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Is Bargabhima Temple of Tamralipta - A Shakti Peeth or A Buddha Monastery: Myth or Reality - A Debatable Evaluation

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Abstract: History is not written by myths or superstitions or stories. True scientific history is written by facts, theories and accurate evidence. Assimilation of History and religion there arise some different legends and mythological stories. Devi Bargabhima temple is one of such monuments which bears sizzling story of history. Bargabhima temple is Shakti Peeth of West Bengal. This temple is one and only 51st Shakti Peeth in Tamluk. Bargabhima temple is a Hindu ancient temple situated at Tamluk stands by River Roopnarayana in Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal. The Bargabhima temple, also known as Vibhash Shakti Peeth and Bhimakali Mandir, is devoted to the Goddess Sati. It is a Kali temple. This place has been mentioned in Mahabharata as a place which Bhima acquired. This temple is considered as 51 Shakti Peeth of mother Durga where left ankle of sati fell. According local stories it is believed that the temple was build by Mayuradhwaja of Mayur Dynasty or Peacock Dynasty (Tamralita Royal Family).

Introduction

History is not written by myths or superstitions or stories. True scientific history is written by facts, theories and accurate evidence. Based on this general formula, some common myths or legends of Tamralipta or Tamluk's mysterious Bargabhima temple, archeological objects, strength, structure, style, art style, nomenclature are endlessly discussed and

criticized. This temple is one and only 51st *Shakti Peeth* in Tamluk. Bargabhima Temple is a Hindu ancient temple situated at Tamluk in Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal.[1] Standing in this context, Tamralipta's Bargabhima, Why so much controversy is the only purpose of choosing this essay. Tamluk is now again copper-plated from the ancient times to the present day. Especially the ancient copper-clad wire- has always been highly praised for its Legendary and Gloriousness. The temple is bordered by a long courtyard. In General, Ancient time *parbanchal* was divided into five parts – *Anga, Banga, Kalinga, Sumbha and Pundra. Tamralipta* was the capital of this *Sumbha* port[2]. In the ancient History of Bengal, there was referred Tamralipta as a port. The connection with Buddhism of this city is very deep. Budhidrum started his Journey to Singhal (Present Srilanka) from Tamralipta. Chinese traveler Fa- Hien (399-414A.D) and Hieun-Tsang (640-642A.D) and I-Tsing (673 A.D) came Tamralipta and they had been seen 24 Sangharam, 10 Sangharam and lastly 5-6 Sangharam[3]. In this reason the history of Tamralipta is a unique example of Indian civilization, culture and art. On the other hand, Hieun Tsang, the great Chinese traveler of the seventh century, said that the ancient harbor of Tamralipta was located on the bank of a land wards, protruding of the sea. Although the ancient history of Tamralipta is proved by evidence, it is present Tamralipta or Tamluk, but it is not actually the Tamluk of today's era. Its scope or spread was the current Panskura, Debra, Pingla, Sabong, Moyna, which is proved by various evidences in the present study**.**

Objectives of this Article

Bargabhima temple is considered as 51st *Shakti Peeth* of mother Durga where left ankle of *Sati* fell. According local stories it is believed that the temple was built by Mayur Dynasty (Tamluk Royal Family).[4, 5] Now the question is - why the history of Goddess Bargabhima in this traditional place is shrouded in mystery. We will discuss here a few reasons. **First observations** are about Goddess Bargabhima's real name. **Second observations** are about the location of Goddess Bargabhima. **Third observations** are on the legend of Goddess Bargabhima. **The fourth observations** are- Is Devi Bargahima really the 37th lesson of the *51st Peeths* of India? Each of these observations is an exploratory scientific attempt to find history, not intended to envy anyone or hurt anyone's spiritual consciousness. Our aim is to seek the real history[6].

Materials and Methods

At the outset of the initial phase of the discussion of motifs, it is necessary to mention two facts about the Mother Goddess. Every one of us worships our native land as mother land with respect, reverence and spiritual spirit, because loyalty and love to mother is our religion and true religion educates people beautifully and religion is the worship of true beauty. Lord Krishna says in *Srimad Bhagabat Gita* "I accept whatever deity is worshiped in this universe". Since ancient times we have seen people thinking about God the feminine form of maternal energy is worshiped in the form of *Mrinmayi Devi* idols. Honourable Swami Sardananda said *Mata Prithvi* is great as mentioned in *Rikveda* - so regardless of

one's opinion about *Shaktipuja*, motherly *Shaktipuja* and God thinking is India's own property[7]. So where religion is debated it is eternal because all the debates in the world centered on religion. And one of the efforts of this debate is about Goddess Bargabhima. In general If seems that before the establishment of Tamralipta this temple was established. Barabhima temple built in Sen Dynasty. Especially of the time of Ballal Sen. As the opinion of historian this temple actually was a Buddhist monastery. It is referred to in the Buddhist religion that this Hindu temple was established as the restoration of Hindu religion. For this course this temple was built during the Sen Times. Some writings were depicted on the wall of Bargabhima temple Devi Puran, Chandimangal of Mukundaram and Markendio Puran Devi Bargabhima was mentioned – '*Kapalini Bhimarupa Bamgulko Bibhaske Vasirabasheh Mahadev Surbananda* [8], Subhiprad Twelth chapter of Brahmapuran described that – "*Tamralipta purdeshe cha Baagabhita Birajate*[9]*".* Main temple was reconstructed but still it bears its same ancient structure. 60 fit high this temple has 9 fit wall. It has a round shaped roof. It is divided in four parts. Main temple is divided in Jagmahan, Jajana temple, and pot temple. All parts of this temple were not constructed at a same time. 27 terracotta works found of in Bargabhima temple. This is *atchala* temple of Bengal built in the style of *Natmandir*. Different types of architectural Style of Kalinga or Lingaraj temple was taken from Nagara style. Kalinga architecture was mainly two types, one is tower and other is 'hall'. Tower is called *deul* and the hall is called Jagmohan *deul* and the wall of Jagmohan was built by variety of motif [10]. The temple of Orissa has mainly three type's *deul – Rekha Deul, Pitha / Vadra Deul and Khakra deul*. Devi-Bargabhima is mainly *Rekha deul* temple. Long *sikhar*, this type of *sikhar* also can see in the lingaraj temple. *Rekha deul* is an architectural form where many temples are placed in one line. Bargabhima mandir has *biman* (structure containing the sanctum), Jagmohan (assembly hall) *Nat mandir* (festival hall) and *Bogmandir*.

First Observation: Naming of Goddess Bargabhima

We all know that there are *51st Satipeeths* mentioned in India. 51st *Peethas* are described in the *Shiv Purana*, 51st in *Tantrachura Mani* or 53 according *to Pushda Siddhanta Panjika*. That is why the great poet Rabindranath wrote "*Pratham Samrab Tapovane Gnanadharma Keta Kavya Kahini*". It is mentioned in *Bhavishyapurana.*

"In the province of Tamralipta there were bargabhima,
Gobindapur edge of the black melody".

In other words, Goddess Bargabhima used to reside in Tamralipta province. *Sati's* left ankle fell here in *Bivas* i.e., Tamluk in East Medinipore district.

"Kapalini Bhimarupa Bamgulofo Bibhaske
Vairabascha Mahadev Sarbananda"

The Goddess is identified as Bargabhima in the *pranam mantra* but to all common people known as the Goddess Bargabhima. In *Peethsala Tantra* the Goddess is identified as *Kapalini Bhima*. In *Annadamangal* the poet Bharatachandra Bhairava is described as *Kapali.*

"Bibhaske Bamgulof felilo Keshav.
Bhimarupa Devi tahe Kapali Bhairav"[11].

Many researchers believe that *Bhimadevi* has been identified as Bargabhima in the copperplate under Buddhist influence. But folklore tells that a Goddess in this region was named '*Barga*', with *Bhima* being associated with her, the name *'Bargabhima'*. Another popular opinion is that the Goddess bestows the devotee with the four categories of *Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha*. So she is *Bargabhima*. It is known from the scientific history that the Goddess was known as *Bargabhima* as the *Bargis* worshiped the Goddess. In historical records, no Goddess named Bargabhima is worshiped anywhere in Bengal. The origin of this name is still shrouded in mystery. Somewhere, many people think that the temple of Bargabhima is not among the *51 Sati Peeths* of Hindus. This field is known as *Upapitha.*

Second Observation: Location of Goddess Bargabhima

Director General of Archaeological Survey of India Lord Cunningham's famous book "Ancient Geography of India" wrote about the location of Tamralipta - "*Tamralipta country laying to the Westward of the Hoogli River, from Burdwan and Kolna on the North*"[12]. It is also known that three and a half thousand years before Christ, a group of *Kshatriyas* established and expanded several kingdoms in the riverine and coastal regions of South-East India from this country on the banks of the Narmada and Saryu rivers in the Mahabharata period. Among those *Kshatriyas,* the kingdom founded by Mayuradhwaja is Tamralipta. The Kingdom is named after Tamrashish, the son of Mayurawaja. In the 6th century BC, when the protest movement against the Vedic religion began, the geographical and political environment of India was unstable and unsettled. In this context, Lord Goutama attained *Bodhi* at the age of 35 years after that his 140 advice, *Trisharan Mantra* religious philosophy of undivided India showed a new direction to the public life of India. Buddhism had an unforgettable influence in Tamralipta. Although the King of Tamralipta was an ardent Baishnava devotee, he did not become an obstacle in the spread of Buddhism. 24 *Sangha Rama* or *Buddhist Biharas* were built on the shores of the Bay of Bengal at Rupanarayan-Bhagirathi at the eastern southern end of Tamralipta. Archaeologists and historians speculate that the current enigmatic Bargabhima Temple was built in one of the *Sangharams* or *Buddhist Biharas* that were built in *Rajyapat* with the capital of Tamralipta as the capital of Emperor Ashoka after the Kalinga War in 265 BC. One of the researchers of temple architecture of Bengal David McCutehion in his book 'Temple of Midnapur Census of India 1961' Midnapur District Handbook, Part-I. The Bargabhima temple at Tamluk was probably built on a *Buddhist Stupa* built by the Maurya emperor Ashoka[13]. It is believed to resemble the idol of *Ugratara or Brahmatara,* the Goddess worshiped by the Buddhists.

Third Observation: Legend of Goddess Bargabhima

The Editor and regional Researcher, Joyadev Malakar in his "*Tamralipta*" 50th year, autumn issue-2023, notes that the extinction of the Tamralipta port tradition in the 8th century, the influence of Brahmanism again in India, and the influence of *Shaivism* and *Shaktism* almost drove the Buddhists out of the Tamralipta kingdom. Later, due to the influence of Brahminical religion, the form of idols, temple structure, rituals started to change. The creation of God's creation is based on popular belief, and various myths and legends about this temple and idols arouse religious emotions in the public mind. At present, there are many legends and myths surrounding this monument and idol, as well as the mysterious Bargabhima. Legends will be mentioned later[14].

The question that was mentioned in the main title of the article is - Why is there so much controversy about this temple? The main point of contention is the present position of the Bargabhima Temple i.e., the Temple on the Supreme Goddess the idol is placed at a height of 50 feet. The place where the temple is built is prepared with huge wooden foundations and 30 feet high foundation built with stones and bricks. Three folds form include compacted wall with 9 feet base on concrete and 60 feet high vaulted roof covered with big stones[15]. Archaeologists say that there is a cistern 30 feet below the ground floor above the temple keeping the structure style of the temple. To the south were 7 *'Solid Stupas' or Votik Stupas* built by the Buddhists. These *stupas* were built as religious symbols in Buddhist temples or *Sangharams*[16].

Cultural Sustainability – New Trends of Heritage

It is a very recent time we observe in the field survey from the collection of data and first of all we concluded that we have seen the Bargabhima temple has been declared by Heritage Site by West Bengal Government. Visuality of the heritage remains as an important mode of interpreting and appreciating the cultural and aesthetic approaches of any country in different times. Visuality gives a proper understanding of the social contents, the religious concepts and the perception of artists of a particular period. We can analyze the cognitive foundations of art and architecture as a product of a complex society. Culture has been considered as an important aspect of sustainable development in the context of indigenous culture, regional developments and tourism. Cultural sustainability requires the recognition of local, regional values[17]. For sustainable development of any archaeological or heritage site, preservation of both tangible and intangible aspects along with the application of heritage management policies are necessitated. The Bargabhima temple will probe the cultural link with Indian culture and other countries through archaeological remains and sustainability of heritage sites and the focus is on socio-cultural, economic, and environmental impacts and sustainable and responsible tourism. So this temple arisen a new trends of heritage.

Conclusion

In the 1960s there were those *Kelas Stupas*. During this time the Brahmin worshipers offered devotion by lighting lamps. At present, the kitchen has been built at that place. So Devi Bargabhima temple is one of the important temple architectures of Kalinga architectural styles. Ancient history and architecture of this temple demands more research. Next time we can hope that many research works would be organized in near future. Therefore, we are confident that the real history of the mystery will come out to the public when the archaeologists will make the excavation work to prove whether it is Bargabhima temple or the mysterious Buddhist monastery.

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