

Story of the Haneswari Temple, Bansberia

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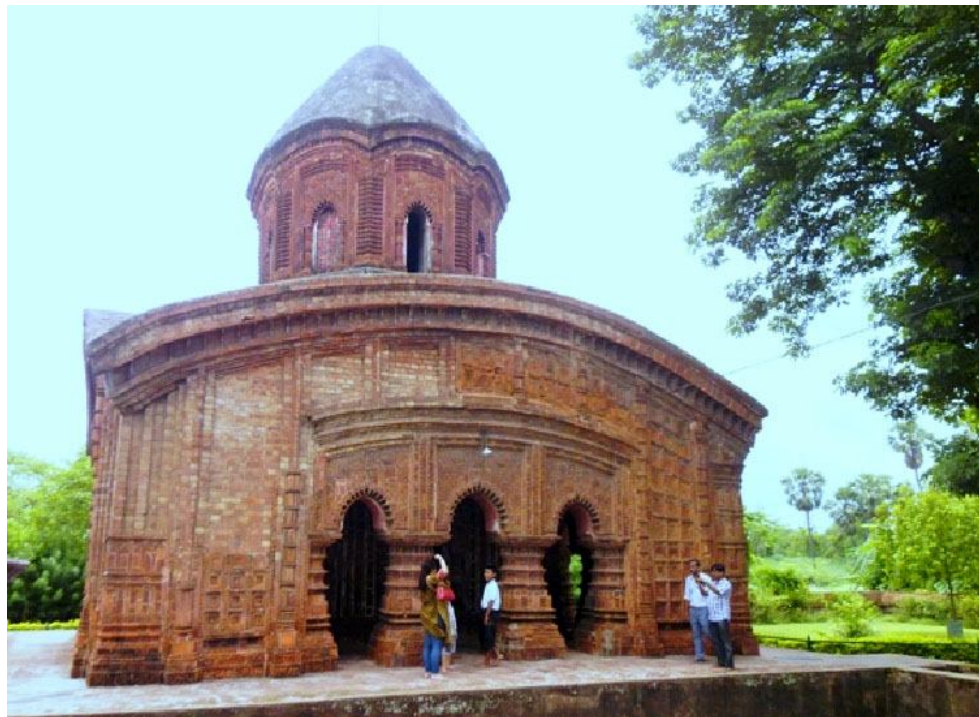
In 1673, Zamindar Rameshwar Ray left Patuli and settled in Bansberia or Banskabati as it was known earlier in Hooghly. Bansberia is located besides our holy river Ganga, and in between Tribeni and Bandel. Zamindar Rameshwar Ray was gifted this village of around 400 Bigha of Land and its Zamindari by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb who also gifted him the prestigious title of King. From this time onward many of his kith and kin settled in Bansberia.



The Haneswari temple was built in the beginning of the 19th century. The main deity is the blue neem-wood idol of the four-armed goddess Haneswari, a manifestation of Goddess Kali. The temple is 21 meter high and has 13 towers. The peak of each tower is shaped as a lotus flower. Built according to Tantric principles, this five-storey shrine follows the structure of a human body - Ira, Pingala, Bajraksha, Sushumna and Chitrini.



The temple complex has another temple—Ananta Basudeba temple—besides the main temple. There is also the Swanhaba Kali temple nearby built by Raja Nrisinhadeb Roy Mahasay in 1788. This temple too holds a very special position as a terracotta temple with exquisite terracotta works on it.



The Haneswari temple has a distinctive architecture different from the usual pattern present in this area, consisting 13 minars or ratnas, each built as a blooming lotus bud. The inner structure of the building resembles human anatomy. It was started by Raja Nrishinghadeb Roy and later completed by his wife Rani Shankari.

According to a legend King Nrisingha Dev Rai, while staying in Varanasi during the year 1792 to 1798 learnt deeply "Kundalini" and "Six cyclic centers (Six Chakras)" in the human system. Cancelling his plan to visit Britain he endeavored to build a temple at Bansberia based on "Kundalini and yogic concepts". At that time rupees one lakh or more was spent in procuring marbles from a hilly area called Chunar situated near Benaras (Varanasi, U.P). Skilled artisans were also brought from this place to build up the temple. Unfortunately the King left for his heavenly abode in the year 1802 in the midway of construction of the temple. His queen Shankari took the initiative and the temple was completed in the year 1814.



The temple is now taken over as a heritage site by the Archaeological Survey of India. It consists of six floors and a total of 13 lotus bud-shaped minars having the height of 27.5 meters or 90 ft. Inner precincts of these minars follow the design of the human anatomy. Metallic idol of rising Sun God with his thousand bright rays has been inscribed on the top of the central minar. Even the deity has been designed and installed following the concept of Yoga and Pranayam. The word "Hong" is pronounced at the time of breathing out whereas the word "S-a-a" is uttered at the time of breathing in. "Hong" manifests "Shiva" and "S-a-a" represents "Mother Shakti".

The temple has both the Deities of Shiva and Shakti and hence the name is "Hansheswari". On the top of thousand petals blue lotus, lies the eight petals blood-red lotus. Image of white "Shiva" is found to be found lying on six triangular marbles. From the navel of "Mahadeva", a lotus stem has come out carrying twelve petals blood-red lotus. On this, four-handed "Mother Shakti" is standing on her right leg- resting the left leg on her right thigh. The upper left hand is carrying a sword to represent her power to curb the demons, the lower left one is carrying a severed head of a demon; the upper right palm is posed in a "Fearless-Mudra (Abhaya Mudra)" so as to depict her as the "Protector" of the world from the evils whereas the lower right hand is posed in a way as if to offer her blessings to all ("Bar-Mudra"). The Deity is blue in colour and made of wood derived from "Neem" tree. The room beneath the Central Minar has a white marbled "Shiv linga".



The adjoining areas of the temple have beautifully maintained lush green lawns. Apart from the architectural marvel of the temple, serenity of the place coupled with village-cum-town scenario is also worth enjoying.

Mrs. Sikha Banerjee is a retired West Bengal State Govt. School Teacher. She has been in the Education and Training field for over four decades. She is a source of knowledge and continues to update herself regularly. She has travelled the length and breadth of India and is presently working on a book upon all her travel experiences, history and facts which regardless includes a deep dive in the local home made cuisines of India.
