



Kantanagar Temple, commonly known as **Kantaji Temple** or **Kantajew Temple** at Kantanagar, is a late-medieval Hindu temple in Dinajpur, Bangladesh. The Kantajew Temple is one of the most magnificent religious edifices belonging to the 18th century. The temple belongs to the popular Hindu Kanta or Krishna and this is most popular with the Radha-Krishna cult (assemble of memorable love) in Bengal. This beautiful temple is dedicated to Krishna and his wife Rukmini Built by Maharaja Pran Nath, its construction started in 1704 CE and ended in the reign of his son Raja Ramnath in 1722 CE. It boasts one of the

greatest examples on terracotta architecture in Bangladesh and once had nine spires, but all were destroyed in an earthquake that took place in 1897.



History:

Kantanagar Temple an eighteenth century brick temple, situated in the peaceful island hamlet of Kantanagar (Kantanagar), about 12 miles north of Dinajpur town, and about a mile west of Dinajpur-Tetulia highway across the Dhepa river. It has gained eminence as an outstanding monument in Bengal for its fabulous terracotta embellishment. This nava-ratna or 'nine spired' Hindu temple, now stripped off its original nine spires atop its corners during the devastating earthquake of 1897, exhibits the exuberance of TERRACOTTA ART at its best in Bangladesh.



Kantanagar Temple, Dinajpur

The confusion about the date of its construction can be settled from the record of a chronogram in the Sanskrit stone inscription, fixed on the northeast corner plinth of the temple. It records that Maharaja Prannath of Dinajpur began its construction about 1722.

His adopted son Maharaja Ramnath completed it, in Shaka era 1674 (1752 AD) in order to propitiate the consort of Rukmini in fulfillment of his father's wish. However, in the early 20th century Maharaja Girijanath Bahadur restored it substantially, except for the missing nine spires.

This magnificent pyramidal temple rose in three receding terraces and was crowned with nine ornamental spires or ratnas (jewels) on the corner of the three terraces which imparted to it an appearance of a huge ratha or an ornate chariot resting on a high plinth. It was provided with arched openings on all four sides in order to enable devotees to see the deity enshrined inside from all directions.



Epic scenes on the arched doorway

Architecture:

The 15.84 sq km temple stands in the centre of an oblong court (73.15m ' 36.57m) enclosed by a pilgrim shed with a corrugated tin roof. Its main fabric pivots around a nuclear square cell (3.04m), shooting up to a height of about 15.24m above its 1.005 m high plinth of stone, believed to have been quarried from the ancient ruins of Bannagar near Gangarampur in Dinajpur. Three other square outer shells in graded heights have been added to it, as much to variegate the plan as to strengthen the central cella which carry atop a massive tower. The other eight ornamental towers, now missing, occupied the eight roof corners of the lower two stories.

The curved cornice of the ground floor, sharply drooping at the corners, rise in the middle to a height of 7.62 m from the plinth, while that of the first floor rises to 4.56m and that of the second floor to 1.83 m. There are small square cells at each of the four corners of the ground and first floors for supporting the heavy load of the ornate octagonal corner towers above.



Marine ship in terracotta

The temple accommodates four rectangular corridors on the ground floor around the prayer chamber measuring 9.17 m × 1.53 m and 4.57 m × 1.22 m. On the ground floor, there are three multi-cusped arched entrances on each side, each separated by two richly decorated brick pillars. The number of arched doorways in the ground floor disposed in its four shells is 21; that of the first floor is 27. The reduced second floor has only three entrance doors and three windows. A narrow strip of staircase, merely 0.70m wide, built into the western second corridor, winds up through its dark passage to the first, second, and third stories.

A small derelict single spired temple, now overgrown with rank vegetation, stands about one hundred yards north of the main temple beyond the pilgrim shed, which is believed to have been erected by Maharaja Prannath in 1704 where he initially installed the Krisna icon, brought from Brindaban. The icon was later transferred to the 'nava ratna' temple when completed. It is now an abandoned shrine. It is a 16-sided temple rising to a height of about 12.19 m and provided with a multi-cusped arched entrance on the south.

How to go:

Dinajpur and Dhaka are also linked by road. You take a bus from Dhaka to get to Dinajpur. Some of the bus services are listed below for your assistance:

1. Keya Paribahan

Contact: Gabtoli: 88-02-9000812, 01193-255 944. 01193-255 943

Shyamoli: 01193-255 941

Arambagh: 01711-704 171

Uttora: 01197-435 092

2. Bablu Enterprise

Contact: Shymoli: 8120653, 01716 932 122

Fair: BDT 600 (Approx.)

3. Nabil Enterprise

Contact: Asad gate: 02-9007036, 02-8012136

Fair: BDT 600 (Approx.)

4. Mim Paribahan

Contact: Gabtoli: 01911013694, 01734422971