



Dhakeshwari National Temple(*Dhakeshshori Jatio Mondir*) is a Hindu temple in Dhaka, Bangladesh. It is state-owned, giving it the distinction of being Bangladesh's 'National Temple'. The name "Dhakeshwari" means so called "Goddess of Dhaka". Since the destruction of Ramna Kali Mandir in 1971 by the Pakistan Army during the Bangladesh Liberation War, the Dhakeshwari Temple has assumed status as the most important Hindu place of worship in Bangladesh.^[1]It is also the largest Hindu temple in Bangladesh.^[2]This temple is part of the famous Shakti Peethas in Indian Subcontinent. Here the gem of sati's crown had fallen.

History:

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The Dhakeshwari temple was built in the 12th century by Ballal Sen, a king of the Sena dynasty, and many say the city was named after this temple. The current architectural style of the temple cannot be dated to that period because of the numerous repairs, renovations and rebuilding which have taken place over time. It is considered an essential part of Dhaka's cultural heritage. Many researchers said that the temple is also one of the Shakti Peethas, where the jewel from the crown of the Goddess Sati had fallen. Although there is not enough historical context to establish this as a fact, researchers were directed to this site while trying to locate the particular Shakti Peetha. Since ages, the temple has been held in great importance. The original 800-year old statue was taken to Kumartuli, Kolkata, West Bengal, India. There remains the replica of original idol in Dhaka. The temple was further damaged during the Muslim mob attacks of 1989–90.



It is widely believed that the Queen, wife of King Bijoy Sen, went to Langolbond for bathing. While coming back, she gave birth to a son, known to historians as Ballal Sen. After ascending to the throne, Ballal Sen built this temple to glorify his birthplace. Legends say that Ballal Sen once dreamt of the deity covered under the jungle. Ballal Sen uncovered the deity from there and built a temple, named for Dhakeswari. Whatever the legends describe, Hindu religious consider Dhakeswari to be the presiding deity of Dhaka, which is an incarnation or form of Goddess Durga the Adi Shakti . The idol of Durga is called Dhakeswari.

Within the premises of the Dhakeswari there are temples of two types of architecture. The ancient one is of the Poncharotna Goddess Durga's which lost its actual look after the renovation work. Bradley Bird wrote this at the beginning of this century. The present temple is two hundred years old which was built by an agent of East India Company. Most probably he had renovated the temple. Other than this there are four

Shib Temples. According to hearsay, in the 16th century King Mansing built these temples by laying four Shib Lingas there. But this information seems to be unreliable. The fusion of Bangla chowchala and shikor temple is notice in the architecture of Dhakeshawri. Ratan Lal Chakraborti in an article mentioned that “ the structure and architecture of it is like a BuddhistPagoda”. He opined that it was probably a Boddist pagoda which was turned into a Hindu temple later. From this, he assumed that the temple was probably built in the 10th century.

How did Dhakeshari temple look like in the 19th century? Ridohnath Majumder described about the temple. At that time the temple was covered by jungle and in its north the Urdu road went westward towards Pilkhana and at its south west was Mirpur road. At its south there was a wood and Urdu bazaar was at the east.



Architecture and Structural Features :

The architectural and structural features of the temple demonstrate its builder to be someone who had very little influence on the culture of native Bengal. Many of the features, such as the existence of a large tank, banian tree, garden, matha, resting-place and place for saints, and the practice of allowing one and all inside the temple suggest similarity to Arakanese religion and religious practices. The existence of twin deities - the first one is a ten-armed female deity known as Dhakeshwari and the second one is four-armed male deity known as Vasudeva - suggests the affinity with Tantric Buddhism of the Maghs dynasty.



The Dhakeshwari temple is a multifaceted compound consisting of several temples and ancillary buildings. The compound has an inner-quarter is on the east and an outer-quarter is on the west. In the inner quarter stand the main temple. In the outer quarter stand a few temples and a few rooms. On the western side there is a large tank with north-south elongation with walking-path all around. A very old banyan tree stands on the southeastern corner of the tank. There are a few tombs of saints on the east side

In addition, there are four small temples of same size and shape on the northeastern corner of the tank, which stand one after another from east to west. Each of these temples is built on a high plinth and approached by a flight of steps and the stairs of the eastern-most temple is made of marble. The entrances are narrow arched openings, one each on

all sides except the north. There exists a projected band on linear decoration, and in between this band and the domical roof the walls are decorated with panels of semi-circular cusped arches. Each of the temples has a shiva linga inside.

A wall separates main temple from the outer wall and entered through a monumental gateway, a bell adorns its top. In the ground of the inner quarter stands a marble altar for worship-offerings. The three-roomed structure with a veranda has beautiful wooden doors with curving of different motifs, both sculptural and floral. The rectangular veranda

in front of the central room, has marble floor and is covered over by a vaulted roof. The veranda in front of the eastern room, square in shape, is entered through semi-circular arched entrances, while the western veranda, also square, is entered by a simple doorway.

The central room has a vaulted roof, while the side rooms are covered with flat roof on wooden beams. The spandrel of the arch in the central room is decorated with six lions. Merlon decorations are placed above the curved cornice.

The temple complex has undergone repairs, renovation and rebuilding in its long years of existence and its present condition does not clearly show any of its original architectural characteristics.

