

Poet Joydev left his indelible mark on this village

readers' corner

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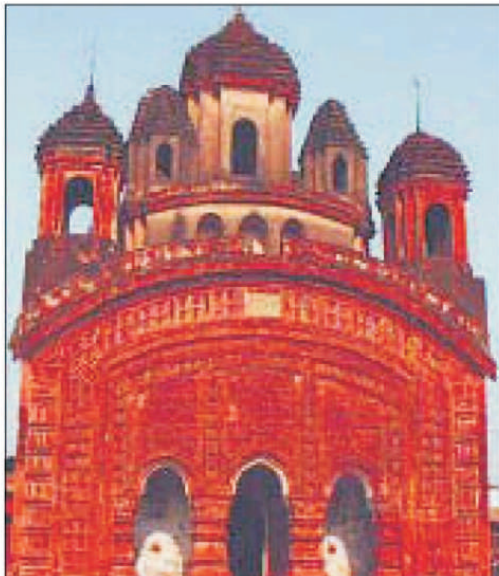
There was dense fog, but I could see silhouettes of several people. Suddenly, one by one, the people started jumping in the river splashing the water around. I was standing on the bank of River Ajoy at Joydev-Kenduli village, Birbhum district.

People were getting down into the chilly waters of the river on a cold January morning on the occasion of Poush Sankranti or Makar Sankranti.

Joydev-Kenduli is the birthplace of poet Joydev who wrote the famous Sanskrit poem *Geet Govinda* in the 12th century. It is said that the poet worshipped at the Kusheswar Shiva Temple at Kenduli, where his meditation stone still exists.

This temple, as it exists today, was built in 1910, while the original temple was an earthen structure located in the deep forests of Kusha trees. Other important temples of the village are the famous 17th century Navaratna Radhabinode temple, built of terracotta,

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■ A child takes a dip in River Ajoy on Makar Sankranti. (Top) Navaratna Radhabinode Temple.

and a Shiva temple of Rameshwar and Ratneshwar.

Every year, starting on January 14, a three-day fair is organised at Joydev-Kenduli. It's said that the poet Joydev had to walk some 30 km from his village at Kenduli to take a dip in the Ganges. This became tiresome for the poet and one day Lord Vishnu asked the Holy Ganges to infest her holiness in River Ajoy at least for one day, on Makar Sankranti. From then on, Ganges started flowing back to River Ajoy. Legend says anyone who takes a dip on this auspicious day in River Ajoy has his/her wishes fulfilled.

Kenduli fair also provides an opportunity to masses to listen to Baul songs over three days.

We had stayed the earlier night at a friend's house at Bolpur and started at around 5 in the morning. We drove through Ilambazar to reach the gates of the fair at around 6 am.

Though we were shivering, devotees around seemed to be oblivion to the chilly winters of the village. At many places, fire was lit up and people were warming themselves after taking the holy bath. The fair has stalls of clothes, cooking utensils and paintings and there are eateries too. Most popular among the lot of paintings sold at the fair is that of poet Joydev and his wife Padmavati.

But one can visit Joydev Kenduli at any time of the year to see its beautiful and old temples.

Kenduli is about 40 kms away from Bolpur. You can stay at Bolpur and drive to Kenduli in a hired car. Bus service is available from Jambuni bus stand at Bolpur. Accommodation options at Kenduli are basic and Spartan.