped by the Jalpesha.¹⁴ In the *Kalika Purana* it is mentioned as a holy place and Nandi is said to have performed austerities in order to attain his attendantship of Siva.¹⁵ There has also been mentioned that the Jalpesh *pitha* is situated on the North Western (vayu) side of Kamrupa and the *pitha* has got a close connection with Parsurama.¹⁶ The present village named Jalpesh of North Bengal which was once a part of the ancient territory Pragjyotisha-Kamrupa.¹⁷ But there are different opinions among the social scientists and archaeologists as to the exact time period of Jalpesh *Mahapitha*. In this context, we can focus on the view of Dr. Francis Buchanan Hamilton who states that, “I could not determine exactly when king Jalpeswar was existed. But the priest of the temple informed the temple had been built twice between the time of Jalpeswar and Prana Narayana. The temple was built by King Jalpeswar and later reconstructed by the Coah Behar king Maharaja Prana Narayana”¹⁸ T.N. Ramachandran also prepared a note on the Jalpesh Temple in the year 1952 and who states that, last Varman king Jalpeswar Varman had built the temple during 800 A.D. and consecrated a *linga* in his own name near the Trisrota river and this Varman dynasty ruled in Kamrupa between the time of 200-800 A.D.¹⁹ According to the *Kalika Purana*, “the kshatriya who were afraid of *Jamadagmya Parsurama* took the disguise of *Mleccha* and resided under the shelter of Jalpes siva”²⁰ According to this view Ramachandran explained that “In the 11th century A.D. king named Narasimha Parsurama, a descendant of Bhoja Gauda dynasty in Bogra District. Confusion in name has obviously arisen owing to similarity of names of Narasimha Parsurama and Jamadagmaya Parsurama.”²¹ There is another inspection note prepared by the M.S. Vats, then the Director General of Archaeology, dated 4th March 1952 in the Archaeological Survey. It is mentioned that in the *Skanda Purana*, Varman King Jalpa found the *Nava-Ratna* temple of Jalpeshwar Deva in the *Ratnapith* region.²² After a long time the temple was reconstructed and renovated by the king of Koach dynasty, named Prana Narayana, mentioned earlier. In this inspection, Sri M.S. Vats also mentioned that, “The temple of Jalpesh which is originally said to have been constructed by the king of Bhutan in the 12th century A.D. was more or less completely repaired by Maharaja Prana Narayana in or about 1665 A.D.”²³ In the opinion of eminent social reformer and lawyer of North Bengal Sri

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Upendranath Barman, “according to his research of Kumar Jagadindradeb Raikat (the first secretary of Jalpesh temple committee), the last King of the Varman dynasty Jalpeswar Varman built the Jalpesh temple in the 8th Century A.D.”^{23a} Another eminent archaeologist Adris Banarjis’ opinion was, “This temple was originally erected by the Siva king of Bhutan in the 12th Century A.D. when the Pala empire had gone the way to the empire and Senas were to be wiped out by hardly tribes men from Garmsir.”²⁴ Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal also said that, “The Lingam is enshrined in a big temple which is said to have been built at the first by Raja named Jalpeswar in the 19th year of Saka (about 100A.D.) probably one of his descendants, Prithu Raja, rebuilt the temple in the second century.”²⁵ In the Bengali literary sources Gosani Mangala (18th century A.D.) stated that the Siva Linga of Jalpesh which was built by the Kamtesvara of Kamatapur.²⁶ According to Buddhist tradition, “Prithu was a religious man, most probably a Saiva yogi and led a monkish personal life. His religious belief was in a combination of yoga and Buddhism. He retained what Maynamati initiated; and therefore, he patronised the Siva temple in the whole of Kmatapur. It was, most probably, for that reason he too was called *Jalpeshwar* in reminiscence of the founder of the Jalpesh Siva temple”.^{26a}

Initially some eminent scholars also prefer to suggest that, the Siva linga preserved in the Jalpesa temple, that stone may be fallen from the sky.²⁷ Perhaps that the ‘meteoric stone’ became an astonishing factor to the local people of this area and was ultimately considered as God.²⁸ From these assumptions definitely glorify the sanctity of this *pitha*. But it is still properly unknown to us how much old the Jalpesh Mahapitha is? Early histories of this *pitha* behind various proverbs are not yet fully unfold for us.

After a long time, the temple was reconstructed and renovated by the king of Koach dynasty, named Prana Narayana which is mentioned earlier. But according to folktales, once upon a time the Mahraja Prannarayan (1632-65) king of Coach Behar state, when he visited a place named Gortoli for hunting he came to know, with the aid of a cow which was found used to every day to go to the neighbouring jungle and dropped its milk, then the Raja found the some ruined structures, stones; when he ordered to his army for remove the stone blocs, then he suddenly found a black stone *Anadi linga*.²⁹ But J.F. Grunning wrote in his account, “Between his time and that of Prana Narain, Raja of Coach Behar, the temple appears to have been re-built twice, but the story goes that the *linga* was eventually forgotten until Pran Narayan, who ruled about 300years ago, dreamt that Siva appeared to him and told him that he was at Gortoli and wood be found if search was made for him. The Raja left his place with a large army and many attendants, and, after a long search, was success full in discovering

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the *Siva linga*.”³⁰ After this incident he at once ordered his officials to reconstruct on the spot the present Siva temple. It is said that Prana Naryan brought a few Muslim architects from Delhi for making the finishing touch as per the style of a mosque of the temple but before doing anything in this regard he suddenly died. After the death of Pran Narayana fifth Raja of Coachbehar dynasty named Modnarayan finished the construction of the temple of Jalpeswar and he granted 44 *jotes* as its Devattara property.³¹ Modnarayan also opened a Sadavrata (to provide free food to visitors) and arranged the annual payment of eleven hundred ‘coins’ to meet the expenditure involved.³² From the historical perspective the scholars of recent time, do not subscribe to the above mentioned story as it sounds to be based on mythology. At this points the scholars became interested to find out the actual background of the history of the temple and as it has not been mentioned in the Puranas or any contemporary sources. It appears that such type of religious establishment came into existence as a mark of political victory of a king or to certify the unchallenged power of the respective ruler.³³ It has already been discussed that the temple once a Buddhist temple, perhaps the people of this area belong to the Buddhist religion and the king Jalpa or Prithu occupied this area and transformed this Buddhist temple into a Siva temple. But there is no concrete evidence in support of such an assumption. It is however interesting that among the objects discovered in the site we have got a bell on which some Tibetan words have been inscribed. Thus, there is a common belief that this temple is some way or other connected with Buddhism and the faith holders of this religion used this bell at the time of their prayer.

The Jalpesh shrine is consecrated to *Mahadeva Iaan* which there is a *Swayambhu Lingam*, the top of which is now visible about 2ft., below the marble *Gouripitha* now built into the centre of sanctum of the temple.³⁴ The Dome and around area are constructed according to the style of Islamic architecture. It is likely that this later construction that has survived internally in the major part of the temple. The Jalpeswar Siva temple was built with durable bricks and has a high central dome with four smaller domes surrounded at each corner. The temple was built on mound and surrounded by a trench which was nearly dry and basement of the floor is sunken depth in the mound and a flight of stairs lead down to it. The *Siva linga* is fixed a whole in this basement and all times more or less covered with water, which has to be bale out before the *linga* can be worshipped.³⁵ The building itself is square sanctum and galleries used to run round the base and top of the large dome. The height of the temple from basement floor to top of dome is around 127 feet and the lower is 120 feet square.³⁶ The upper storey of building 38 feet and 36 feet square and the dome of temple is 34 feet diameter and

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inner diameter is 26 feet, the height of dome is 17 feet.³⁷ The construction was such that at the ground floor there were two series of corridors, one behind the other, and at the centre the *Garbhagriha* is 6 ft. 2 inc. thick, but the thickness of the walls between the outer and the inner corridors form the second storey is 3ft 6 inches only.³⁸ On the second storey the outer series of corridors form the terrace in front of the inner series. The inner series of corridors on the second storey consist of an oblong central apartment. The façade of the second storey from outside shows five arched 7ft. by 4ft. wide and 10 ft. high, three of these piercing the oblong compartment in the centre of each side and one in the corner room.³⁹ These arches both inside and out are either multi foil are also numerous chases and niches in the walls of the various corridors and the sanctum.

The old picture of the temple shows that above the two storey's of corridor round the sanctum stood vertically an octagonal figure and it was above the height of these two storeys octagonal that the outline of the structure receded back to provide a small terrace round the octagonal figure, and this space was naturally emphasized at the corners above the second storey of the corridor.⁴¹ At this level, that is to say, at the top of the octagonal figure round the sanctum rose a tall drum, which was ultimately covered by a semi-circular dome on which traces of the lotus necking can be made out. The original pinnacle would have risen from the centre of the lotus necking.⁴²

However, the temple is several times controlled by numerous kings and dynasties. During the colonial period, the temple was controlled by British colonial government. Taking advantages of the weak successor of King Prana Narayana the king of Bhutan during the 18th century annexed the entire Dooars area including Jalpesh temple.⁴³ The kings of Bhutan also paid attention on the temple and fulfilled its all necessity. After second Anglo-Bhutan War (1864) the entire area of Dooars including Maynaguri and this historical temple took over by the British Government. From the beginning the British Government never shown any interest on the temple; but due to local resistance they had to take some measures for the temple. They formed a committee for maintained the financial condition of temple on 30 January, 1899.⁴⁴ The eminent members of the temples were Sri Upandranath Barman and Sri Govinda Sankar Sarbadkshya and Sri Govinda Sankar Sarbadhakshya wrote a letter to the Archaeological Department of India, to visit and to estimate the amount for rebuilding the temple. Archaeological Department responded about this matter and visited this temple and estimated that 11laks of rupees were needed to reconstruct the temple. After this incident the members of newly born committee gave a proposal to the British Government for financial

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support.⁴⁵ As usual the government never showed their responsibility but after that, the members of Jalpesh temple committee especially Sri Jagadindradev Raikot started to collecting subscriptions from the *jotdars* and *zamidars* of Maynaguri and its surrounding areas.⁴⁶ During the First World War due to economic disturbances the construction of the temple was stopped. But this situation did not last very long after the First World War the construction was quickly completed by the labour of local people and with the financial support of *jotdars* and *zamidars*.⁴⁷

Jatileswar Temple

After the Jalpesh temple, the *Jatileswar Shiva* temple is one of the oldest temple architecture in the region of Maynaguri. The temple has religious as well as historical significance. It is said that the main temple was built during the time of Later Gupta period around 800 A.D.^{47a} This temple is dedicated to *Jatileswar* or Lord Shiva. It has not been mentioned in the Jalpaiguri District Gazetteer (1911) but D.H.E. Sunder in his *Settlement Report* in the year 1896 had described this temple. Actually, the *Purbadahar* or *Jatileswar* (Mahadeva) is well known God was established here, which a blood colour temple existing here.

The Siva Lingam is worshipped in the village of *Purvadohor* (Huchludanga, Malliker Hat), situated 5 Kilometres away from the east side of the Jalpesh Temple and 10 Kilometer from Maynaguri town of Jalpaiguri district, also bank on the western side of the river *Jaldhaka*, close to 31 No. highway (Asian Highway) connecting to Maynaguri with Dhupguri. The word 'Purba' means 'at east or first' and 'dahar' means 'to adoro or worship' i.e., the word *Purvadahar* obtains forms the god Mahadeva and by the name which is known as this *taluk* *Purvadohor*.⁴⁸ The main temple compound is very large and full of trees. The main Shiva temple is located on the bank of a large pond.

It is believed that the temple of *Purvadahar* was built by the feudal chief of Gupta kingdom. But according to Dr. Suniti Kumar Chattarjee, the *Jatileswar* temple was constructed during the Pala period of 12th century A.D.⁴⁹ and it was constructed by the Maharaja Jalpa who belongs to the Varman dynasty (200-800 A.D)⁵⁰ and also the founder of *Jalpeswar Siva Temple*. But some historians point out that; the earlier temple had been ruined by the foreign invaders or natural calamities. Later on, this temple was renovated by the Coach king Maharaja Pran Narayana.⁵¹

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At present, only a small broken part has been found in the early temple of Jatileswar and in this temple there is a living temple with one *anadilingam* in the *garbhagriha*. The structure of the Jatileswar is almost a miniature Jalpesh and Bateswar temple. It is interesting to note that, there are clear differences found in the both upper and lower section of the temple structure. The shikhara was newly built and the remaining structure of the temple is most probably Rekha Deol. It may be possible that, both the lower and upper sections of the temple architecture had been made by different architects in different periods of time. The surrounding wall of the temple has decorated with different beautiful relief sculptures of Tantric *Mahyanism*. It was situated beside a huge pond and huge number of broken pieces are lying all around near the temple. According to the excavation of the Archaeological Survey of India, the temple had been established by the Pala kings but the temple seems to have been erected over a still earlier structure. The shrine has contained “*Svayambhuva*” type of Siva Linga in its *Garvagriha*.⁵²

The Shiva Deva Linga of Purvadahar Temple is known to us as name Jatileswar. The temple architects are very appreciable among the people. The outer wall of the temple architecture has engraved different types of beautiful relief sculptures; among them most famous are- different posture women sculptures, dancing Ganesha, Buddhist Sculpture and Nataraja Siva and so on. Few years ago, the Archaeological Department under the Government of West Bengal had found Kuber Sculpture and Vishnu Sculpture which has further preserved in the museum under the Government of West Bengal. According to the view of Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, the Vishnu Sculpture is the “Priceless Treasure”.⁵³ The gigantic sculpture of *Darpala* stands at the corner of the temple intensified and justify the beauty of the temple. The decorative and sensitive treatment of forms has accentuated elongation enlivened with a sense of plasticity recalling the art of Pala of Bengal in about 11th to 12th century A.D. which once inspired the painting style of Nepal and Tibet.⁵⁴ The old gate of the temple is built of massive stone blocks placed one above the other without any cementing material. This stone portion is 10 feet and the brick portion 25 feet high. Some stone were measured, which are 16”x16”x 8” and some are 18”x 24”x 24”.⁵⁵

There is another small temple within the compound but there has no image found. This temple is said to belong to Jatileswar and Siddeswari. This puja is like Kali puja but there has no animal sacrifice is prevailing where goddess Siddheswari worshipped.

Apart from the singular example of Purvadahar with the sculpture panels depicting Buddhist divinities. Recently near the temple, there is a pond were dug by the *Kharatran*

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Trust of West Bengal and there found different types of sculptures such as-sculpture of *Siva*, *Ganesha*, *Vishnu*, *Chandi*, Buddha etc. At present all the found sculptures are being preserved by the Government of West Bengal. These sculptures proved that this temple convey the old long historical background. The government of West Bengal had declared the temple of Purvadahar as an archaeological site and the place now has been reserved under the Ancient Monument Preservation Act.

Bateswar Temple

Bateswar temple is situated in between the middle of Maynaguri and Jalpeshwar Shiva temple is another Siva temple. The temple is situated 3Kilometers away from Maynaguri town and 4 km from the Jalpeshwar Shiva temple. Looking at its architectural style, we can understand that the temple is contemporary to the Jatileswar temple and it was also founded by King Jalpeswar Varman. At present, the temple is in ruined condition with only three walls and *Garbhagriha* remaining. Many slabs have been scattered and relief paintings or sculptures were engraved on these slabs.

The ancient temples near *Maynaguri*, the most attractive are the ruined of *Bateswar* temple which reveals a square sanctum with three symbolic projections and stupendous heap of remnants of its *Sikhara carved with amalakas, Purnaghatas*, foliated scrolls, *gavakas* or *Chaitya-windows*, *Sankha-Padma* and a *Brahminical deities* amongst whom a seated *Kubera Sculpture* had been recovered of a *Kiritimukha* flanked by a meandering *scroll-work*.⁵⁶ The decorative stone blocks bear masons marks signs of tenons and one example shows in relief a pair of Shrines in both Northern and Southern style. It is not possible that the temple of *Batesvar* was dedicated to Shiva besides is architectural style belongs to the early Pala Period.⁵⁷ The ground plane of motif is *Chaitya-Window* and *Purnaghata* as also the depth of volume of *Kubera* being reminiscent of the Late-Gupta convention and certain adoptions from layout of Shrine of Deogarh near Jhansi.⁵⁸

According to Surgeon Rane's in his writings said that during the battle of the second Anglo-Bhutan War in 1864 some British soldiers who belonged to the Jalpesh cantonment thought that the Bhutanese army hide huge amounts of gold and money in this place before leaving the village named Bhotpatti. So, during the war time the British troops destroyed this temple. In 1865 Surgeon Renee come to the army camp of Jalpesh and ordered to covered this broken temple with soil. He admitted that it was the temple of Raja of Baikunthapur and also wrote that 'An old temple which until lately was concealed by an earthen mound.'

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Sadarkhai Temple

Sodorkhoi temple, which is one of the famous temple of Jalpaiguri districts, located very near to the Maynaguri Railway Station and 2 Km away from the Maynaguri town is in ruined condition. Three walls surrounding the temple are left un-destroyed. The term 'Sodorkhoi' is 'spent some times in the house of relatives' i.e., 'Sodor' means 'relative' and 'Khaoa' means 'eating'. According to mythology, once upon a time the Siva of Jalpeswar, Jatileswar and Bateswar came here to meet his relatives and settled here permanently. It is a ruined temple, the three walls still un-ruined which surrounded to the temple. The internal corridor and the *Garbhagriha* were the most noticeable part of the temple. From the structural point of view the temple has sort of similarity with the Jatileswar and Bateswar temple.

The temple of *Sodorkhoi* a couple of miles away from Maynaguri town has a square sanctum or *Garbhagriha* with small niches, an *antarala* or vestibule and a porch or *mandapa* the entire ground-plane of which probably appertains to *Circa* 11th century A.D. It is quite possible that the shrine was originally dedicated to the life-size wonderful image of *Camunda* of about the same chronology now being worshipped by the local villagers who call her *Petkati*.⁵⁹

The many of the slab are found and relief sculpture have been engraved on it, but also most of the slab under the earth. The structure and the shape suggest that it was built in the early medieval period. Only through the survey of archaeological excavation can be found all debris and total picture of the temple can be imagining.

The archaeological study or survey help us to recover the material remains of the past and history and heritage. Among the many of archaeological remains of North Bengal, remains of *Sodorkhoi* are the major primary source for the reconstruction of early history of North Bengal. Now it is essential to take immediate intervention of the government the truth and the myth of this temple to enrich our cultural heritage, archaeological evidences, historical architecture and sculpture of North Bengal.

Petkati Temple

The idol of Devi Petkati is made of black stone and she enshrined in a small temple at the village Bangkandi about one and 1.5 K.M to the north of Maynaguri town and very close to Sodorkhoi Temple, under the Jalpaiguri district and at a 1.5 miles distance from New Maynaguri Railway station. There is different contradiction of opinions about the time when the worship of the Goddess started. It was left underground amidst dense forest of the land.

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The idol was found when cleaning the forestland for the growing of sweet potato.⁵⁹ The black stone idol was recovered with the help of local people and preserved in the temple as a worship of Goddess.

The idol of the Goddess is assumed as the symbol of *Bajrayana Tantric* worship.⁶⁰ The black stone idol of the goddess was made with the similarity of Buddhist sculpture and art.^{60a} The idol was decorated with thin skeleton like body and there is a hungry statue of a scorpion seated on the basement of the idol on a height of 7 feet and 2 feet 7 inches long.⁶¹ The sculpture has five pair of hands of which two of the right and one of the left are found broken. The goddess holds an elephant with her both side two hands over her head and there is a bird, probably an owl, sits on the back of the elephant. On the remaining left side, one hand of the goddess holds a human figure pierced in the trident, on the other hand holds a bell and one hand is partly broken. On the right-side hand of the idol holds a skeleton of a dead man another hand holds a 'Damru' but two hands are partly broken. The goddess is decorated with a garland of cut human head, her crown is made of snakes, she has three eyes, and ear rings are made of snakes. She is sitting on a lotus flower and under her feet, there is a kneeling female figure. On the left of the seat below is a jackal and to the right is a peacock. Below the idol there are large number of dead bodies and jackals eating them. Above the head of idol on two sides of elephant are two female figures with snakes in their hand.^{61a} It seems that the idol of the Goddess actually is an idol of Lord Buddha as per its image and design. On the other hand, it appears as an idol of a god or goddess of Hindu tantric religion. Above all, the idol of the goddess is worshipped cordially with grandeur irrespective of all religions some people call it an idol of '*Dhumabati*'⁶² and *Chamuanda*⁶³ but apparently it has many similarities with that of the Devi *Chaumunda* in close observation. The local people established the idol as *Devi Kalika*.

The temple of Petkati was built approximately 80-90 years ago which was discovered by the late Santeswar Roy with his two brothers.⁶⁴ But as to the age of the idol of the Goddess there are so many contradictory opinions among the scholars. Some scholars pointed out that the idol of the Goddess was built in the era of Buddhist Culture, as there are many similarities in its architectural design of Buddhist era.⁶⁵ So we may assume it was built in the era of *Pala Dynasty* because the king of *Pala Dynasty* patronizes the Buddhism. In addition to it, the *Pala* architects were experts in art architecture of Buddhist era. So, it may be concluded that the idol is one of the wonderful examples of *Pala* architecture. From several surveys and experiments, we can easily assume it; the idol of the Goddess is of 1000-1200 years of age.

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According to the local people, believe the big *Pala-Sena Camunda* image called *Petkati Mao*.⁶⁶ The temple provides another story about the religious faith of inhabitant people of Maynaguri. The idol of Petkati Devi is different from any other idol of Hindu goddess. The external characteristics of the idol influence by the Buddhist tantric faith. This type of architectural style had never seen in the Hindu god and goddess. The entire area of Maynaguri once upon a time was administered by the Bhutanese and for that reason, some Buddhist Tantric used this place for their spiritual practice and for this purpose, they designed this idol. In this perspective it may be assumed that at that time the land of the temple was a place of righteousness of the Bhutanese '*Trantics*' and '*Lamas*'. Perhaps the idol the Goddess was made by the Bhutanese *Trantics* and *Lamas* for their ritual's activities. What so ever, it may be concluded that there is a connection of Buddhist with this idol of Goddess to some extent. It also can be presumed that, The Buddhist *Tantrics* and *Lamas* perhaps for some political or religious reasons left this place and the idol and by some natural calamities or intolerance influence the idol had undergone into the earth. After a long period, the idol was recovered by some local people and was shaped as *Dhumabati Devi*.

It is important to note that religious establishments are influenced by the religious faith of the local people. As we can see the early history of India or as well as the world of the religious faith of inhabitants were by and large reflected on the religious establishment. In the Northern region of India witnessed particularly with the different types of Siva temples. Most of the temples contained the phallus emblem of lord Siva (*Linga*) and others installed the idol of Lord Siva. In the case of Maynaguri, all the Sive temples which have been discussed above contained the phallus emblem of Lord Siva. The structure and architectural style of these temples are almost the same and the ruin period of these temples is perhaps more or less the same. For this reason, it may be easily concluded that the temples belonged same dynasties and destroying by some non-Hindu influence or natural calamities.

Lastly, it can summarise that, if Maynaguri is to be taken as comparatively a small place but its history has valuable for the regional historical development. The ruins of the temples silently described the historical importance of Maynaguri. The geographical location of this place helps to create a historical background; for that reason, the kings of various dynasties patronised the construction and maintenance of these religious shrines. The existence and the history of the temples fairly justify the viability of the region which seems to have prompted the kings of various dynasties to take the initiative to dedicate themselves to the establishment of such a huge number of religious sites. Due to the negligence of the

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government, the early history of Maynaguri cannot be explored properly, if the government has taken interest in this matter perhaps a great historical influence added eminency in the regional history of West Bengal as well as India.

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3. Debnath, Sailen, *Kamtapur: An Unexplored History of Eastern India (650-1498)*, Delhi: Ayu Publication, p.215.
4. Ibid.
5. Sanyal, Charu Chandra, *The Rajbanshis of North Bengal*, The Asiatic Society Monograph Series, Vol. XI, Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1965, reprint. 2002, p.149.
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8. *Pariharas* is exemptions and privilege granted to done in royal land grant.
9. The *Shikhara* style of the temple was associated with land between the Himalayas and Vindyas, it is also called Nagara style of architecture and the temple is square.
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14. *Skanda Purana*, ch.66 vs. 34f; Sarkar, Ichhimuddin, *Aspects of Historical Geography of Pragjyotisha- Kamrupa (Ancient Assam)*, Calcutta: Naya Prokash, 1992, p.199-200.
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18. Chaudhury, Nirmal Chandra, 'Jalpaigurir Mandir, Masjid O Girja', *Madhuparni, Jalpaiguri Bishes Sankha* (in Bengali), 1398B.S., Jalpaiguri, p.84.
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22. Barman, Ajit Kumar, op. cit. p.24; Kamrup is a spiritual centre and it was divided into four *Pitha's* such as - *Kampitha, Ratnapitha, Subarnapitha* and *Saumarpitha*.
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32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*
34. Vats, M.S., op.cit. p. 72.
35. Sunders, D.H.E., op.cit., p.26.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*
38. Vats, M.S., op.cit. p. 70.
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.* p.72.
42. *Ibid.*
43. Barman, Ajit Kumar, *op.cit.*, p. 36.
44. *Ibid.* p. 59.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
46. *Ibid.*,
47. *Ibid.* p.49.
- 47a. Sanyal, Charu Chandra, op.cit., p. 149.

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48. Sunders, D.H.E., op.cit., p. 342.
49. This opinion of Suniti Kumar Chatterjee is mentioned in the Survey Report, prescribed by the ASI Department which is depicted on the signboard and is located in the site of Jatileswar Temple.
50. Sanyal, Charu Chandra, op.cit., p. 149.
51. Debnath, Sailen, op.cit., p.215.
52. Banerji, Adris, op.cit., p. 197.
53. Field Survey, Dated 23rd January 2023; Also mentioned in the article of Chaudhury, Nirmal Chandra, ‘Jalpaigurir Mandir, Masjid O Girja’, op.cit. p. 85.
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57. Ibid.
58. Ibid., p. 10.
59. Ibid.
- 59a. Interview of Naren Roy, (Land Donner of the Temple), Dated. 31 October, 2021.

60. Chandra Chaudhury, Nirmal, op.cit. p. 86.
- 60a. Ibid.

61. Sanyal, Charu Chandra, op.cit., p. 150.
- 61a. Ibid.
62. Interview of Naren Roy, Land Donner of the Temple), Dated. 31 October, 2021; Features of *Dhumavati* is one of the ten Tantric goddesses and is believed to have appeared between the 10th and 15th centuries. Described to be a widow, Dhumavati has dirty robes, disheveled hair and has only a few teeth. She is thought of as pale, tremulous and angry as well as rough, deceitful, unstable, and terrifying. She wears ornaments made from snakes, and her dress is made up of rags from a cremation ground. She is often depicted sitting on a cart on which there is a banner with a crow. Dhumavati is described to be tall with harsh eyes, a big nose, and asymmetrical features. She holds a blowing fan and is consistently hungry and thirsty. Also described to be thin and weak, Dhumavati is said to live in ruined and deserted places. She holds a skull bowl in one hand while the other holds a spear. She is also presented as a social outsider and can be connected to poverty, misfortune, and evil.
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