

RAISEN

(17) ASHADEVI TEMPLE



Ashadevi temple is a Shakta temple. This is located on a plateau 1 km north east of the Ashapuri village. There is a pond too near this temple. This temple is completely ruined. The entrance of the Sanctum Sanctorum is not at all visible. This east-facing temple is dedicated to the Mahishasurmardani. This temple is comparatively small. There might have been an *ardhamandapa* in this temple. There was a provision of staircase to reach the sanctum sanctorum. There are remnants of two big rectangular (10.7 x 69.23 c.m.) halls in the

backdrop of the temple. Certainly, they were the meditation or worship centres of a Matha. The ruins indicate that this was built in Bhumij-style having a *shikhar*. It might have been a *shaktipeeth* (*tantric* centre) dedicated to the goddess Durga or Mahishasurmardani. This is proved by the Bhairava images engraved on two long rock-plates. Probably, this was associated with the Shaivas or the Kapalikas. The description of different form of Bhairava prayers and rituals for Shakti-worship are found here. Today, this is known as the temple of Ashadevi. The village derives its name from this temple. In fact, Ashadevi is a form of Mahishasurmardini. She is worshipped as the protector of crops, cattle and children. From the alliance of *tantric* rites in the *shakti*-worship the possibility of being this temple as a centre of *tantric* cult becomes very strong.

(18) BHOOTNATH TEMPLE



This Paramara temple was totally a new piece of Bhumij Style of architecture. This was the largest and one of the great temples of Ashadevi group of temples, which is today in ruins, 100 km west from the Ashadevi temple on the bank of a dry pond. The Bhootnath temple was dedicated to the lord Vishnu. The images recovered from this temple and its ruins confirm that it was as large as its contemporary Bhojpur temple.

This was an east facing temple constructed on a high platform. The directive principles of Bhumij style of architecture are discussed in the magnum-opus of Bhoj Paramara— "Samrangansutrardhar". Developed by the Paramaras, this style became very popular even in the south India. The Bhootnath temple was built in this style. Images, pillars decorated with fruits and creepers, *dwar toran*, parts of *shikhar* such as *amalsanak*, *shringa* etc. have been recovered for the ruins of this temple which confirm that the pillar & *shikhar* of the sanctum sanctorum & *mandapa* of the temple were sufficiently decorated. Comparing it to the temple of Udayeshwar, Bhojpur, Un etc. it become clear that this temple, in its structural plan was akin to the temple of Udayeshwar.