



## Glory of Bharath » Bharath Darshan

This month our sojourn is to the sacred Danteshwari Temple situated in Dantewada town in the state of Chhattisgarh.

### Danteshwari Temple



Danteshwari Devi is one of the forms of Mother Goddess and is one of the Shakti Peethas shrines of Maa Shakti. Danteshwari Temple is built over the site where tooth of Sati fell. During the Dusshera festival only, the idol of Danteshwari Devi is taken around the city and thousands of tribes from jungle or nearby villages gather to pay homage to the Goddess Danteshwari. Bastar Dussehra festival is one of famous tourist attraction of Chhattisgarh state.

This ancient temple is at the confluence of the Dankini and Shankini rivers, about one and a half hours from Jagdalpur. It was built by the Chalukya kings of Bastar in honour of their family Goddess, Devi Danteshwari, who is venerated by both Hindus and tribals in the entire Bastar region. The temple is divided into four parts - Garbh Griha, Maha Mandap, Mukhya Mandap and Sabha Mandap. The first two are constructed using stone. The temple itself has been constructed at various times, but the sanctum sanctorum is believed to be more than 800 years old. A Garud Pillar has been erected in front of the temple entrance.



In ancient days when Bastar area was famous by the name of Chakrakot, present Dantewada region was known as Tarlapal. The kings of Chalukya Dynasty made Barsur their capital and ruled this region; in course of time they transferred their throne to Dantewada. Along with Chalukya Kings their ancestral deity of Warangal also came and got established in a temple as Danteshwari near the confluence of Dankini and Shankini rivers and thus this place is called Dantewada. It is believed that Danteshwari of Chalukya kings is the changed name of Manikeshwari of the kings of Naga Dynasty, who ruled this region earlier to Chalukyas. Chalukya Kings had the temple constructed during fourteenth century.

According to a prevalent myth in connection with Danteshwari, due to an insult committed by her father Prajapati Daksha towards her consort Lord Shiva during a Yagya, Goddess Sati got frustrated and committed self-immolation in the fire pit of yagya. Lord Vishnu cut the dead body of Goddess Sati into pieces with his Sudarshan to make Lord Shiva free from the grief caused by the death of Sati. Parts of the dead body of Goddess Sati were scattered to fifty-two different places, which were consecrated as Shakti Peethas by different names. It is believed that a tooth of Sati had fallen here and Danteshwari Shaktipeeth was established.

Chalukya rulers were the dedicated devotees of Danteshwari. Whenever they came from Bastar to obtain a glimpse of goddess, a village was offered to the name of goddess. The number of these villages, thus became as much as one hundred and forty four by 1909, it has become a Mukasha or Maphi Jagir (estate, received from a ruler as a gift or reward). Temple's management was done by the Zia family and followers of this family have been performing the worship hereditarily till today. Affectionately known as Maiji among her millions of devotees both tribal and non-tribal, Danteshwari has become a living Shakti Peeth in the form of deity, faith and belief.

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