

## Shodakshi alias Tripura Sundari

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Tripura Sundari in a temple in Tripura



Tripura Sundari as per Soundaryalahiri

### Temple

A temple for Tripura Sundari has been built several hundred years ago in the State of Tripura in the Northern part of India . She is also referred as Shodakshi, Sodakshi, Rajarajeswari and Lalithamba. Tripura Sundari, is the goddess associated with Maha Vidya, a powerful Mantra. In Soundaryalahiri (composed by Adi Sankaracharya) she is portrayed as a sixteen year young girl while no such mention appears in the story pertaining to Shodakshi. The temple in Tripura which is one out of the fifty one Shakthi Peedas

established in the world so far, is situated three KM from a place called Udaipur in Tripura and 58 KM from Agarthala another city. It is believed temple was damaged by lightning 400 years back and the same was later renovated and restored by a ruler of Tripura.

### The story of Tripura Sundari Temple

Though many stories are floating on Tripura Sundari none match with the devi in Soundarya Lahiri, composed by Adi Sankaracharya. One of the stories state that angered with the insult meted out to him in the Yagya performed by his father-in-law Dakshyan and the subsequent death of his wife Parvathi by jumping into the sacred fire, Lord Shiva carried Parvathi's corpse on his shoulders and ran dancing uncontrollably all around the world for days. In order to calm down Shiva, Lord Vishnu used his Chakrayuda to cut Parvathi's body into pieces, which fell at several places subsequently becoming the Sakthi Peedas. The temple in Tripura came up in Mathapuri, a town where Parvathi's right foot fell. Since the structure of the temple looked like a tortoise it was also named as Kuurmasthan.

As per another folk story on the temple at Tripura, long ago there lived a Asura called Tarakasura. He had three sons each of whose characters matched with three aspects viz, Tamas, Rajas and Satva. They obtained a boon from Lord Shiva that they can not be killed by anyone except Shiva, which too in one stroke and constructed three floating lands made of Iron, Gold and Silver and lived there. Due to the boon they got, they became arrogant and started humiliating and torturing the other devathas. Unable to bear the tortures the devathas ran to Lord Shiva and complained of the

unbearable tortures and ill treatments meted out by the three sons of Tarakasura. Shiva got annoyed with the arrogance of the three sons of Tarakasura and destroyed them in one stroke. Since Parvathi helped Shiva to destroy the three asuras with three aspects of life -Rajas, Tamas and Satva -, and no female equaled to the beauty of Parvathi existed anywhere in the three parts of universe viz, Padaal loka, Bhooloka and Brahma loka, she came to be accepted as Tripura Sundari representing the three aspects and three worlds. The name of the temple in Tripura where she resided at that time thus became Tripura Sundari. Another version states that since Shiva destroyed the three asuras with three aspects of life and Parvathi absorbed all the three aspects from the entire universe consisting of three worlds, to beautify herself and thus named Tripura Sundari.

### Glory of Tripura sundari

Though it is believed that Tripura Sundari was a sixteen year beautiful girl she appears in the form of two Kali devi in the Tripura temple. Two statues have been consecrated inside, with one of them called Choata matha that is younger devi and the other as bada matha that is elder devi. One measures two feet high and the other five foot statue. When some one wondered how could a Kali be termed as Tripura Sundari , they were told that in a famous Bhadrakali temple in Andhra Pradesh ( Southern state in India ), the Kali devi has been beautified by invoking special mantras and worshipped in the form of Tripura Sundari. So is the case with Tripura Sundari temple in Tripura. It was indeed an exciting news to hear !! The Choata matha used to be carried by the rulers of Tripura whenever they went out of their country or to the battle field at the time of war.

Why did Tripura Sundari manifest ? An interesting folk tale narrates the story thus. When love God Manmatha disturbed the tapas of Shiva, he was burned to ashes with Shiva's third eye. The devas carefully collected the ash and brought it to life. Instead of becoming Manmatha , it turned out to be an asura who went to Lord Shiva and took several boons. Thereafter he started troubling the same devathas who gave him life. When his tortures went beyond control, the devas went to Shiva and prayed for his protection and to save them from the acts of the asura created by them. Shiva too converted Parvathi to look like Kali devi and powered her with three aspects of himself to destroy the asura. Thus Parvathi powered with the three aspects of life in the three worlds of the universe, manifested as Tripura Sundari for a particular cause.

*End note: The contents of this article is based on the expressed views of the Pundits ( Pujaries ) and other devotees whom I met in the temple during my visits. Photos gathered from different sources. In case some one get further information in the temples they visit I shall be glad and thankful if they mail me the story in [nrj1945@gmail.com](mailto:nrj1945@gmail.com) so that updates in the article can be done in future.*