



## Glory of Bharath » INDICA

### Kharchi Puja

Of the many festivals current in Tripura, the one that occupies the pride of place is the worship of the fourteen deities popularly known as Kharchi Puja celebrated in July at Agartala (Puran Agartala). The week-long celebration is held in the temple premises and is joined by thousands of people. The word Kharchi is said to be a corrupt form of Khya which means earth. Kharchi Puja is, therefore, the worship of the earth - the earth that sustains mankind with all her resources. Sacrifice of goats and pigeons at the altar of gods is a usual feature of the festival.



Next in importance come Ker and Garia Pujas - both are traditional tribal festivals. The former is celebrated two weeks after Kharchi Puja.

The guardian deity of Vastu Devata is Ker. A large piece of bamboo when bent in a particular fashion assumes the image of Ker. It is generally believed that the former rulers used to perform this Puja for the general welfare of the people of the state. The literal meaning of Ker is boundary or specified area. Two age old beliefs may lie behind the ritualistic incantation of a specified boundary for the Ker Puja. One is to safeguard the interest of the people from any calamitous misfortunes, diseases, and destitution. The other is to save people from any external aggression. Offering and sacrifices constitute an important aspect of Ker Puja. The Kharchi Puja is performed to clean out the sins; it is done for seven consecutive days to clean up the post menstrual uncleanness of mother earth's menstruation.

Kharchi Puja is often referred to as 'Chaturdash' or 'Chaudha Devata Puja'. The 'Chaturdash Devata' or 'Chaudha Devatas bari, is place where this festival fair is held in Old Agartala. 'Chaturdash Devata' was the family deities of the former rulers of Tripura and old Agartala was the capital of their kingdom. Kharchi Puja begins in the month of Ashar (June-July) that falls on the eighth day of the moonlit period (Suklastami). This festival continues for seven days. As per the legend there was a king named Tripur who ruled this land and after whose name the state is called Tripura. The king was very cruel and oppressive towards his subjects. To free themselves from the tyranny of the King, the subjects worshiped Lord Shiva and offered prayers to Him. Lord was pleased and He killed the king.

The Lord said that the queen of Tripur, 'Harabati' would bear a son, who would be the next King of the kingdom to the satisfaction of its subjects. The queen and the subjects of the Kingdom were directed by the Lord to worship everyday the following Gods : Prithvi (Goddess of Earth), Uma (Wife of Lord Siva), Hari (Lord bishnu), Kumar (Kartikaya), Hara (Lord Siva), Ma (Lakshmi), Bani (Saraswati), Ganesh (Siddidata), Brahma (creator of Universe), Kamdev (God of Love), Samudra (God of Ocean), Ganga (Goddess of Ganges), Agni (God of Fire), and Himalaya (God of all Hills). The tribal priest also worships another Goddess, namely 'Burama' during the Kharchi Puja.



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