



## Tara Pitha of Bhusandapur

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The meaning of the word pitha is "Asana" or 'Seat' (Sabda Kalpadrumah). The different pithas in India are supposed to be the dwelling places of the Devi (the Mother Goddess): that is why they are also called "Devisthanas". To a Sakta devotee the word pitha further bears a special significance. It includes such places, where it is believed, the different parts of Sati's person fell after Visnu cut it into pieces. Therefore all the pithas are the Devisthanas, but all the Devisthanas are not necessarily the pithas.

In this connection it may be noted that the places which are associated with the Mother-Goddess yet without holding Devi's physical parts are known as 'Upapithas'. Some 'Devisthanas' on the other hand are called 'Siddhapithas' in as much as there lived at least one Sadhaka who attained realization or Siddhi at the place. Tara pitha of Bhusandapur (Orissa) for example is one such siddhapitha associated with the Buddhist Tantric cult of Orissa.

Bhusandapur is one of the prominent Sakta pithas of Orissa. It is situated at about 50 kms towards the south of Bhubaneswar (on S.E.Railway). However, the abode of Tara is about 2 kms from the railway station and 5 kms from the National Highway No.5. The temple is located amidst the calm, serene and beautiful atmosphere of nature. The image of Goddess Tara is enshrined in a Sikhara type temple at the bottom of the hills where the Chilika lake is partly visible.



The temple complex of a Rekha Deula, a pyramidal porch, a flat-roofed rectangular mandapa. The present structure was erected in the 2nd half of the 20th century. In front of the mandapa are installed two big size lions in aggressive posture. The interior wall of the pyramidal porch is decorated

with Dasa Mahavidya figurines enshrined in small niches. A Ganesha image is placed in the right side of the entrance gate. The image of Tara which is about 3 ft. in height is installed on a masonry pedestal housed in the garbhagriha of the Vimana.



The image of the deity which conforms to the description of the Nila Tantra is as follows:

She is in the midst of four blazing funeral pyres; She is standing on Siva; the right foot upon his chest and the left upon his thigh. Her face is like a lotus with smile. She has three eyes and four arms. She is carrying a skull, and a lotus in left hands, a sword and katari in right hands. She wears a mundamala. She is short with a big belly and lolling tongue. She wears around her lines the tiger skin. Her eyes are blazing like the morning sun. She is also called Sarabha (the spouse of Siva). Her eye brows are knit in anger. In her hair she has Akshbohaya and a snake entwined and also decorated with crescent moon. The Tantra says that she gathers all the ignorance

of the triple world in her bowl made of human skull and then destroys it in a sweep.

Out of the number of festivals held at Tara pitha of Bhusandapur, the Durga Puja in the month of Aswina and Raja Yatra in the month of Jyestha are famous. Tara pitha of Bhusandapur thus plays a vital role in the religious life of the people of Orissa as it is one of the prominent Sakta pithas of Orissa. With a little improvement this place can be converted into a good tourist-cum-temple center.

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