



Durga Stotra

Shri Aurobindo

Hymn To Durga

I

Mother Durga ! Rider on the lion, giver of all strength, Mother, beloved of Siva ! We, bon from thy parts of power, we the youth of India, are seated here in thy temple. *Listen, O Mother, descend upon earth, make thyself manifest in this land of India.*

II

Mother Durga ! From age to age in life after life, we come down into the human body, do thy work and return to the Home of Delight. Now too we are born, dedicated to thy work. *Listen, O Mother, descend upon earth, come to our help.*

III

Mother Durga ! Giver of force and love and knowledge, terrible art thou in thy own self of might, Mother beautiful and fierce. In the battle of life, in India's battle, we are warriors commissioned by thee; Mother, give to our heart and mind a Titan's strength, a Titan's energy, to our soul and intelligence a god's character and knowledge.

V

Mother Durga ! India, world's noblest race, laywhelmed in darkness. Mother, thou risest on the



eastern horizon, the dawn comes with the glow of thy divine limbs scattering the darkness. Spread thy light, Mother, destroy the darkness.

VI

Mother Durga ! We are thy children, through thy grace, by thy influence may we become fit for the great work, for the great ideal. Mother, destroy our smallness, our selfishness, our fear.

VII

Mother Durga ! Thou art Kali, naked, garlanded with human heads, sword in hand, thou slayest



the *Asura*. Goddess, do thou slay with thy pitiless cry the enemies who dwell within us, may none remain alive there, not one. May we become pure and spotless, this is our prayer, O Mother, make thyself manifest.

VIII

Mother Durga ! India lies low in selfishness and fearfulness and littleness. Make us great, make our efforts great, our hearts vast, make us true to our resolve. May we no longer desire the small, void of energy, given to laziness, stricken with fear.

IX

Mother Durga ! Extend wide the power of Yoga. We are thy Aryan children, develop in us again the lost teaching, character, strength of intelligence, faith and devotion, force of austerity, power of chastity and true knowledge, bestow all that upon the world. To help mankind, appear, O Mother of the world, dispel all ills.

X

Mother Durga ! Slay the enemy within, then root out all obstacles outside. May the noble heroic mighty Indian race, supreme in love and unity, truth and strength, arts and letters, force and knowledge ever dwell in its holy woodlands, its fertile fields,

under its sky-scraping hills, along the banks of its pure-streaming rivers. This is our prayer at the feet of the Mother. Make thyself manifest.

XI

Mother Durga ! Enter our bodies in thy Yogic strength. We shall become thy instruments, thy sword slaying all evil, thy lamp dispelling all ignorance. Fulfil this yearning of thy young children, O Mother. Be the master and drive thy instrument, wield thy sword and slay the evil, hold up the lamp and spread the light of knowledge. Make thyself manifest.

XII

Mother Durga ! When we possess thee, we shall no longer cast thee away; we shall bind thee to us with the tie of love and devotion. Come, Mother, manifest thyself in our mind and life and body.

XIII

Come, Revealer of the hero-path. We shall no longer cast thee away. May our entire life become a ceaseless worship of the Mother, all our acts a continuous service to the Mother, full of love, full of energy. This is our prayer, *O Mother, descend upon earth, make thyself manifest in this land of India.*





Shakti Cult in Orissa

Dr. Atul Chandra Pradhan

The worship of the deified form of female energy or principle which is called Shakti in our religious terminology is traced back in the Indian history to the pre-Vedic Indus Valley Civilization. On Orissan context, some scholars trace the worship of Shakti in the form of Viraja at Jajpur to the pre-Christian era on the basis of certain references to this deity in the Mahabharat, Hari Vamsa and Vayupurana. But Shakti worship at Viraja, the ancient place-name of Jajpur, was overshadowed by the predominance of Buddhism for some centuries preceding the Gupta era. With the efflorescence of the Brahmanical religion in the Gupta period, the Shakti worship at Jajpur assumed new importance. The present image of Viraja in the temple at Jajpur belongs to the fifth century A.D. This image, called Mahisamardini, is a two-handed Durga, engaged in killing the



buffalo demon. The two-handed image of Mahisamardini is the earliest form of Goddess Durga. Besides Jajpur, an image of this type has been found at Somesvar near Kakatpur of the Prachi valley. In first half of the seventh century A.D., Hiuen Tsang noticed a large number of Deva temples in Orissa. Some of the temples must have been places of Shakti worship.

During the early Bhaumakara rule, the Durga image became eight-armed. During the later Bhaumakara period this image is found to be ten-armed. The ten-armed Mahisamardini images of the Prachi valley are assigned by the scholars to the tenth century A.D. The Dasabhujia or ten-armed

Durga was depicted as a war Goddess, armed with weapons of different Gods like Siva's trident, Vishu's disc, Varuna's conch, Agni's dart, Yama's iron rod, Vayu's bow, Surya's arrows, Indra's thunder bolt, Kuvera's mace, Brahma's rosary and



pot, Viswakarma's sword and Himavan's lion. Though the early Bhaumakara Kings were Buddhists, Shakti worship flourished at Jajpur, their capital, all through the Bhaumakara rule. The popularity of Shakti worship at Jajpur is borne out by the fact that the Bhaumakara queen Tribhuvan Mahadevi compared herself with Katyayani (Durga or Viraja) at her accession.

During the Sailodbhava and Bhaumakara periods the deification of female energy was conceived and executed in various ways. The image of Siva was accompanied by that of his consort Parvati. Deification of female energy was also introduced within the framework of Saivism, because Siva was conceived as Ardhanariswar (half-male and half-female).

The most important factor contributing to the popularization of the worship of mother-Goddess during these periods was the growth of Tantricism from seventh century A.D. The Tantriks worshipped the mother Goddess as the source of power or Shakti and the giver of the highest spiritual bliss. From seventh century onwards Tantricism continued to dominate Buddhism, Saivism and Brahmanical religion.

The Buddhist Tantricism, called Vajrayan, conceived of the Goddess Tara (Saviouress). Tara images have been found in such places as Banapur, Vanesvaranasi, Ratnagiri, and Khiching.

During the Bhaumakara period the Tantrik Shakti worship dominated Bhubaneswar, the great centre of Saivism. The Kapalikas who were the devotees of Siva worshipped the Tantrik Goddesses, Chamunda and Mahisamardini, for the attainment of Siddhis. Four Shakti shrines were erected on four sides of the Vindu Sarovar tank, near the Lingaraj temple. Of these four temples Vaitala, Mohini, Uttaresvar, and another unnamed-Vaitala is the most important. The presiding deity of Vaitala temple is Chamunda. Chamunda is

terrific looking deity, with sunken belly, emaciated body, bulged eyes and garland of skull, seated on a corpse, and flanked by jackels. The name Vaitala is derived from Vetala, the spirit whose help the Kapalikas and Tantrikas sought for the attainment of Siddhis. In the Vaitala temple strange Tantrik rites like human or animal sacrifice were being practised. In front of the temple, the basement of a stone Yupa which was used for sacrificial purposes is found. In the inner wall of this temple, a fierce image of Bhairava is found.

Chamunda was a deity worshipped by the Buddhists, Saivites as well as Tantrikas. Apart from the Vaitala temple, a prominent centre of Chamunda worship in the Bhaumakara period was Khiching.

The Shakti worshippers of the Bhaumakara period conceived of worshipping a group of seven mother Goddesses, called Saptamatraka. The seven Goddesses are Varahi, Indrani, Vaishnavi, Kaumari, Sivani, Brahmi and Chamunda. These seven Goddesses were accompanied by Ganesha and Virabhadra. The Saptamatraka images have been found at Jajpur, Belkhandi (in the district of Kalahandi), near Markandeya tank of Puri, Salanpur (Jagatsinghpur P.S of the undivided Cuttack district) and in the Parasuramesvara, Vaitala and Muktesvar temples of Bhubaneswar. Dr. K.C.Panigrahi has discerned some iconographic differences between the Saptamatrukas of earlier period (Sailodbhava and Bhaumakara) and those of the later period (Somavamsi period). The later Saptamatrakas, such as the image found in the modern temple of Dasasvamedha Ghat of Jajpur, Markandeya tank image (which is attributed to the Somavamsi ruler Bhimaratha in the Madala Panji) and the image of Salanpur hold babies in arms. The seven mothers with babies in arms were designed to symbolically deify the maternal affection.



Like Chamunda, Varahi, one of the seven mother Goddesses, was worshipped independently. Varahi temple is found at Chaurasi village of the Prachi valley (in the Puri district) and Narendrapur in the Balasore district. The Varahi image of the Chaurasi temple which is assigned to the tenth century A.D. is a colossal image, seated on a crouching buffalo, holding a fish in right hand and a skull in the left hand. By worshipping Varahi, people sought to ward off pestilences. The Brahmanical Tantricism developed in the form of a cult, called Yogini cult. According to Kalika Purana, Orissa was the land where the female Tantrikas just as the Kapalikas were the devotees of Lord Siva, Yoginis were the devotees of Shakti or Durga. The Yoginis and Kapalikas lived in spiritual as well sexual intimacy for the attainment of spiritual bliss. The Yogini temples contain Shakti, i.e. a deified form of female energy as the presiding deity, and contain as many as sixty four manifestations of Shakti. In Orissa two Yogini temples of Bhaumakara period are found. The Yogini temple of Hirapur, near Bhubaneswar, is presided by the ten-armed figure of Bhairava and a four-armed Ajaikapada Bhairava. This temple contains sixty three images, symbolizing the different manifestations of Shakti. The presiding deity of the Yogini temple of Ranipur-Jhariel (in the district of Bolangir) is a terrific Chamunda. This temple possesses forty manifestations of Shakti. This was situated within the territory of the Somavamsis of Kosala.

During the Bhaumakara rule, the Sulki rulers worshipped a mother-Goddess in the form of a pillar Goddess called Stambhesvari.

The Somavamsis were Saivites. During their rule the worship of Shakti or Tantricism did not suffer from any negligence due to the close relation between Saivism and Tantricism, i.e. the cult of Siva who is known as Bhairava and that of His female consort who is called Bhairavi, Shakti, Parvati, Durga or Mahamaya. But the Ganga rulers extended their patronage to Vaishnavism and showed no interest in Tantrik cult. Chodagangadeva was antagonistic to the Shakti worship. But the worship of Shakti did not disappear; it assumed a new form. In the temples of Ganga period the Dikpalas or guardian deities appear with female consorts. The Gangas built the temple of Parvati inside the Lingaraj temple compound. They also built the temples of Lakshmi and Vimala inside the compound of the Jagannath temple at Puri. During the Ganga period the deification of female energy entered into Vaishnavism. Jayadev, the twelfth century poet, introduced Radha as the consort of Krishna. The Tantrik cult adjusted itself within the pantheon of deities at Puri or Shreeksheetra during the Ganga and Suryavamsi rules. The Bata Avakasha of Balaram Das, the poet of early sixteenth century A.D. tells us that Jagannath is attended by sixty four Yoginis, Katyayani, Saptamatruka, Vimala and Viraja. The Bata Avakasha mentions seventy six mother Goddesses. The worship of Shakti or mother Goddesses continues to prevail in different parts of Orissa under different names.

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Sculptures of the Ruined Chandi Temple at Chandital

Ramesh Meher

The temple of Chandital is one of the important Sakta shrines of Boudh district. It is called Siddha pitha as it is believed that the goddess fulfills the wishes of her devotees. The temple is situated in a small village in the Khuntabandha Grampanchayat area of Boudh district.¹ This temple is located at Chandital village which is close to the right bank of the Mahanadi. It is situated at the distance of about 12 kms from Boudh towards Sonepur, and can be reached by the State Highway through a rural road of about 2 kms. The temple is considered as most sacred by the local people. Goddess Chandi, the presiding deity of the temple is regarded as the protectress of that area.

From the architectural point of view, the present temple of Chandital is not important as it is built in the middle of 20th century A.D. But the temple contains sculptures datable to early medieval period. The temple of Chandital is consisted of two structures such as Vimana and Jagamohana. The structure of Vimana collapsed due to heavy rain in August 2000. There is an open flat roofed Mandap recently built in front of the Jagamohana.

Vimana

The *Vimana* of the Candi temple is a *Rekha deula* and its height is about 25 feet from the surface of the temple complex. The structure of the temple is erected on a platform of 1.5 feet high. It has four parts such as Pistha, bada, Gandi, and *Mastaka*.



Chamunda, Chandital

Jagamohana

The *Jagamohana* or *Mukhasala* of the temple has a vaulted roof or semi-cylindrical roof and it is about 10 feet in height from the surface of the temple complex. The outer walls of the *Jagamohana* are completely plain. According to the local people, deities like Chamunda, Uma-Maheswar,

Indrani, Kumari, Brahma, Maheswari, Barahi, Ganesha and Siva Linga are worshipped inside the *Mukhasala* or *Jagamohana*. Two lions are installed on both sides of *mukhasala* and they are acting as the *dvarapalas* of the temple.

On the basis of the survived image of Chamunda in the *Jagamohana* hall, S.S.Panda has suggested the existence of the image of Saptamatrika amidst loose sculptures of this



temple.² All of these sculptures of the temple are briefly described below.

Indrani

The first image is Indrani, the wife of lord Indra. She is also carved seated in lalita pose on a pedestal with right leg pendant. A figure of elephant is carved below the pedest as her conventional mount. She has two hands, but the right hand is destroyed. She is wearing a kirita mukuta on her head, and bracelet in her left hand. Flying Vidyadharas with garlands in hands are carved in the topmost corners of this slab. It measures 71 cm long and 40 cm wide. It is made of sand stone.

Brahmi

The second image of mother goddess is that of Brahmi, the wife of Brahma. She is carved seated in lalitasana on a pedestal with goose as her vehicle. She has four hands. Her hands are damaged along with attributes hold in them. She is wearing a kirita mukuta on her head. Her vanna hansa (swan) is carved below the pedestal. Flying Vidyadharas with garlands in hands are carved in the topmost corners of this slab. It measures 67 cm long and 36 cm wide. It is made of sand stone.

Kaumari

The third Matrika is Kaumari, the wife of Kumara or Kartikeya, the god of war. She is sitting in the lalita pose on a plain pedestal containing peacock (Mayura), her conventional mount. She had four handed; now all are missing. Her head is also missing. The image is 38 cm long and 30 cm wide. It is made of sand stone.

Uma-Mahesvara

The fourth image of Uma-Maheswara is carved on a stone slab in the sitting posture. Parvati is sitting on the left thigh of Siva. The right leg of Siva is kept on his vahana bull and the left

leg of Parvati is kept on his vahana lion. Both bull and lion are carved on the pedestal. Siva has four hands. The top left hand is shown on the left shoulder of parvati and lower left hand holds a lotus bud. The right top hand is in abhaya mudra. Both Siva and Parvati are wearing mukutas on their heads. Flying Vidyadharas with garlands in hands are carved in the topmost corners of this slab. It measures 66 cm in length and 36 cm in width. It is made of chlorite stone.

Varahi

The fifth matrika is Varahi, the wife of Varaha. She is a fat pot-bellied female with head of boar and seated in lalita pose on a plain pedestal. A buffalo is carved below the pedestal as her vehicle. She has two hands. Her right hand is in abhayamudra while her left hand is holding a baby, who is sitting on her left thigh. The baby is touching her left breast.³ Hairs on her head are arranged in the shape of snake coils radiating in all direction. The size of the image is 76 cm long and 37cm wide. It is made of chlorite stone.

Chamunda

The sixth image is Chamunda who is shown as sitting on a corpse in the ardhaparyanka posture. She has six hands. A garland of skulls is worn around her waist. Her hair is tied like a jatabhara. She holds a sarpa(long snake) in the upraised left and right hands over her head. In her lowest left hand is a severe human head. Flower motifs are carved on the topmost corner of this slab. This is a unique image of Chamunda.⁴ It measures approximately 69 cm in length and 37 in cm width. It is made of chloride stone.

Mahesvari

The seventh image is Maheswari, wife of Siva. She is carved in standing posture. She has two hands. Her vahana bull is carved on the



Maheswari, Chandital

pedestal.⁵ It (image) is 92 cm in length and 36 cm in width. It is made of sand stone.

Chamunda

Another image of Chamunda is also found in the mandapa. Her hands are broken and her left leg is also destroyed. It measures 58 cm in

length and 28 cm in width. It is made of chlorite stone.

Ganesha

The image of Ganesha is depicted in the maharajalila pose. It is beautifully carved on black stone slab. He has four hands. The lower left hand possesses a battle axe (parasu). His vahana mouse is carved at the bottom of the pedestal. Flying Vidyadharas with garlands in hands are found in the topmost corners of this slab. He wears a mukuta on his head. It measures 79 cm in length and 32 cm in width. It is made of chlorite stone.

Date of the sculptures

Most of the scholars of art history accept that the sculptures of this Chandi temple belonged the Somavamsi period. Local legends ascribe the builder of the shrine to king Chandihara Yayati-II of Somavamsis dynasty who was also the builder of Chandi temple at Belkhandi and Ranipur jharial.⁶ The name Chandihara Yayati-II (A.D. 1025 to 1040 A.D.) suggests that Yayati-II was a devotee of Chandi and Hara, this temple exists nearer to the capital of Yayatinagar i.e. modern Jagati. The original temple of Chandital and the existing sculptures might have been made by

Chandihara, the Somavamsi king. In that case, the date of the temple and sculptures can be 11th century A.D.

Conclusion

It is known from the above discussion that the architectural feature of the temple is not so important like other notable temples of Orissa but the shrine preserves a good number of sculptures of different deities which are of great significance. Most of the images found here are Saptamatrika image. It is not unlikely that the temple might have been of Saptamatrikas. People of the neighboring villages worship these deities with great devotion. Festivals like Makara Sankranti, Pana Sankranti, Dasahara, Sivaratri etc are regularly observed in this temple with much enthusiasm.

References

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Bali-Harachandi Temple at Baliharachandi

Dr. Ratnakar Mohapatra

The temple of Bali-Harachandi is one of the important Sakta shrines of Orissa. It is situated on the sea-shore in Brahmagiri area of the Puri district. This shrine is exactly located 6 km to the left side of the Kathuabada Chhak of the main road, which lies between Puri and Brahmagiri and also 27 km to the south-west of Puri town.¹ Due to its picturesque location amidst thick growth of Casuarina trees, devotees usually visit the shrine of Bali-Harachandi. The temple gives a majestic appearance in view of its location on a huge sand dune overlooking the blue water of the Bay of Bengal.² The Goddess Bali Harachandi is considered by people as one of the Asta-saktis of Orissa.³ Hence the site of the temple is an important Sakta pitha of the Puri District. The shrine is also one of the notable Tantric pithas of ancient Orissa.⁴ According to tradition, the present temple was built on the ruins of an earlier dilapidated temple.⁵ The temple of Bali-Harachandi is erected over a sandy ridge of 25 feet high from the road level. A modest attempt has been made in this article to highlight the art and architecture of this temple.

The temple of Bali-Harachandi consists of two structures such as vimana and jagamohana. Both the structures of the temple are heavily plastered with lime mortar. It is built in sand stones, which is locally known as Baulamala and Kanda patharas. This temple faces to east.



Vimana:

The vimana of the Bali Harachandi temple is a pancharatha rekha deula and its height is about 75 feet from the ground level.⁶ It has four vertical parts such as pistha, bada, gandi and mastaka. The pistha of the vimana consists of the conventional mouldings of khura, kumbha, patta, kani and basanta. Vertical bands are joined at the centre of each paga of the pistha. The bada of the vimana is navaratha in plan and it is panchanga type i.e. having five-fold divisions viz. pabhaga, tala jangha, bandhana, upara jangha and baranda. The pabhaga of the bada is completely undecorated. The niches of the tala jangha are relieved with erotic scenes and maithuna motifs. The intervening recesses between the pagas of tala jangha are filled with simha vidalas, gaja vidalas, nara vidalas, etc. The bandhana of the bada consists of single moulding, which is devoid of decorative ornamentation. The intervening



recesses between the pagas of upara jangha are filled with alasa kanyas, dancing girls, devi figures of Sarasvati, Parvati and Lakshmi. The baranda of the bada is completely plain.

Parsvadevatas:

The central niches of the three sides of the bada of vimana are housed with the parsvadevata images of Varahi, Karali and Bhairavi. Goddess Varahi is the parsvadevata of the northern side. She displays gada and panapatra in left two hands and the right two hands hold khadga and garland of beads. The devi is carved in seated posture on buffalo.

Goddess Bhairavi is the parsvadevata of the western side. She is in the seated posture on the back of a bull. She holds panapatra and a child in her left two hands while the right two hands display khadga and rosary respectively.

Goddess Karali is the parsvadevata of the southern side. Here one of her legs has been kept upon the head of an asura. She displays a panapatra and shield in her left two hands and the right two hands hold khadga and trident respectively. Mahisasura lies under the feet of Goddess Karali. All the three parsvadevatas are made of chlorite stone and comfortably housed in the pidha mundi niches.

The curvilinear superstructure is surmounted on the bada of the vimana and it displays five pagas or rathas. The base of the raha paga in three sides are decorated with different deities such as the four handed Kali image in the southern side, another four-armed Kali image in the western side and the two armed Lakshmi image in the northern side respectively. They are depicted with usual attributes in their hands. The middle portion of the raha paga is projected with gaja kranta motif (lion on crouching elephant) on each side of the gandi. The raha paga of the eastern side is decorated with a miniature pidha deula, which is crowned by the gaja kranta motif. Rahu heads are decorated above the gaja kranta

motif on each side raha paga of the gandi. Dopichha lions are fixed on the top of kanika pagas of the gandi. Deula charini figures are inserted in the four cardinal directions of the beki above rahas. They are acting as the supporting elements to the amalaka sila of the mastaka.

The mastaka of the vimana consists of beki, amalaka sila, khapuri, kalasa, ayudha (chakra) and dhvaja.

The sanctum preserves the eight-armed image of Goddess Harachandi as the presiding deity of the temple. She is in the form of Goddess Mahisamardini Durga. This image has been carved in the attitude of striding over demon Mahisasura who is shown in human body and buffalo head. The image of presiding deity is made of black chlorite. She holds shield, bow, naga phasa and head of asura in left four hands while the right four hands possess trident, ratnamala, arrow and khadga respectively. The image of Goddess Harachandi is about four feet in height.⁷ One of her legs is on the back of lion and another leg is firmly set on the double petalled lotus pedestal. Lion, the conventional mount of Goddess Harachandi is carved on the right of the pedestal. The same designed image of Goddess Durga made of astha dhatu is installed beneath the feet of the presiding deity. She is worshipped as the Vijepratima of Goddess Harachandi. The prabhamandala around the head of presiding deity is exquisitely carved with scroll works. Both the images of presiding deity and the Vijepratima are installed on the simhasana of one foot high. The image of Goddess Bali-Harachandi was possibly built before the construction of the present temple. In this regard Sri Arakshita Pradhana says that the image of Goddess Harachandi is contemporary of the images of Jhankada Sarala and Kakatapur Mangala.⁸ The top of the simhasana is covered by a small kanaka mandapa, which is supported by four pillars. There are two mudas or ceilings found on the top of garbhagriha or sanctum-sanctorum; the lower one is called



garbhamuda and above it there is another muda which is known as ratnamuda respectively. The floor of the sanctum is covered with marbles.

The sanctum has one doorway towards the jagamohana. The frames of the doorway are devoid of decorative ornamentation. The image of Gaja-Lakshmi is carved on the centre of the doorway lintel. She is depicted in abhiseka pose with usual attributes in hands. Navagrahas are completely absent on the architrave above the doorway lintel.

Jagamohana:

The jagamohana of the temple is a pidha deula and its height is about 30 feet from the surface of the temple complex.⁹ It has also four vertical parts such as pistha, bada, gandi and mastaka. The pistha is designed like the pistha of the vimana i.e. having conventional mouldings of khura, kumbha, patta, kani and basanta. The bada of the jagamohana is also panchanga type i.e. having five fold divisions such as pabhaga, tala jangha, bandhana, upara jangha and baranda. The pabhaga of the bada is devoid of decorative ornamentations. The intervening recesses between the pagas of the tala jangha are filled with erotic scenes, alasa kanyas, different vidalas and devi figures. The bandhana of the bada consists of single undecorated moulding. The intervening recesses between the pagas of the upara jangha are relieved with erotic figures, dancing girls, gaja vidalas, nara vidalas and simha vidalas. The baranda of the bada is devoid of decorative ornamentation.

The pyramidal superstructure is surmounted on the bada of jagamohana and it consists of five pidhas. Jhapa simhas are projected on the central (raha) paga of the gandi in all sides. Dopichha lions are fixed on the top of kanika pagas of the gandi. Deula charini figures are also inserted in the four cardinal directions of the beki above rahas. They are acting as the supporting elements to the amalaka sila of the mastaka.



The mastaka of the jagamohana consists of beki, ghanta (bell shaped member) above which there is another beki, amalaka sila, khapuri, kalasa, ayudha (chakra) and dhvaja.

Inner walls of the jagamohana are devoid of decorative ornamentation. There is an additional pidha structure, which is closely attached to the northern side of the jagamohana. It is used as the storehouse of the temple. Gaja-simha motif is noticed on the floor of the jagamohana. It is worshipped as the conventional mount of Goddess Bali-Harachandi, the presiding deity of the temple.

The jagamohana has three doorways; one on the eastern (main entrance), one on the southern and another on the northern side towards the storehouse respectively. Both the northern and southern side doorways are devoid of decorative ornamentation. The Gaja-Lakshmi image is carved on the centre of the doorway lintel of the eastern side. Navagrahas are completely absent on the architrave above the doorway lintel. A series of masonry steps of ascending order have been provided in the eastern and southern side doorways for the approach of devotees towards the jagamohana as well as the sanctum. Two huge lions are installed on the both sides of the main entrance of the jagamohana. They are watching the eastern side doorway of the jagamohana.



Additional Shrine:

There is an additional Saiva shrine named Chandeshvara erected in the northern side of the main deula. According to tradition, a merchant of that locality had built this Siva temple in the temple premises of Goddess Bali-Harachandi. The shrine is a small pidha deula and its height is about 15 feet. Sivalingam is enshrined in its sanctum as the presiding deity of that shrine.

Date of the Temple:

There is no authentic evidence regarding the exact time period when the temple was constructed. On the basis of the local tradition, R.P. Mohapatra has mentioned that the Bali-Harachandi temple was constructed by Gajapati Mukunda Deva (1560-1568 A.D.) of Orissa.¹⁰ In this connection Arakshita Pradhan describes that king Rama Chandra Deva, the ruler of Bhoi dynasty built this beautiful temple for Goddess Bali Harachandi by breaking the old temple.¹¹ Sarata Chandra has also remarked that the temple of Bali-Harachandi was built by Gajapati Ramachandra Deva of Puri.¹² On the basis of the architectural features, the construction period of the temple can be tentatively assigned to the 2nd half of the 16th century A.D. Most probably, it was constructed by the King of Puri. Both the vimana and jagamohana of the temple are built in the same period.

It's Relation with Lord Jagannatha Temple:

This temple has relation with Sri Jagannatha temple of Puri in respect of a ritual on the Mahanavami day in the month of Asvina.

Conclusion:

Thus, it is known from the above discussion that the temple of Bali-Harachandi is one of the important sakta shrines of Orissa. Architectural features of the temple indicate that it was built after the end of Gajapati rule in Orissa. Though the architectural features are not so important but from the religious point of view,

temple is an important sakta pitha in the Brahmagiri area of the Puri district. The additional Saiva shrine of the temple complex is built in the later period. A series of masonry steps of ascending order are arranged in the north-eastern corner of the temple complex for entry into the temple premises. Being an ancient Sakta pitha of Orissa, the shrine of Bali-Harachandi is considered by people as one of the important place for the devotees of Sakta sect. Those devotees who visit Lord Alarnath temple of Brahmagiri, most of them also do visit the temple of Goddess Bali-Harachandi. Some of the tourists of the different parts of India as well as abroad also go to the site of the temple due to its picturesque location between the Lord Jagannatha temple of Puri and the Alarnath temple of Brahmagiri. Now the site of the temple is one of the picnic spots of Orissa.

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Goddess Majhi Ghariani of Rayagada

M.S. Rao

Of the many places where history and myth embrace in love Rayagada in Koraput district is one. This small township nestles in the arms of green mountains. River Nagabali kisses her hem and plays about in a half circle. The J.K.Pur Paper Mill ten kilometers away and the Jeypore Sugar Factory in her courtyard keep her still nights throbbing with life. The wind from Parvatipuram forty kilometers to the south blows past her doors leaving behind the very strong scent of Andhrite culture. Rayagada appeared as far back as the reign of King Samudragupta who tried to claim her. The scars of these battles are still there at today's Champikota, a thirty minutes' ride from the town. Such is her ancient lore. Such is her modern tale.

Goddess Majhighariani (Also known as Majji Gouri) is evidently the prime deity here. She commands the soulful devotion of the entire

population. The origin of the Goddess is associated with a historical event dating back to the fourth century A.D. The Orissa Gazetteer says, Samudragupta invaded Mahakantara, the modern Koraput and Kalahandi tracts. King Vyaghraraj of Mahakantar braved the battle with success. People today believe that he did it with the grace of the Goddess. The Goddess continued to be worshipped since then as a form of Shakti, energy incarnate. Shakti and the mother figure are synonymous in the mind of a Hindu. Therefore almost in no time the Goddess was accepted as the



Goddess Majhighariani, Rayagada

universal mother. Mr. N.C.Padhi, a Teacher of G.C.D High School Rayagada has done copious research on the deity. He quotes the Orissa Gazetteer that " in the fourteenth century the Silavansi king Viswanath Dev chose Rayagada as his capital and shifted his headquarters to that new town. He built an enormous mud fort at



Rayagada the ruins of which are still seen. Viswanath Dev also constructed rows of temples along the river Nagabali and the ruined temple called Majhi Ghariani is also attributed to the Goddess right in the middle of his palace and the temple was raised later at that very spot. Hence, the name Majhi Ghariani, or the one seated in the central room.

The construction of the temple (The structure as we see today) is of very recent origin, say, about forty years. At that time the railways were building a bridge over the Nagabali at a stone's throw from the shrine because at this point the river is a deep and narrow gorge going down around a hundred and odd feet. To the surprise of the builders, the massive piers gave way as many as three times. And then the head Pujari one night had a dream in which the deity commanded that her temple be built first. It was raised forthwith. Legend goes that the bridge too could be completed afterwards with no further difficulty.

The temple is situated at one end of the town. River Nagabali flows close by. The green hills around repose in peace. Among knee-high shrubbery, an occasional knot of large trees and a lean throng of thatched cottages, the temple complex stands imposingly. The room for head-shaving, the rest-house for incoming devotees with provision for cooking their meals and the water tap are spread closely over a small area. There is the Satikunda too where in 1571 A.D. when Viswanath Dev died, his hundred and odd queens immolated themselves following the custom of SATI.

From the main road towards Parvatipuram the approach way crosses the railway tracks to the temple steps along a gentle slope for a few yards. The main temple and the entrance hall stand on a rectangular marble-

floored platform. The booking counter and the entrance to the sanctum sanctorum are on two adjacent sides of the hall. The other two sides are open and grilled to let in enough air and light. The inner shrine is fitted with marble stones on walls and glass panels above that reflect the deity's burning image clearly.

The idol is a piece of lengthy stone dug deep into the earth. The small upper part is visible and it is pasted thick with red vermilion powder. Facial contours are marked in black and gold colours. The red face radiates fear. The eyes are round with large brows. The nose dazzles in an ornament that rests lovingly on the upper lip. The tongue made of a thin curved plate, sticks out. Light green leaves are littered before the image. Behind her are a few swords wrapped in coloured pieces of cloth. The Goddess is invoked into these swords during holy festivals. They are taken outside the temple precincts to represent the original idol that cannot be moved. The swords are worshipped when epidemics break out of any such calamity befalls the locality.

Each Sunday and Wednesday, devotees pour into this town with offerings of live goats and of cocks to propitiate the Goddess. These are people who had made a vow to sacrifice a live goat or cock if their prayer was granted. The overwhelming number of the temple-ward traffic is proof that the deity responds, and responds unflinchingly.

There is an interesting custom in connection with the animal sacrifice. The sacrificial bird (say, a cock) is brought right before the image and the Pujari in deep red robes throws a few grains of rice before it. The devotee awaits the cock to peck at the grains. With bated breath. If the cock does not, the Pujari cannot offer it to the Goddess and it is believed that the cock won't



touch the grains if the devotee has not performed a vow made before.

These days there is brisk business for coconut and banana vendors. The temple is packed every inch. The pilgrims purchase tickets for shaving or for offering a goat or cock etc. The notice-board in the entrance hall tells you the rate. They stand in a long row while home-guards keep an eye on discipline. The rituals in the shrine being over, they come out with the animal or bird to the open ground where paid butchers are waiting to kill the bird or animal and to make a few bucks. The fatal stroke falls. The headless body dances a while in death-throe and then dies. The pilgrims pick up the Prasad and leave for home. Many also stay back for the day. They cook their meals in the premises itself and wait for the homeward train. And out there, the open ground is layered many times with fur and feather. The air catches a strong scent of spiced meat. People, old and young, keep shouting. The bustle, beginning from the small hours of the morning, goes on till late at night.

Killing is a sin. But who won't risk it once at least for just this moment's euphoric surrender to the Almighty?

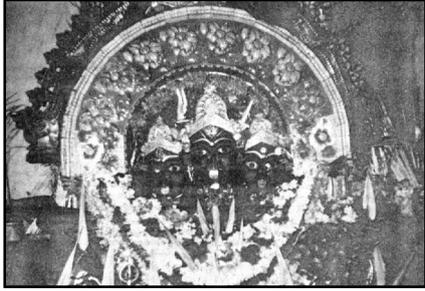
The CHAITRA festival is the most important of the festivals held every year with much pomp and ceremony in honour of Goddess Majhi Ghariani. The centre portion of the entrance hall is enclosed and holy fire is lit to the recitation of MANTRAS. The deity is installed in sacred pots (GHATA) and people carrying the pots go in procession. The streets too celebrate the function during and after the conclusion of the festival in the temple. The temple area during this function is decorated with flags, festoons and pyrotechnics. Fascinating feats of acrobatics enthrall the spectator on the last night. At sundown

people stream into the area. The cool night, the flurry of lights, those half-lit human faces so lost under a spell and the air of pious anxiety give the whole atmosphere a magical charm. At about 10 P.M the sacred pots will have made the last round and they reach this side of the railway track. The head Pujari carries the deity, comes dancing to the heavy beat of drums and cymbals. His steps grow faster and then a leap and he is swinging effortlessly on a wooden plank nailed on the surface with iron spikes the pointed ends showing up. The trance look on his face speaks clearly that he has sat on a bunch of flowers, not a bed of blood-hungry thorns.

There is still another surprise. The fire-walking feat. The bed of fire is prepared in advance and the glowing cinders are spread over about fifteen square feet. Again the mass of on-lookers await expectantly the scene of this ritual. A small chick is dropped on the fire-bed. And it runs right on it. The head Pujari steps down the swing and again dances round the fire a couple of times. As the beating of drums rises in crescendo, he sweeps into the fire and out. Who can then check the frenzied tide of devotees? They rush and jump into the fire and run Townsfolk, tribal, young men, old women, destitute and drunkards all and each. As if the burning bed beckons us beggars of God's mercy. It is a moment's total surrender distilled from an eternity's fragmented awaiting.

A board of trustees is entrusted with the temple's managements. The Tahsildar is the Managing Trustee and some persons of eminence of the locality are the member trustees. They have been doing their best to utilize temple funds so that a larger number of pilgrims are attracted.

Courtesy: Orissa Review, October 1989.



Ramachandi : The Guardian Deity of Ganjam Port

Prof. P.K. Chhotray

At a distance of about 5 kms from Ganjam town, we find the temple of Ramachandi on the summit of a picturesque hillock situated on the right bank of river Rushikulya. As the visitor strives to climb the hillock, the journey appears to be a difficult one but feelings of fatigue abruptly disappear when he finds himself in front of the deity. In the sanctum of the shrine are installed the heads of three Goddesses exquisitely carved out of stone in a unique Orissan style. Here the sculptor had taken utmost care to depict Motherly tenderness and compassion of the deities. Since no inscriptional evidence in regard to the date of the images is available, on style and iconographic features, the image may be assigned to the early mediaeval period. As one comes out of the temple and looks around, he is bewildered in joy by the kaleidoscopic scenes of the hills in three sides and the blue ocean on the other, sandy banks of River Rushikulya, silvery sheets of water in tanks, villages big and small, crop fields, arecanut and coconut plantations, vegetable farms and the colour of the hillock varying from red to saffron. The deities are worshipped under the names of Harachandi, Ramachandi and Jaya Chandi. As regards the installation of three deities, various thoughts come to mind. Probably they represent Mahalakshmi, Mahakali and Maha Saraswati or Durga, Kali and Bhubaneswari of Hindu faith or

the Triratna of Buddhism or the universal mother with two divine attendants. The Mother cult declares that, the mother performs the act of creation, preservation and dissolution. She assumes various forms for the protection of the entire universe, and destruction of the evil. The ruins of the brick structure found in the close vicinity of the temple indicate that the deities were originally worshipped there. The bricks are quite large in size and of light weight. It seems that the old structure had a flat roof. On examination of the ruins it appears that the old structure belongs to the early mediaeval period.

Korraval is the name by which the Mother Goddess was known to the early Tamil writers. As she is associated with war and victory, she can be identified with Durga. The Silappadikaram a Tamil epic of sixth century, describes Her as the "three-eyed Goddess whose crown is adorned with the crescent moon, whose lips red as the coral, are parted in a beatific smile, whose waist is encircled by a serpent, whose arms wield the tridents, and whose feet bedecked with anklets, rest upon the severed head of Mahisasura. She is the embodiment of victory, Dharma and wisdom. Among the numerous sculptures of the Pallava and Pandya rule, from the 7th to the 9th century are the panels, representing Mahisasuramardini.



The members of the famous mediaeval trading corporation were worshippers of Bhagabati Durga. To the Tamil members of this corporation. Durga was Kandall, a Tamil word meaning the divine principle beyond form and name and transcending all manifestations. The common folk install her as the guardian deity of the villages and pray to her for liberation.

"namami bhavabhitoham samsaranavatarini"

Afraid of the pangs of worldly life, I bow unto Thee, who helpeth me to cross the ocean of earthy existence.

The village Karapada and an ancient site situated at the foot of Ramachandi hillock deserve special attention in the context of the Tamil word Korraival. A certain sect of the people of the village differ from other in social custom. Their principal occupation is betel plantation. The ruins of the habitation and burial practice of the ancient site appears to be south Indian in origin. A link between the Oriya word Kandhuni and Tamil word Kandali cannot be also ruled out. Both the words refer to the names of a Goddess. Durga is invoked as Kandall by the members of a trading corporation. The villages like Aliabad, Prayagi and Kantiagoda alias Podumpetta can be associated with the Alvar movement and Alvars of South India under the name of Poygoi and Pudam.

From the great ports of Palur, Ganjam, Kalinganagar and Charitra, the people of Kalinga were carrying on trade and commerce from ancient times with Burma, Malayasia, Siam, Kambodia, Java, Bali, Borneo and Sumatra. Situated near the mouth of river Rushikulya Ganjam flourished as an emporium of overseas trade and boasted of its handsome buildings till recent times. The following observations throw light on its past glory. "As these (Palempores locally known as 'Patta') from Ganjam are much approved you must endeavour to send a large

portion of that sort". This was the note of the Company's Government to the Chief of Ganjam port. Dr. William Hunter, while passing through this deserted town in 1870, saw it as described by him in the following lines: "of its former magnificence scarcely remains, except a few half fallen mansions with hovels swarming around their tower storeys and seeming to grow out of their ruins. Lofty pillared gateways stand about the rice fields leading nowhere, or a more pregnant lesson to human history, are utilized as entrances to the peasant's thatched cottage." It is interesting to note that the temples of Ramachandi, Harachandi and antiquities of Buddhism are found in the ancient port-towns of Orissa. With the network of rivers and sea by the side, the association of people of Orissa with boats was quite intimate, this is even reflected in Mahisasura mardhini (Durga killing the demon Mahisasura) lying near Brahmeswar temple of Bhubaneswar is interesting as having the representation of a boat below the pedestal of the Devi. Tara the primordial deity of Buddhist pantheon is also worshipped to ward off the perils of sea voyage. In those days travel on sea was full of perils. The sailors and sea-faring merchants of Ganjam while setting sails on the ocean worshipped deities like Ramachandi, Durga and Tara for protection and prosperity.

The cultural intercourse that Orissa maintained with other countries helped the spread of Buddhism in the distant lands. The monks and missionaries sailed from different ports on their way to those countries. A number of Buddhist centers were developed in the coastal region for the cause of the spread of religion. Buddhist monuments come to notice in Ganjam port and places around it.

Ramnagar Street,
At/Po- Aska, Dist.- Ganjam



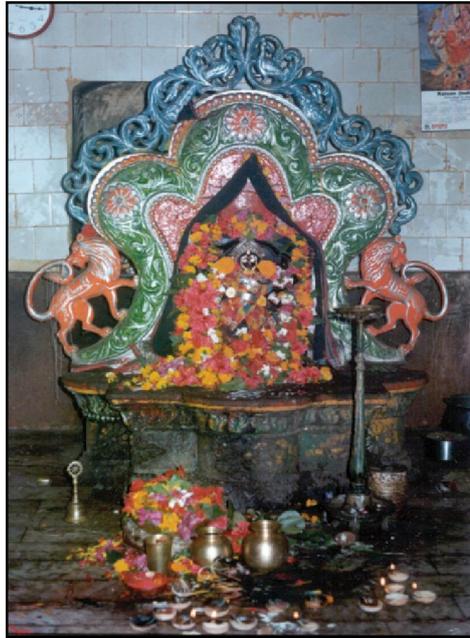
Tara Pitha of Bhusandapur

Prof. Sanjaya Kumar Mahapatra

The meaning of the word pitha is "Asana" or 'Seat' (Sabda Kalpadrumah). The different pithas in India are supposed to be the dwelling places of the Devi (the Mother Goddess): that is why they are also called "Devisthanas". To a Sakta devotee the word pitha further bears a special significance. It includes such places, where it is believed, the different parts of Sati's person fell after Visnu cut it into pieces. Therefore all the pithas are the Devisthanas, but all the Devisthanas are not necessarily the pithas.

In this connection it may be noted that the places which are associated with the Mother-Goddess yet without holding Devi's physical parts are known as 'Upapithas'. Some 'Devisthanas' on the other hand are called 'Siddhapithas' in as much as there lived at least one Sadhaka who attained realization or Siddhi at the place. Tara pitha of Bhusandapur (Orissa) for example is one such siddhapitha associated with the Buddhist Tantric cult of Orissa.

Bhusandapur is one of the prominent Sakta pithas of Orissa. It is situated at about 50 kms towards the south of Bhubaneswar (on S.E. Railway). However, the abode of Tara is about 2 kms from the railway station and 5 kms from the National Highway No.5. The temple is located amidst the calm, serene and beautiful atmosphere of nature. The image of Goddess Tara is enshrined in a Sikhara type temple at the bottom of the hills where the Chilika lake is partly visible.



The temple complex of a Rekha Deula, a pyramidal porch, a flat-roofed rectangular mandapa. The present structure was erected in the 2nd half of the 20th century. In front of the mandapa are installed two big size lions in aggressive posture. The interior wall of the pyramidal porch is decorated

with Dasa Mahavidya figurines enshrined in small niches. A Ganesha image is placed in the right side of the entrance gate. The image of Tara which is about 3 ft. in height is installed on a masonry pedestal housed in the garbhagriha of the Vimana.



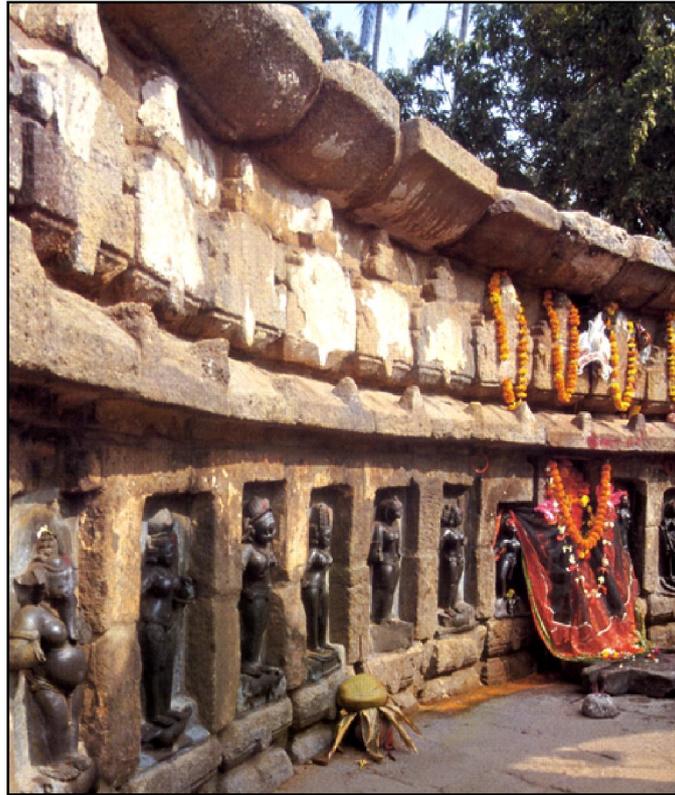
The image of the deity which conforms to the description of the Nila Tantra is as follows:

She is in the midst of four blazing funeral pyres; She is standing on Siva; the right foot upon his chest and the left upon his thigh. Her face is like a lotus with smile. She has three eyes and four arms. She is carrying a skull, and a lotus in left hands, a sword and katari in right hands. She wears a mundamala. She is short with a big belly and lolling tongue. She wears around her lines the tiger skin. Her eyes are blazing like the morning sun. She is also called Sarabha (the spouse of Siva). Her eye brows are knit in anger. In her hair she has Akshbohaya and a snake entwined and also decorated with crescent moon. The Tantra says that she gathers all the ignorance

of the triple world in her bowl made of human skull and then destroys it in a sweep.

Out of the number of festivals held at Tara pitha of Bhusandapur, the Durga Puja in the month of Aswina and Raja Yatra in the month of Jyestha are famous. Tara pitha of Bhusandapur thus plays a vital role in the religious life of the people of Orissa as it is one of the prominent Sakta pithas of Orissa. With a little improvement this place can be converted into a good tourist-cum-temple center.

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Chousathi Yogini, Hirapur



Kandhen Budhi

Dr. Chitrasen Pasayat

Kandhen Budhi Yatra is a popular festival celebrated in Kantamal of Boudh district in the state of Orissa in honour of the deity named Kandhen Budhi. Kandhen Budhi means 'an old woman belonging to Kandha community'. On the official record, Kandha is recognized as a major tribal group in Orissa. Kandhen Budhi is a tribal deity widely worshipped by the Kandha people. She is believed to be the *Ista-Devi* or presiding deity of Kandha people. She is represented in the natural form of stone under the tree or on the side of the serpentine road of the village or on the bank of the river and pond. The main attraction of Kandhen Budhi Yatra in Kantamal is Ghusuri-Puja.

In many parts of this area, Kandha people live in physical and social isolation. The reasons are geographical, historical and cultural. Even today, it is difficult to reach them. Many of them still manage to survive in primitive economy. The ritual performance of

Kandhen Budhi Jatra appears to be a symbolic system that ties the community of Kandhas to each other and with the rest of the village. This Jatra renews social contacts and bonds among Kandha people of this area. To understand this Jatra, it is imperative to know the geographical and cultural milieu of the Kandhas who practice this ritual performance.

Etymologically, *Yatra* refers to travelling. The annual festival of Kandhen Budhi in Kantamal is known as *Yatra* because, Kandhen Budhi travels or moves from door to door of the village, meets her subjects, listens their grievances, opines remedial measures on this occasion. Villagers offer rituals to her. On many occasions, she ascends through human beings known as *Barua*. Though the *Barua* is generally a male being, he is addressed as *Maa*. In fact, the common people address the mother deity as *Maa*, who is in the body of the male *Barua*. The deity speaks to the



*Kandhenbudhi Pitha at Lather village
(Mohangiri G.P.), Dist. Kalahandi*



people through the *Barua*. Usually, the female members are prohibited from visiting the place of worship of the deity i.e. *Devi Pitha* in the village. So, this yearly *Yatra* provides an opportunity particularly to the female members of the village to worship the village deity.

Kantamal is a big village situated on the bank of the river Tel. Sonepur district is situated on the other side of the river. In other words, Tel is the natural boundary, which divides Boudh and Sonepur districts. Kandhen Budhi is the reigning deity of this village. She is placed under a tree in the form of a stone. The spot is green and well wooded with fine old mango and other trees and forms a pleasing sight. It is, however, always liable to be flooded by the Tel River in the height of the rainy season. She is also established in the courtyard of the *Gauntia* (village head-man) in the name of *Paruan Khunt*. Every year, this *Yatra* is performed on *Pousa Purnima Tithi* i.e. full moon day in the Hindu month of *Pousa* (December-January).

This *Yatra* begins at the residence of *Gauntia*. The deity appears in the human body called *Barua*, who is well decorated with *Sindur* (vermilion), Mandara flowers and Dahana. *Barua* may also be called a non-Brahmin priest, who carries the deity on his body. The role of *Barua* is normally performed by a male member. The deity i.e. the *Barua* starts dancing to the tune of Dhol, Muhuri, Nishan and Changur. The village priest known as *Jhankar* offers puja to the deity with *Sindur*, *Dhupa*, *Nadia* (coconut) and *Arua Chaul* (sun-dried rice). *Jhankar* is the conventional non-Brahmin priest of the village. Previously, he was enjoying rent-free land in the village in order to perform his ritual duties.

After that, the deity travels around the village and proceeds in the evening to her seat (*Pitha*) situated on the river bank as mentioned

earlier. There the deity is placed under a *Buro* tree (*Zizyphus jujube*) in the form of a stone. The deity moves with a captivating procession of dancing and singing. On the river bank, people offer her ritual of animal sacrifice at his *Pitha*. A good number of *Kukuda*, *Bataka*, *Mendha*, *Para*, *Boda* (he-goat), *Anda* (egg) are offered to Kandhen Budhi. *Jhankar* worship the deity with local made liquor. The meat of the animals and birds sacrificed on this occasion is considered as *Prasad*, which is shared by all. The whole night is celebrated. Everyone present and participate in this festival enjoys dancing, singing, drinking and eating.

Kandhen Budhi *Yatra* is an agricultural festival. This is celebrated by the *Gauntia* of the village with a hope of abundance crop and good rain in the year; the *Gauntia* performs this annual *Puja* to keep the village free from diseases, misfortunes and tragedies. This indicates that the festival is observed with social and collective interest. If the village passes through natural calamities frequently then the *Gauntia* makes arrangement for a special *Yatra* of Kandhen Budhi. This special *Yatra* is organized on *Baisakh Purnima* i.e. on the full moon day of *Baisakh* (April-May). This is called *Ghusuri Puja Yatra*. A small child pig (*Ghusuri*) is arranged for sacrifice during this special ritual. Oil and *Haldi* are applied properly on the body of the child pig. Then he is bathed. He is decorated with *Sindur* and *Mandar* flowers. A small piece is cut off from his ears and tail with a sharp knife. But he is not sacrificed that year.

After three years, the pig is ritually offered to the deity. However, on that day he is taken round the village. Villagers perform the ritual of *Bandapana* to the pig with *Haldi* and vermilion. They apply oil and *Sindur* on his body. It means that the pig meant for sacrifice is introduced to



the villagers so that villagers will not harm him. Since then the pig is left scot-free in the village. He is regarded as the *Pratika* (symbol) of Kandhen Budhi. Even people call him Kandhen Budhi. Even if the pig harms anybody, it is not taken seriously rather people ask him what fault they have committed. Villagers feed the pig properly. *Jhankar* takes precautionary measures through *Mantra* for the protection of the pig from evil influences of black magic by others. Thus, the pig is protected from all respects for three years.

After three years, before the special *Puja*, the *Gauntia* of the village invites the villagers. They sit together and discuss how to arrange and celebrate the special *Puja*. Relatives and friends are invited from outside as usual to attend the special *Puja*. In addition, other deities of the village namely Chhidki-Mundi, Mauli, Bauti, Grampati and Panthei are invited on this occasion. These deities are traditionally tribal deities of Kandha people. If the monthly period of *Jhankar's* wife coincides with the special *Puja*, then other *Jhankar* is assigned the ritual duty. Thus, ritual purity is maintained. Everybody sends the ritual items called *Akta-Patri* to the house of the *Gauntia*.

In the morning of Ghusuri Puja, *Jhankar* prepares himself ritually pure, takes bath, wears new clothes, cleanse the place of worship. Various Puja items like *Biri*, *Kandul*, *Mandia*, *Mahu* (honey), *Mada* (liquor), *Mandar* flowers, *Sindur*, *Dahana*, *Dipa* (lamp), *Arua Chaul*, *Haldi* (turmeric powder) etc. are arranged. On the previous day, the invited Kandha, Deheri, *Jhankar* and other guests arrive in the village with their traditional musical instruments and weapons. On the day of *Puja*, the pig is brought, treated with oil and *Haldi* and bathed. Then the pig is decorated with the *Mandara* flowers and *Sindur*.

They the Ghusuri and visit round the village with dancing and singing from door to door. Every household performs the *niti* of *Bandapana* to Ghusuri. The female members of the household also remain in *Kastha* (ritual purity) and perform Puja to Ghusuri with oil, *Haldi*, *Sindur* and *Arua Chaul*. People take liquor, sing traditional songs and dance on the village streets carelessly during procession.

Then the Ghusuri is taken to the place of worship. The final ritual is sacrifice of Ghusuri. Before sacrifice, the Ghusuri is given *Charu-Anna* for eating. If the Ghusuri eats the *Charu-Anna* gladly and with pleasure then it is believed to be a good sign for the village and villagers. The village is believed to be free from natural calamities and other tragedies. But if the Ghusuri does not take *Charu-Anna* willingly, then it is considered that the deity is not eager and keen to accept *Bali* or sacrifice. It indicates that adversities and misfortunes are looming around the village. Obviously, it frightens and upset the villagers.

They call and request the deity to forgive them for their mistakes if any committed unknowingly. Subsequently, the Ghusuri is sacrificed and offered to the deity. Above and beyond, other animals and birds are also sacrificed. Other invited deities on this occasion are also treated appropriately. The meat of *Bali* Ghusuri is regarded as *Prasad* and distributed to one and all. Some celebrate it as feast. Those who do not eat meat, they take it to their house and cover under earth in their courtyards. By doing so, it is believed that no disaster can trouble their households; no calamity can bother them. Thus, the Ghusuri Puja is completed.

Sacrifice is as old as humankind. The essence and real meaning of sacrifice appears from the etymology of the word itself; Latin '*sacer-facere*', meaning 'to make sacred'. Through



sacrifice, the sacrificing community believes that it is made sacred by the purging of sins and renewed relation with the Divine. What is sacrificed loses itself by being poured out, burnt or slain. The loss of the sacrificed victim is somehow seen as bringing gain to the community and sacrificers.

After the Ghusuri Puja, the guests, visitors and relatives return to their respective villages and houses, because, for the following seven days the villagers of Kantamal observe mourning as per the tradition. No pious and religious work is done. No one uses oil and ghee in cooking. The house is not cleansed and washed. Hair cutting is forbidden, nail cutting is not allowed and cloth washing is prohibited. No one goes out of the village during this week-long period of mourning. People from other villages are also not permitted to enter into the village. In other words, people from the village do not go out of their village. In fact, people of Kantamal and its neighbouring villages are well aware of this practice. In case of any violation or deviation, people believe that misfortunes will arrive in the village. Though time has changed and some relaxations are observed still the villagers try to follow this ritual practice strictly.

The faith on the deity is the base of this *Yatra*. Though Ghusuri is worshipped or offered *Puja*, in reality this Ghusuri is sacrificed in honour of the deity. This tradition appears to be the transformed version of *Meriah* sacrifice or human sacrifice prevalent among Kandhas of Boudh-Kondhmal Agency during British period. It may be said that, once upon a time human sacrifice was prevalent during the Special Puja of Kandhen Budhi Yatra in this Kandha dominated Kantamal village.

As per the *Meriah* custom, the Kandhas never sacrificed a Kandha. They used to kidnap

a non-Kandha boy from the plains. The boy lived in the Kandha village as a very respected and honoured guest. He used to get plenty of wine and whatever food he wanted. Moreover, he used to have the company of any Kandha girl he wanted. Obviously, he did not try to run away. On the day of the sacrifice he was completely drunk. He was so intoxicated that he was totally anaesthetized. Portions of his body could be cut away without feeling any pain. Subsequently, instead of the *Meriah*, as the sacrificial boy was called, they started sacrificing a Ghusuri which they purchase from outside. This Ghusuri is treated as *Meriah*.

Thus, time has changed. In due course of time, severe form of blood sacrifice called *Meriah Bali* i.e. human sacrifice has been stopped and Ghusuri sacrifice has been substituted. It may be said that this transformation has come during the British Raj when the practice of *Meriah* sacrifice was ruthlessly suppressed and curbed by John Campbell during December 1837 and January 1842. In order to expedite the suppression of human sacrifice, the Governor General in Council also decided to establish a cohesive agency including all Kandha areas under an agent directly responsible to the Central Government. It was known as Meriah Agency, which was established in July 1845. Captain S. C. Macpherson was the first Agent for the Meriah Agency, who took over the charges in December 1845 (1).

Today, Kantamal is no more a backward village. To some extent, it is transformed into a small town. One finds Block Office, Tahasil Office, Court Building, Sub-Registrar Office, Sub-Treasury Office, Section Offices of R&B, PHD, RD and other Government offices in Kantamal. There are also a number of educational institutions like schools and college. Kantamal is well connected with Boudh and Sonepur towns



by road. The other side of the river Tel is Sargaj, a village and Gram Panchayat under Tarva Block of Sonapur district. Tarva is just 11 kilometers from Kantamal by this road. On the way one has to cross the river Tel by ferry-boat. If a bridge is constructed here then the distance between Kantamal and Bolangir will be reduced to about 60 kilometers. The village *Gauntia* is very much active in politics of the area. Earlier, his father was a Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) of Orissa. In such changed circumstances, people are surprised to see the prevalence of this tradition and superstitions. Many people raise questions as well. It is interesting how the elite of the society ridicule and demonize this tradition and value system, because it falls outside their acceptance parameters.

Though this is mainly a tribal festival of Kandha people, other villagers irrespective of their caste and creed participate in this annual *Yatra* of Kandhen Budhi. So, this is regarded as the Tihar *Yatra* of the village. It is believed that this *Yatra* is to appease Kandhen Budhi, who takes care of the village and think about its inhabitants. All the happenings throughout the year in the village are considered to be her wish and desire. On this occasion, the *Jhankar* performs the ritual of purity strictly. He wears new clothes and offers *Puja* with devotion. If this annual *Yatra* coincides with the monthly or period of menstruation of *Jhankar's* wife, then he is not eligible to perform *Puja* that year. In that case, other *Jhankar* of the village is called to perform the *Puja*.

Taking me on a walk around the Kantamal village during my first visit in 1989, some people of the village wondered why I should know about this *Yatra*. Though forget their names, I am thankful to them for their cooperation in my research work in Kantamal village. Then one old woman told me, "Previously, we lived in

somewhat different conditions. It was a nice place. With the deep jungles around, we never faced the threat of poverty. There were no many health issues either". Certainly, time has changed. She was correct.

Note:

1. Superstitious beliefs are still prevalent. One 10-year-old girl was beheaded by her grandfather in the village Adhaphar, about 48 kilometers from Sambalpur. After that, he took a steel pot and collected the blood coming out of the headless torso. Villagers termed this ghastly incident as human sacrifice (*The Times of India*, Bhubaneswar, dated 28-04-2009). It is really a matter of great surprise that, in this age of computers superstition still reigns supreme in some hinterlands of the State. In this shocking incident reminiscent of pre-historic times, a tribal man decapitated his grand daughter to propitiate mother earth for a bumper crop in the village Adhaphar under Kulundi Gram Panchayat in Jamankira Block in Sambalpur district. The incident happened in the afternoon of 26.04.2009, a day before *Akshaya Trutiya* considered as an auspicious day for sowing seeds. It is said that the man committed the act to appease the mother earth hoping for a bumper crop. Reports said that he had planned to mix the blood with seeds so that he can sow them on *Akshaya Trutiya* (*The New Indian Express*, April 28, 2009, P.5). In another incident, over 200 residents, mostly tribal people of Siadimal village under Nilagiri Police Station in Balasore district, have abandoned their village since last couple of days in search of a "tantrik" (*The New Indian Express*, 28-04-2009, p.5).

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Concept of Yogini - A Study

Dr. Sarbeswar Satpathy

The Sakti concept developed from 7th Century A.D. in India after its first mention in the *Markandeya Purana*. Here in *Kavacastotram* we find description of nine Durgas, eight Matrukas and several Yoginis.¹ These are called Khadgadhari, Varuni, Kauveri, Suladharini, Jaya, Vijaya, Ajita, Aparajita, Dyotini, Maladhari, Yasasvini, Trinetra, Yamaghanta, Sankhini, Dvaravasini, Carcika, Citraghanta, Kamaksi, Dhanurdhari, N a l a k u b e r i , Vajradharini, Dandini, Sulesvari, Nalesvari, Kamini, Guhesvari, Karali, Urdhvakesini, Kalaratri, Mukutesvari, Padmavati, Cudamani, J v a l a m u k h i , Dharmacarini, Chatresvari, Ksemankari, Jayanti and Papanasini etc. Even there are yoginis moving on earth, those moving in the sky, those born in water, those directed and induced by others, those born in one's family, like Mala, Sakini, Dakini and other forces.²



Chausathi Yogini, Ranipur Jharial, Dist.- Bolangir

called ? According to T.V. Kapali Sastry prayer to an indefinite something, to an impersonal divinity can only evoke impersonal or indefinite response. If a response is sought to be evoked for a particular need, the prayer could be fruitful when it is addressed to a channelised centre of the

Divinity, the personal form which is active for the purpose in question, and that is precisely what the Devata in its higher sense is in the Tantra.³ Now the Yoginis appearing first in Buddhist Tantras and subsequently in v a r i o u s iconographies are based on the aforesaid concept.

Further it may be pointed out that when Indian Philosophy believes in one ultimate reality, "Brahman", how such peculiar concept of Yoginis arose in the socio-religious arena. It is quite likely that Sakti concept was in rudimentary forms in Buddhist religion which was evolved in greater details in the later Buddhism like Mahayana and Vajrayana concepts. Amitabha, Avalokitesvar,

What is the basis of such type of subordinate deities or whatever these may be



Aksobha deities of Buddhism have had their Saktis and that precisely arose because of Buddhist Samghas comprising both male and female mendicants. The one does not negate the many. The one God does not overrule the other gods in their respective fields of operation. He is the soul, they are his limbs (*Sa atma angani anya Devatah*). And each limb has a specific function to perform. There is a gradation and a hierarchy of delegated functions of Isvara and the gods deriving their authority from the supreme Godhead and posted in various planes on the rising tier of consciousness, i.e., *Citsakti*.

According to *Lalitasahasranama*, Devi, the Prime Sakti is called *Kulayogini*⁴ and also named as the Deity⁵ worshipped by 64 prime Yogini herds, their being several crores. Thus Yogini is at the same time the Prime Goddess and also the subordinate godhead. This explains the concept that there are two aspects of *Sakti*, *Samavayini* and *Parigraha Sakti*. As *Samavayini Sakti* she is *Cit* and so identical with Siva Himself. *Yogini Hrudaya Tantra* supports this stand by saying that who knows the heart of Yogini i.e., Sakti except Siva Himself, the Sakti holder ? As *Parigraha Sakti* she is inert and evolving i.e. in Tantric parlance *Bindu*. Again *Bindu* as pure aspect of *Cit* is *Mahamaya* or *Mahayogini* i.e. Pure conduit of creation and as mixed or *Asuddha maya* or Yogini i.e. Inherent cause of material world the impure conduit,

It is quite possible that Yogini must be a concept quite akin to its function i.e. Yoga. Samvit or *Cit* which is self-luminous is the root of all experience though one and undivided. Objective knowledge is divided into seer, what is seen and the function seeing and as *Kulayogini*.⁶ Devi connects the knower, knowledge and what is known and who is also the measurer, measure and what is measured. As *Mahayagakrama*,⁷

Devi is described as one who is offered oblations with 64 Yoginis, or who is the subject of an occult meditation in the prescribed manner performed by Siva-yogis. In other words Yoginis are tutelary deities who are evoked for certain *abhicara* purposes to acquire occult power.

This Yogic connection of Yoginis is more evident in the descriptions of *Cakras* and its presiding deities beginning from *Muladhara* to *Sahasrara* in the yogis plexuses of human body.⁸ The Yogini called *Sakini* is situated in the *Muladhara Cakra* (the lower most plexus just below the spinal column close to anus) having four petals exposing four syllables from 'va' to 'sa' with *Bindu*. She is having five faces, an elephant hook, a lotus a book with *Jnanamudra* in her four hands. She is attended upon by *Varada*, *Sri Sarada* and *Saraswati*. The *Yogini Kakini* abides in *Svadhithana* above *Muladhara* lotus and below the navel quite in opposite direction of *Bajra* or *Yoni*⁹ of the body upon spinal column with six letters 'ba' to 'la' with *Bindu* in each petal. She is of four faces. Her weapons are a trident, a nose, a skull and an elephant-hook. She is yellow in colour and is surrounded by *Saktis* like *Bandhini*, *Bhadrakali*, *Mahamaya*, *Yasasvini*, *Raka* and *Lambosthi*. The *Yogini Lakini* resides in *Manipura Cakra* at the navel having ten petals. She has got three faces. Her weapons are specified as *Bajra*, *Sakti* and *Danda* in three hands and the *Abhaya mudra* in the forth. She called *Rudhirasamsthita* presiding over blood element of human body. She is surrounded by *Kalaratri*, *Khandita*, *Gayatri*, *Ghantakarsini*, *Nagna*, *Canda*, *Chaya*, *Jaya*, *Jhankarini*, *Jnanarupa*, *Tankahasta*, and *Thankarini* on the twelve petals of the heart-lotus. The *Yogini* residing in *Visuddhi Cakra* is called *Dakini*. She is the presiding deity of throat region of the body. This *Cakra* is having sixteen petals exposing sixteen vowels with *Bindu*. She holds and uses her



weapons specified as the club or a rod with a skulltop, sword, trident and shield respectively in each hand. She is having only one face. She is surrounded by deities of great power like Amrita, Akarsini, Indrani, Isani, Uma, Urdhvakesi, Rudra Rukara, Lukara, Likara, Ekapada, Aisvaryatmika, Omkara, Ausadhi, Ambika and Aksara. Her description in the *Lalitsahasranama*¹⁰ is really very interesting in ascertaining the *Tattva* of Yogini.

*Grivakupe Visuddhau nrupadala Kamale
Svetaraktan trinetrām
Hastai Khatvāngakhadgān trisikhampapī
Mahacama sandharayantim
Vaktrenaikena yuktam Pasujanabhayadam
Dakinim biravandyam*

The Yogini called Hakini resides in the *Ajñacakra* which has petals exposing two syllables 'Ha' and 'Ksa' in it. She is spotless white in complexion having six faces. She is attended by Saktis called Hamsavati and Ksamavati. This Hakini is the up bringer of all peace and pleasure. She is having three eyes. This otherwise means that by contemplation of it in *Ajñacakra*, Sadhaka becomes happy and contented and his third eye i.e. the eye of knowledge *Samvit* is unfolded.

Lastly the Yogini called Yakini abides in the *Sahasrara Cakra* having one thousand petals. She shines with all colours as a variegated deity and surrounded by fifty alphabets, *varnamala* arranged in alphabetical order and in its reverse order. She is having all kinds of weapons. This is otherwise known as 'Siva's abode, *Kundalini* in *Muladhara* plexus below the spinal column rises

by *Tantra Sadhana* and reaches Siva in *Sahasrara* which otherwise means that the power and power holders in polarized form comes nearer, joins with each other and is ignited thereby bringing immense power to a Sadhaka. So the Yoginis are the intermediary deities confronted by a Sadhaka in his journey to attain divinity. In Yogic terms these are temporal powers or Sakti that Sadhaka is endowed with, by which he should not be swayed away and continue his *Sadhana* for attainment of perfectness or *Vibhutva*. In the light of this the 64 Yogini idols available in Hirapur and Ranipur-Jharia in Orissa are required to be studied.

Foot Notes :

1. Shankaranarayanan, S. - *Glory of the Divine Mother*, pp.96-85.
2. *Ibid*, p.95, Verse-45.
3. Kapali Sastry, T.V. - *Further Lights : The Veda and the Tantra*, p.311.
4. *Lalitasahasranama*, V.56.
5. *Ibid*, V.58.
6. *Lalitasahasranama*, P.60.
7. *Ibid*, p.88.
8. *Satcakranirupana*.
9. Male and female organs respectively.
10. *Lalitasahasranama*, Verses 475-483.

Courtesy : Orissa Review, October, 1994.



The Bhairavi of Mantridi

Y.S. Murty

Orissa is famous for its Sakti cult. *Kalika Purana*, a treatise on Saktism, mentions Odra (Orissa) as of foremost importance amongst the major four 'Saktipithas', the other three being 'Jala Sailakam', (now Jullundur in Punjab), "Purnapitha" or "Srimukhalingam" in Andhra Pradesh, and Kamarup of Assam. Thus "Sakti" or "Durga" in its varied forms is the most worshipped deity at the various pithas and temples of Orissa, famous among which are the "Chandi" of Cuttack, the "Viraja" of Jajpur, "Bimala" of Puri, "Samaleswari" of Sambalpur, "Narayani", "Taratarini" and the "Siddha Bhairavi", of Ganjam. Legend says that when Goddess "Sati" Devi went uninvited to her father's place to witness the great "Dakshayagna", she got insulted so much so that she could not bear it and got herself burnt in the sacrificial fire. Enraged at her beloved's self sacrifice, Lord Siva in his "Roudrakara" went on with the destructive dance "Pralayatandava", with body of the Sati in his hands. Fearing the total annihilation of the

"Srusti", the "Devatas" ran to Lord Vishnu to stop "Rudra". Lord Vishnu used his "Sudarsan Chakra" and cut the body of the Sati into several pieces which were strewn all over. Some of those places where these pieces fell, developed in later times as Pithas or centres of worship of Devi Durga.



Bhairavi Temple, Mantridi

Mantridi, located at a distance of 5 kms from Golantra on the National Highway No.5, and 15 kms from Berhampur is the abode of the Siddhi Bhairavi. It is said that the deity bestows "Siddhi" to its "Bhaktas" - hence the name. Located at a calm, quiet, and serene place, a sort

of awe comes into the body when one enters the main-gate of the temple complex, which is spread over about 20 acres. The frontage of this place has a beautiful garden with coconut, Ketaki and Champa trees. A walk of about 250 feet leads to the main entrance of the temple. Here is the first modern arch type gate with the Durga in its "Mahishasura Mardini" style. This is perhaps a later addition by the temple committee. Further going, we enter into the sanctum sanctorum about



3 to 4 feet down the surface level, and the deity is embedded there. The idol is carved from a single granite, "Pashanarupa" stone. It has a clear plough injury mark. It is in the standing form facing the west with one foot and four hands. That is why this is called "Ekapada Bhairavi". There is "Ganga" in the heart from which water sprinkles all along, and will never dry up. The Bhairavi is holding the Trident and the Sword in her two upper left and right hands. The lower left hand is placed on the navel and the lower right hand is pointing the ground. Thus the devi is in her "Roudra" mood. This awe inspiring idol and the presence of a burial-ground nearby is suggestive that this "Pitha" is more of Tantrism than Saktism.

The exact origin of the deity is obscure. But legend as narrated by the oldest archaka, Hari Rana, says that more than 200 years ago, the place was a forest of the village Hurudungo. When the ancestors of the Reddy family wanted to reclaim the land and began ploughing, the plough was stuck up. To find out the reason, they dug the place and found the present idol, with a mark of injury from the plough. They then installed the idol in the present place, and later a temple was built.

The Bhairavi takes precedence over other Saktipithas, it is said, as Parasuram who did his meditation on the Mehendragiri hill was worshipping Bhairavi. This probability is perhaps

due to the nearness of the two places. If this is correct the age of the deity must be put to many hundreds of years before what was told by the Archaka. But no attempt to determine the age either by the stylistic method or historic method appears to have been done. This is because the place did attract any archeologists or historians due to the absence of any other original idols in the surrounding. This is also a deviation from the other pithas, where there are many parsvadevatas besides the main deity.

During "Dasara" the "Bhairavi" goes in a procession from the temple to the basti of Mantridi and stays there for nine days, receiving "Bhog" (daily rituals). Thousand of pilgrims throng during these days, though the daily average attendance during normal days is about 20 to 30 only. On every "Masanta Sankranti" day, however the visitors number about 500 to 1,000. On the last Tuesday of "Chaitra" a "Jatra" is held when thousands of visitors visit the temple. The people of Mantridi come in a procession with the beating of the drums and sounds of "sankhas" (conches), and offer "pona" (sweet drink) to the deity said to be left there by her. The people firmly believe that only after this ritual, there will be the first rains.

Courtesy : Orissa Review, October, 1991



The Cult of Saktism in Orissa

Er. Raghunath Patra

The ancient scriptures of Buddhist texts *Hevajratantra* and *Sadhanamala* of Vajrayan speak of four centres of Saktism : Uddiyan, Kamrup, Purnagiri and Jalandhar where Vimala, Kamakshya, Purneswari and Jwalamukhi are worshipped respectively. 'Udra', the centre of Saktism described in *Kalika Purana* is no other than 'Uddiyan' of Buddhist text *Sadhanamala*. The presiding deity of the centre is Katyayani. The author of the Buddhist iconography suggests that Uddiyan is the same as 'Odra or Udra' and the presiding deity of Uddiyan is Katyayani. So is the opinion of Dr. R.L. Mitra, who says, 'Orissa comes from the word 'Odra' ... Orissa was well-known to the Indian Aryans from a very early period...' The epics like *Mahabharata*, *Brahmanda Purana* and *Manu Samhita* reveal Orissa as a centre of Saktism.

It is learnt from Buddhist texts that the original base of Saktism is Orissa and it spread all over India and beyond, in course of time. This has been brought to limelight by Mr. Malley and

Mansfield, the authors of *Orissa Gazetteers, 1929* : "It is noticeable that Tapussa and Bhallika, the first-day disciples of Buddha are said to have been merchants from Utkala who were travelling

to Madhya desha with five hundred cartmen when they met Buddha at Buddha Gaya." The Buddhist prophets Saraba Buddha, Luipa and Kukuripada had propagated *Kapala Tantra*, *Saputa Tilaka* and *Mahamaya Tantra* respectively. Kambalapada and Padma Bajra propagated Bajra tantra from Uddiyan pitha, Orissa.

By the 7th century A.D., Orissa or Uddiyan or Udra rose to prominence as one of the greatest centres of

Saktism. In 747 A.D., Padma Sambhab of Uddiyan had been to Tibet to teach tantricism and black magic. In the middle of the eighth century, Indrabhuti, the then king of Sambala (Sambalpur) brought about drastic reform to Tantrayan in giving a new shape entitled 'Bajrayana'. Lakshminikara, the sister of Indrabhati and queen of Lanka transformed Bajrayana to Sahajayana during later days. During the later part of the eleventh century,





the celebrated tantric women Nitei Dhobani and Pitei Sauruni were there in Sapta Matrika pitha of Puri at Markandeswar Sahi. They were worshippers of Sapta Matrika and venerating Lord Jagannath and Goddess Vimala as Vairaba and Vairabi respectively.

Some important scriptures available in Tibet reveal that Indrabhuti was the king of Uddiyan and in the preliminary prayer of '*Jnana Sidhi*', he had the vision of Lord Jagannath as Buddhist lord. Padma Sambhab, the adopted son of Indrabhuti, with the help of his wife Mandaraba, had achieved accomplishment in *Sahaja-Yoga*. Some of the antique scriptures of Nepal suggest that few centuries later, Lord Buddha incarnated himself as Padma Sambhab in Uddiyan. In the second century, Ptolemy, the geographer, stated that Sambal is situated in the basin of the river Manad. Sambal is no other than the present Sambalpur and Manad, the river Mahanadi. On the basis of the old copper-plates and archaeological remains, it is argued that Lanka was no other than the present Sonepur of Orissa.

It may easily be shown that Uddiyan or Orissa is the mother - centre of Saktism where Bhairaba is Lord Jagannath and Bhairabi, Vimala. There is sufficient mention in support of this in *Kalika Purana* and *Devi Bhagavata*. Vimala is one of the names of goddess Durga in *Devi Bhagavat* and *Biswa Saratantra*.

During marriage - ritual of Rukmini with Lord Krishna in Jagannath temple, Goddess Rukmini goes to the temple of Vimala for worship to get Lord Krishna as her husband. There Vimala is prayed as Katyayani by Rukmini.

Hence Uddiyan or Orissa is the mother centre of Saktism and Vimala (Katyayani) is the deity of Uddiyan pitha, encircled by Mother goddesses, namely, Viraja at Jajpur, Sarala at Jhankad, Mangala at Kakatpur, Bhagavati at

Banpur, Harachandi at Puri, Ramachandi at Konark, Charchika at Banki, Bag Devi at Kulad, Stambeswari at Aska and Sonepur, Hingula at Talcher, Narayani at Khalikote, Tara Tareni in Ganjam, Bhattarika at Badamba, Barunei at Khurda, Chandi at Cuttack, Sapta Matrika at Puri, Jajpur, Belakhandi, Titilagarh, Khiching, Dharmasala, Kundeswar and Seragarh and 64 - Yoginis at Hirapur and Ranipur - Jhariyal and Samaleswari at Sambalpur and many others.

There is a nice legend in connection with the inception of *Sakta - pithas* all over the country and beyond. Dakshyaprajapati, the father of goddess Sati, did not invite his son-in-law Lord Siva to his sacrificial rites. Sati went to the function uninvited against the will of Lord Siva. Dakshyaprajapati passed filthy comments on Lord Siva in presence of all divinities. Sati could not tolerate censure of her husband and threw herself to the sacred fires and committed suicide. Lord Shankar, with pangs of separation, moved her and there, carrying the dead body of his beloved wife on his shoulder. For the welfare of the world, Lord Visnu directed his missile (Sudarshan Chakra) to cut the dead body of Sati into pieces without the knowledge of Shankar. Innumerable *Sakta-pithas* were erected from every fragment of the body of Sati which fell to the ground. It is said that the dead body was cut into pieces. According to *Devi Bhagvat*, 108 centres of Saktism were erected out of 108 fragments. From the navel-chord was the Viraja - pitha of Jajpur and from the tongue of goddess Sati, Vimala - pitha at Puri, as mentioned in *Uddisa tantra*.

THE SHRINES

Vimala :

The temple of Vimala is situated in the South-West corner of the court-yard of Lord Jagannath temple at Puri. Mother goddess is in a



standing posture with four arms, holding garland of beads, noose, pitcher of nectar and in Japamudra. She is worshipped in Bhubaneswari mantra except on 7th, 8th and 9th bright days of the month of *Aswina* when non-vegetarian food is offered to Her.

Vimala is described as Supreme Vaishnavi goddess who takes *Kaibalya* or *Mahaprasad* of Lord Jagannath as her only food unlike other goddesses in Jagannath temple. She goes to bed only after Lord Jagannath retires. Vimala is most closely associated with the rituals of Lord Jagannath compared to other goddesses in the temple. When goddess Lakshmi has her separate arrangement for cooking other than Mahaprasad, Vimala takes Mahaprasad throughout the year except on 7th, 8th and 9th bright days of the month of *Aswina*. During these days of Durga Puja, she is offered two goats a day on each of the three days (total six goats) as sacrifice to Her due to the influence of 'Bamachar worship' of Saktism which seems to be a later introduction. The sacrifice of goats to Mother goddess is done late in the night after Lord Jagannath goes to bed which clearly shows that the priests of Lord Jagannath do not co-operate with *Bamachar* worship of Vimala and such worship is being performed by a few Bamachar worshippers in Vimala temple. The rituals of Lord Jagannath are based on *Sudhachar* only. The domed roof of Vimala with its inner surface reveal the figures of Vaishnavism. Though Vimala, the first and foremost deity of Uddiyan (Orissa) has been described as Bhairabi and Lord Jagannath as Bhairaba, the Vaishnavites treat her as wife of Lord Balabhadra.

Out of sixteen days of Durga Puja in the month of *Aswin*, Goddess Vimala does not wear any specific attire on first and last four days. During the rest eleven days, she is adorned as

Bhubaneswari, Bana Durga, Rajarajeswari, Ugratara, Matangini, Bagala, Narayani, Simhabahini, Jaya Durga, Shuli Durga and Harachandi respectively.

From the 8th dark day to the new moon-day of *Aswin* (eight days), Durga -Madhab (Durga and Madhab or Jagannath fastened together on a wooden platform) are seated on a cot in the Jagamohan of Vimala temple and from first bright day to ninth bright day take up on a journey to Narayani temple of Dolamandap Sahi on a chariot which is known as *Sakta gundicha* or *Car Festival of Durga Madhab*.

Viraja :

Viraja - tirtha on the sacred bank of river Baitarani found its celebration during Mahabharat days and commemorates ten Horse Sacrifices (*Dasaswamedha* Yajna), conducted by Lord Brahma in Puranic age and Yayati Keshari-I, the king of 10th century A.D. It has got its early name and fame as a Sakti-pitha in the Puranas like *Visnu Purana*, *Brahma Purana*, *Kapila Samhita*, *Kubjika tantra*, *Jnanaranaba tantra* and *Brihannila tantra* etc. It is said that the goddess emerged from the sacrificial fires of the *Aswamedha* Yajna.

Viraja mostly remains clothed. She firmly holds the tail of buffalo-demon by her left hand and pierces it with a spear by the right. Image of goddess with two hands dates back to 4th or 5th century A.D. It is one of the fifty-one distinguished Sakti-shrines of India, erected from the sacred navel - chord of goddess Sati. The nine day - festival of Durga Puja is celebrated with great fanfare and on the fifth day of the function, the car festival of Viraja is celebrated by thousands of devotees from all around which is known as 'Sakta-Gundicha'. Some are of opinion that Viraja is no other than Prajna - Paramita of Buddhism.



The goddess Viraja is clustered around with three Varahas, five Nrusimhas, seven Matrikas, eight Bhairabs, nine Durgas, twelve Madhavas, twelve Ganeshas and one hundred and eight Rudras. Though the deity relates to 4th century A.D., the present sanctum is of 200 years old only. The place Jajpur and its suburbs are full of icons of Buddhism and Jainism such as Bodhisattvas, Dhyanis Buddhas and Jaina Tirthankars. Udayagiri, Ratnagiri, Lalitagiri and Alitagiri are four ancient Sakta centres in the suburbs, with Buddhist deities Tara, Heruka, Kurukula and Aparajita.

Sarala

Goddess Sarala of Jhankad, a village in Jagatsinghpur district is being worshipped by people of Orissa as Goddess of Learning and wielder of powers as Minerva in Greek myth. According to a legend, Lord Parashuram, the incarnation of Lord Visnu gained all wisdom and powers to conquer the whole world twenty one times, by lying in prostration to goddess Sarala, and so the place is also known as Parashuram Pitha.

Goddess Sarala with her eight arms fought with the demon of beastly power, ignorance and leziness, Mahishasura, holding the gaping mouth of the demon with one hand and with the other seven, she brandishes weapons and a gong-bell. The lion, the *Bahana* or Vehicle of the goddess, attacked demon from right when she pressed the creature on the back with her mighty foot. Goddess Sarala has got some resemblance with image of Durga in Baital temple dating back to 8th century A.D. Sarala blessed Adikabi Sarala Das the epic poet of Odia Mahabharat. She bestowed grace on the illiterate Sarala Das to produce Odia Mahabharata a perennial source of illumination for scholars and the lovers of art and culture.

The original sanctum that stands in ruins has given place to the present shrine which is of two hundred years old only. The festivals during Dasahara, Raja Sankranti and Pana Sankranti are of special significance which draw millions of people from all around.

Mangala

The banks of sacred river Prachi were once the sites for accomplishment of tantricism. It stretched from Kakatpur of Puri district to Phulnakhara of Cuttack district, clustered around by gods and goddesses of antiquities, ranging from 2nd century A.D. to 11th century A.D.

Goddess Mangala dates back to 9th century A.D. and the temple in which she is enshrined relates to 15th century A.D. The Divine Mother seated on *Lalitan* on a double lotus pedestal with her four arms, holding a full moon symbolising Dharma Chakra by her upper right hand, a bunch of lotus buds by left upper, a Japa mala (garland of beads) by lower right and Japa mudra in the left lower, looks graceful with her jewellery crown carved with super artistic refinement. The holy Mother has her special recognition among the devotees of Orissa because of her association with Lord Jagannath during Nabakalebar (the renovation ceremony of the body) of Lord Jagannath. It is believed that *Daitas*, the *Savara* Sevakas of Lord Jagannath, pray for her direction when they set out on a journey to locate holy log (Daru) for the icon of the Lord.

According to some scholars, Mother Mangala was originally Buddhist goddess Tara brought from Srilanka during the days of maritime relationship between Kalinga (Orissa) and Srilanka and was absorbed into Hindu pantheon later.

The name of the place Kakatpur has its origin from the name Kakati, the tutelary goddess



of the place. Some scholars believe that Mangala is no other than Kakatei. In the nearby village 'Chourasi' goddess Varahi is worshipped. She has the face of a boar, pot bellied, holding a fish in one hand and a cup in the others, and the image relates to 9th century A.D. Two armed goddess Mahisa Mardini of Someswara temple at Kakatpur seems to be contemporary of Viraja at Jajpur. Besides, four armed goddess of Motia, six armed goddess of Astaranga, eight armed goddess of Amanakuda, ten armed goddess of Lataharan, eight armed Chamunda of Angeswara temple and ten armed Chamunda of Mangala Temple at Kakatpur draw attention of scholars, archaeologists and historians.

Bhagavati :

The temple of Bhagavati is located on the river bank of Salia at Banpur of Puri district. It is about 300 years old. Goddess Bhagavati was tutelary deity of the demon - king Banasura, as the legend goes. Bhagavati was originally worshipped under a tree with the offerings of goat, buffalo and human beings. The present sanctum was constructed by one Sri Jagannath Harichandan, a king of Rathor dynasty whose royal court was adorned by the Oriya poet, Lokanath Bidyadhar, author of *Chittrakala*, *Sarbanga Sundari*, *Padmavati Parinaya* and *Niladri Mahotsab* etc. The king had allotted some landed property for the rituals of Bhagavati along with *Chhatisa Niyog - Sevakas*.

The temple is built in three parts. The front chamber is Jagamohan and the second chamber is Natamandir where the moving deity "*Vije Pratima*" remains in the form of a log of timber known as 'Kathi Thakurani'. In the third chamber 'Biman', dwells Bhagavati with eight arms. There are associate gods and goddess namely Ganesh in the South, Durga in the East and Bhubaneswari

in the North. In the courtyard of the temple, there are goddesses like Palakasuni, Virajai etc.

Goddess Bhagavati originally was of terrible nature, and as such a metal belt was kept embedded around the month. The moving form of Bhagavati 'Kathi Thakurani' joins in all the rituals except in Dasahara when Kanak Durga joins.

'Bali Jena' is one of the Sevakas of Bhagavati who enacts the role of human sacrifice falling senseless to the ground for some hours when his wife acts as widow. This signifies that in the older days, there prevailed the custom of human sacrifice to the goddess 'Bhagavati'. A good number of festivals are observed round the year namely Chandan Yatra, Savitri Amabasya, Sitala Sasti, Chitalagi Amabasya and Durga Puja etc.

Harachandi :

The temple of Harachandi is situated on a sand dune near the mouth of the lake Chilika joining with the Bay of Bengal. the Divine couple Chandra Sekhar and Harachandi are worshipped here. The deity is carved on a black granite with skilled art and refinement. To the opinion of some scholars, Goddess Harachandi seems to be contemporary of Mangala of Kakatpur and Sarala of Jhankad.

The temple of Harachandi was constructed by one Sri Rama Chandra Dev, then Gajapati king of Orissa, on the advice of a tantric Sadhak named Tratak Kapalika who attended full accomplishment by long prostration to goddess Harachandi. Now, during Durga Puja a betel - nut is offered to the goddess in commemoration of the memory of the Gajapati and Mahaprasad of Lord Jagannath is brought daily from Jagannath temple, Puri for offering to the Divine Mother. During Durga Puja a goat is offered by Gajapati for sacrifice to the goddess Harachandi.



Ramachandi :

The temple of Ramachandi is located on a sand dune near the mouths of the rivers Kushabhadra and Dhanua, four miles away on the sea-side from Konark, in an isolated place. Previously the temple was not negotiable by any road with only sands and shrubs around but now a pucca road leads to the temple from Konark and Puri. The place is famous for picnic for the natural beauties around and cool breeze of the sea.

The boat shaped roof of the entrance hall of the temple is the only shelter for the people coming over, for picnic or prostration to goddess Mother, in rain and Sun. Mahisha Mardini Durga Ramachandi sits in the temple facing North. Sri Krupasindhu Mishra, the historian has described in his book 'Konark' that originally Ramachandi was worshipped in South - West corner of the court-yard of Konark temple and later shifted to the present shrine. This has been admitted by Pandit Nilakantha Das although Adikabi Sarala Das and Balaram Das differ in their opinion. *Banaparva* of *Sarala Mahabharat* and *Aranyak Parba* of *Jagamohan Ramayan* speak of Lord Ramachandra's prostration to goddess Ramachandi before invasion of Lanka.

The deity outside the Western wall is of archeological importance. Two and half feet high, three faced and eight armed goddess stands on a chariot driven by seven horses. In four arms she carries goad, noose, bow and arrow and other four arms are broken. The skilled art of Konark temple is reflected in this deity flanked by Ganesh and Barahas.

Charchika :

The temple of goddess Charchika is situated on a mountain at Banki town of Cuttack district, by the side of the river Mahanadi and associated with Lord Parashuram who had long

meditation before goddess Charchika to get rid of the sin of matricide. So the place is known as Parashuram pitha. A river named Renuka (the name of the mother of Parashuram) was flowing by the side of the mountain in the long past. One of the kings of Dhala dynasty had constructed this temple. Though the main temple is architecturally of no attraction, its front wooden pavilion preserves Orissan antique art and architecture in wooden carving. The thickets encircling the temple have been replaced by a small town.

The presiding deity fixed to the back wall of sanctum - sanctorum has withered and a replica is kept in the central niche of the outer Southern wall of the main shrine which may be well identified with a Chamunda standing on a dead body, fully undressed, with a garland of skull around her neck. Goddess Charchika with her eight hands displays sword, trident, snake, goad, garland of beads, boon, damaru (small double faced drum) and severed head etc. Goddess Charchika does not come under goddess of Vaishnavism. She is Chamunda, for which non-vegetarian food is offered daily. From iconographic and artistic point of view, she may be placed to Bhaumakara period of Orissa.

There are Pancha Mahadev and Sri Mangala inside the temple of Charchika. *Pana Yatra*, *Jhamu Yatra*, *Durga Puja*, *Kumar Purnima*, *Basanti Puja* and *Dola Yatra* are the important festivals where thousands of people swarm about. On eighth bright night of Durga Puja, a buffalo is offered to goddess Mangala. On Kumar Purnima, Charchika is dressed up in Kumari attire.

Brahmin *Sevakas* were engaged in the worship of Goddess by the kings and landed property allotted to them to meet the expenses of the rituals, round the year.



Bag Devi

Bag Devi or Byaghra Devi is the tutelary deity of Bhanja dynasty of Southern Orissa, worshipped in Kulad fort of Ghumusar in Ganjam district. Originally she was propitiated in one of the caves of Bag Devi - mountain, spreading to the western side of the fort, on every Tuesday, until she got enshrined in a temple constructed by late Dhananjaya Bhanja, grand-father of the great poet Upendra Bhanja.

Eight armed goddess Bag Devi with bow and arrow sits on a tiger, pressing down a dead body. Ruins of the palace are visible at a distance from the temple. Goddess Bag Devi is worshipped in both the temples on the top and bottom of the hill. The temple on the mountain is known as 'Yoga Pitha' and at the bottom 'Bhoga Pitha' of goddess Bag Devi. On every Sankranti, Tuesdays of the month Chaitra and Durga Puja, the sanctum is crowded by people from all around. During Durga Puja goats are sacrificed to the Goddess. The tutelary deity of the royal family of Ghumusar became deity of the common people.

Stambeswari

Goddess Stambeswari (popularly known as Khambeswari) is the tutelary deity of Sonapur and Aska. Stambeswari of Sonapur is made of timber - post with a face of vermilion pressed with metallic eyes, nose and mouth to indicate the face of the Divine Mother. Both tribal and not-tribal people worship Stambeswari although originally she is associated with the Adivasis. The Sevakas are known as 'Dumals'.

Goddess Mother is worshipped in the form of two black wooden posts fixed to the ground, one Khamashiri and the other Paramishiri; the former being worshipped by Dumals and later by Brahmins. The black colour of the goddess forbids Dumals to wear black cloth or black

ornament. The women wear sari with red border and red glass bangles instead of black and do not put mark of vermilion on their foreheads. Dumals worship Khambeswari during the month of Aswin.

An ancient copper-plate of 5th - 6th century A.D., reveals the name of Khambeswari worshipped during the regime of Maharaja Tustikara Dev. In the copper plates relating to Sulki King 'Kulastambeswari', Goddess Mother has been described as 'Bhattarika'.

Stambeswari of Aska, one of the eight tribal goddesses named 'Khidising', was propitiated by the kings of Sului dynasty. Wooden Stambeswari of Non-Aryan (Kandha) origin was later replaced by stone Stambeswari by Aryans. Common people believe that the wooden Stambeswari was transformed to stone Stambeswari by the grace of the Divine Mother. But during Durga Puja when the doors of stone Stambeswari get closed, goats are sacrificed to a wooden deity of two feet height kept in front of stone Stambeswari. The wooden deity is perhaps no other than goddess Stambeswari originally propitiated by tribal people.

The face of stone Stambeswari of Aska is made of vermilion fixed with metallic eyes, nose and mouth. Some of the scholars bring analogy between Stambeswari of Aska and Subhadra of Jagannath temple. To them, Subhadra was originally like Stambeswari but transformed to present form during the regime of Ramachandra Dev in 16th century A.D. When goddess Subhadra is worshipped with Bhubaneswari Mantra, Stambeswari is worshipped with Bana Durga Mantra. Both the goddesses have been accepted as Vaishnavis.

Hingula

The temple of goddess Hingula is situated in a village named Gopal Prasad, near the rivulet



'Joda', 25 kms. away from the old palace of Talcher. At the entrance of the village, a pavilion has been erected on which goddess Hingula is worshipped. The pavilion is almost open in a building of 60 feet long and 25 feet wide. It was constructed during the regime of Raja Kishore Chandra Birabar Harichandan and prior to that goddess was propitiated on an earthen pavilion. The king had allotted some landed property for the rituals of the goddess. The Sevakas are known as Dehuris who claim themselves to be descendant of Nala dynasty.

The mouth of goddess Hingula is imagined to be fire and her complexion fire-red. Of all the festivals, Chaitra festival is of great significance which continues for about nine days from 14th bright day of the month of Chaitra. From first Thursday of the month, Dehuri lies in prostration to the goddess Hingula taking *Habishyanna* until he dreams of the location of Goddess. Generally goddess Hingula is seen in the shape of fire at eastern or western direction of the pavilion where she is kept preserved by Sandal wood and ghee and later by coal from all around to keep the divine fire burning upto nine days of the function. After the ninth day, the fire is extinguished with *Pana* and *Panchamrita*.

The renovation of goddess Hingula is done after the death of every king of Talcher. A log is cut out at night from a tree indicated to Dehuri in dreams and after the *Jibanyasa* given by a Brahmin, it is kept on the pavilion. The *Sevakas* join in a dinner with new clothing arranged by the king.

Narayani

The temple of Narayani is at the border of Puri and Ganjam district near Khalikote, a little distance away from the National Highway negotiated with a pucca road, on the plateau of the Vallery mountain range from which flows a

fountain, the water of which is collected in a cistern for the worship of the deity and the water that flows to the second cistern is used for the purpose of bath by the pilgrims.

The temple is of no architectural importance. Some of the scholars opine that it was originally a Buddhist pitha and later transformed to a centre of Saktism. During 17th century A.D., the king of Khalikote, Sri Balunkeswar Mardaraj, had allotted landed property for the rituals of goddess Mother. The *Sevakas* of the ten-armed goddess Narayani are known as *Devatas*. During spring and autumn the natural beauty of the place attracts many for the picnic. On *Mesha Sankranti*, *Raja Sankranti*, *Durga Puja* and Chaitra festival, thousands of devotees gather there. Goats are sacrificed to the Mother during festivals.

Tara Tarini

The temple of Tara Tarini is situated on a mountain near the bank of the river Rushikulya, 35 kms away from Berhampur town of Ganjam district. The deities are of 10" height, made of stone, one Tara by name and the other Tarini. Some believe that the heart of divine mother Sati fell at this place. Goddess Tara, the most prominent among Dasha Mahavidya is being worshipped here, they say. During festivals goats are offered to goddess.

The temple is negotiable with 999 steps flanked by big trees to give shade to the pilgrims and on the other side runs a jeepable road to the temple. Festivals are conducted during every Tuesday of the month of *Chaitra*, *Durga Puja*, *Dola Yatra*, all *Sankrantis* with thousands of people assembled from all around. A small rest-shed is there with provision of water and electricity. The beauty of nature from the top of the hill is of added charm for the visitors.



Sapta Matrika

The centres for worship of Sapta Matrikas spread over Puri, Bhubaneswar, Jajpur, Belakhandi, Titilagarh, Khiching, Dharmasala, Kundeswar and Seragarh etc. At Puri, in Markandeswar Sahi, Sapta Matrikas such as Brahmi, Maheswari, Koumari, Vaishnavi, Varahi, Indrani and Chamunda are propitiated as Sapta *Bhagini* (seven sisters). The Matrikas are flanked by the images of Birabhadra and Ganesh on either side both at Puri and Jajpur although the placing of Matrikas at Dashaswamedha ghat of Jajpur differ in order from that at Puri and includes Maheswari, Kaumari, Sivaduti, Vaishnavi, Indrani, Varahi and Chamunda.

Sapta Matrika described in *Amarakosha* are Brahmi, Vaishnavi, Aindri, Roudri, Varahi, Kouberi, Kaumari, being the Saktis of gods Brahma, Vishnu, Indra, Rudra, Varaha, Kubera and Kumara (Kartikeya). But nowhere in Orissa Kauberi is available among seven divine mothers and Kauberi is substituted by Chamunda.

Sixty Four Yoginis

Sixty four Yogini temple of Hirapur contains eighty (80) images carved out of chlorite stone, kept in niches out of which only 63 Yoginis (one Yogini is missing) are available, of which Mahamaya, the presiding deity is of ten arms whereas other 19 deities are of 4 arms and 43 deities are of two arms only. Bhairabis are in sitting posture whereas Yoginis are in standing pose. Most probably the temple was constructed by Hira Mahadevi, the queen of Bhaumekara king Santikara Deva during ninth century A.D. and the village Hirapur has been named after her.

The temple at Hirapur is of circular shape having outer circumference of 90 feet and inside diameter of 25 feet. There is a rectangular mandap (9'.6" x 8'.0") at the centre having images

of Bhairaba and few Yoginis. The outer surface contains nine images of Katyayani.

The sixty four Yogini temple at Ranipur-Jharia is of circular shape with inner diameter of 47 feet, having 64 niches for 64 Yoginis. But at present, there are only 47 images present in dancing form. At the centre is found a rectangular mandap with images of eight armed Bhairaba and Ganesh.

Samaleswari

Samaleswari popularly known as Samalei was originally worshipped by tribals. During 16th century A.D. she was propitiated by Chowhans, the rulers of the land as their tutelary deity. The temple of Samaleswari was erected by Sri Balaram Dev, the first Chowhan ruler of Sambalpur. Many temples have already been erected in Her honour at Sambalpur, Barapali and Sonepur. Sambalpur has derived her name from goddess Samaleswari or Samalei.

The image of Samalei does not resemble with any of the goddesses in Hindu iconography. It is a monolith, the middle of which is little elevated with two depressions on both sides and a groove underneath representing the mouth. Gold plates designed to the shape of eyes are pressed above the depressions to represent eyes of the mother. She looks scarbit throughout the year with vermilion except on new moon day of the month of Aswina, when she looks white with Sandal. Dasahara is the most important festival of goddess Samaleswari. Beside, Samaleswari, the Chowhans worshipped Pataneswari who resembles with the image of Kali, enshrined in a temple at Sambalpur near Samaleswari temple.

Bhattarika

The temple of Bhattarika located on the right bank of the river Mahanadi, near village Sasanga of Badamba of Cuttack district amidst



scenes of nature, is associated with Lord Parashuram, the incarnate of Lord Vishnu who got boon from goddess Mother by his deep meditation and destroyed all the kings (bhata) of the world establishing peoples' government. The goddess derived her name 'Bhattarika', the destroyer of kings there often. The other name of goddess is 'Brihadamba' (Brihat + Amba), the great Mother from which the place derived its name 'Badamba'.

The original temple which is in ruins, was constructed during the regime of King Hatta Kishore and Malla Kishore in the 13th century A.D. The present temple was erected 300 years back by king Phakir Mangaraj Mohapatra with its entrance hall by Padmanav Mangaraj and Mohan Dasarathi Mangaraj.

The Central niches of the side walls preserve 'Parsvadevatas' like Ganesh, Kartikeya and Mahishamardini and Jaga Mohan, images of Surya, Kubera and Ganesh etc. The presiding deity Bhattarika is seated on a full bloomed lotus pedestals cross legged, with a full blown lotus in her left hand and Barada Mudra in the right. The antiquities of the deity may be well compared with two armed Viraja of Jajpur. Bhattarika is honoured as 'Tripura Sundari' of Dashamahavidya and addressed in prayer as "Maa Rajarajeswari Mahamaya Tripura Sundari Siddhi Bhattarika" and in short 'Tripura' in her rituals although her iconographic features correspond with the image of Tara of Buddhist pantheon. Non-vegetarian food is offered to the Goddess with green coconut-water in a bowl of bell-metal which is equivalent to wine as per Dakshina Bamachar of tantricism. *Pana Sankranti*, *Akshaya Trutiya*, *Devi Snanotsab* and *Durga Puja* are the festivals observed during every year, out of which Durga Puja is of great importance to all pilgrims coming in thousands from adjoining area. During Mahastami-Puja a buffalo is sacrificed to the

Mother Bhattarika and goats in Mahanavami worship.

Katak Chandi

Goddess Katak Chandi was originally worshipped in fort Barabati of Cuttack town and was shifted to the present place due to attack of Kalapahad in 1569 A.D., where she was worshipped by an old woman-devotee 'Maina Dei' in a small temple. The present temple has been constructed by the generous people like Rayasaheb Giridhari Prasad Moda and many others.

In course of time Parsvadevatas such as Lord Siva, Nabagraha, Ganesh, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati, Hanuman and Lakshmi Narayan have been consecrated in Katak Chandi temple, Katak Chandi, the goddess of the royal family has become the goddess of the people like Shyamakali at Puri or Bag Devi at Kulad. Durga Puja is the best of all the festivals when goddess Mother, appears in different attires and forms such as Jagadhatri, Katyayani, Siddhidatri, Shailaputri, Bhubaneswari, Shodashi, Ugratara, Tripura Bhairabi, Matangi, Kamala, Narayani, Bagala Mukhi, Maha Saraswati, Maha Lakshmi and Mahishamardini. Besides, during Dipavali festivals, goddess Chandi is adorned as Kali, in Kartika Purnima as Annapurna, on the thursday of the month of Margashir as Lakshmi and in Sripanchami of the month of Magha as Mahasaraswati. During the month of Chaitra, vernal festival of Divine Mother is observed for nine days. Goats were offered to the goddess on Mahastami of Durga Puja and vernal festival but the system has been abolished recently due to the protests of some intellectuals.

Barunei

The temple of Barunei is located one and a half miles away from Khurda town on a hillock,



150 feet from the ground level. There are two black stone images, Arunei and Barunei by name worshipped as presiding deities in the temple. The Vije Pratima (the moving deity) 'Kanak Durga' is worshipped during four days of Durga puja, i.e. from 7th bright day of Aswin to 10th bright day and rest of the days in the year. She remains worshipped in the residence of the priest. During the regime of Gajapati Maharaja of Orissa at Khurda Garh, Kanak Durga and Jaya Durga of royal palace got together on Dasahara in the particular place every year and dispersed after the function was over; Kanak Durga to the residence of the priest and Jaya Durga to the palace. Now Jaya Durga is worshipped in the palace of Gajapati Maharaja at Puri. At the foot of the mountain, there are Parswadevatas such as Mahadev, Mahavir and Dudhakhai Thakurani etc.

Daily, *Khiri* and *Enduri pitha* are offered to the goddess Arunei and Barunei. Some writers say that the Gajapati Maharaja of Orissa brought images of Uchista Ganesh (Bhanda Ganesh or Kamada Ganesh) and Arunei - Barunei from Kanchi and enshrined the Divine Mothers at Khurda and took Bhanda Ganesh to Jagannath Temple. Because of Her origin of worship in South India, *Enduri Pitha* (Idli) is offered to the goddess daily. *Raja Sankranti* is best of all the festivals when devotees in thousands from all around assemble. On Mahastami of the month of Aswin, goats are offered to the goddess.

Ugratara

The temple of Ugratara is located at Bhusandpur of Puri district, only two kms away from lake Chilika. The perennial flow of a fountain there provides transparent water to the devotees. The image of Goddess corresponds with Hindu Tara but not a Buddhist pantheon. The deity is only 1'.6" high, with her left leg on the chest of Lord Siva and right on his thigh. She is adorned

with garland of skulls around her neck and snakes around her arms. The place is full of scenery and looks like the temple of Kedar Gouri at Bhubaneswar. The place is considered to be the best for the 'Tantra-Sadhakas'. Raja Sankranti and Durga Puja are the important festivals of the year thronged by thousands of people from all around.

Maninaga

Maninaga is the tutelary deity of Raj-Ranpur and its suburbs. The original rulers of this Garajat were said to be the descendants of the Sabar-king Biswabasu, and subsequently Bagedis came into power. A piece of stone was originally worshipped on the mountain as Goddess. The offerings made to the goddess was eaten away by a cobra set with gem, as the legend goes. The mountain and the goddess derived their names as such.

Bagedis were very powerful due to the grace of Maninaga and could bring the suburb areas under their control. The neighbouring kings were tempted to steal away the deity from the mountain. Goddess Maninaga disappeared in the nether regions leaving a hole on the top of the mountain which was subsequently covered with golden plate and worshipped. A temple of 25 feet height having no architectural refinement, was erected on the mount to save the people from rain and Sun. It is said, in the month of Magha, a man was offered to the goddess as sacrifice which was discontinued after independence. A tribal Sevak named 'Jani' was engaged for the purpose of worship. Because of the difficulties to climb the mountain infested by wild animals, a temple was constructed later, by the then king at the foot of the mountain where the goddess is worshipped both by Jani and Brahmin priests. People going to the shrine on the top of the mountain worship the goddess irrespective of their caste or creed.



The morning food of Maninaga is arranged by Jani out of the landed property allotted to his forefathers by the king and night offerings by generous devotees. The shrine and its suburbs are now a good resort for picnic.

Kalijai

Surrounded by blue waters of the lake Chilika, the temple of Kalijai stands on a hillock, a little away from Balugaon of Puri district. It was constructed by one of the kings of Banpur after the kingdom shifted to Parikud in a critical period during British regime. The shrine is associated with a story written by Pandit Godabarish, the celebrated poet of the state. Jai, a newly married girl of village Banpur, was on the way to her father-in-law's house at Parikud, in a boat in the lake Chilika along with her guardians. Unfortunately the boat was capsized in a storm and Jai found missing amidst all others. The laugh and cry of a girl was often heard from the hill top and few days later, a shrine was erected in commemoration of Jai on the hillock where she was worshipped as goddess Jai or Kali Jai. But some of the critics opine that the story of Kali Jai has been written in imitation of Wordsworth's poems on Lucy. Makar Sankranti is the best of all the festivals at Kali Jai; goats and fowls are sacrificed to the goddess without being killed. The natural scenery of the Chilika lake attracts many during autumn and winter for picnic.

Bhadrakali

Bhadrakali of Bhadrak, formerly propitiated as Panna Devi dates back to 3rd century A.D. The old temple where this goddess originally enshrined is now in ruins. A stone of 6'-0" long, 1'-0" width and 1'-0" height of the old structure, kept preserved in State Museum of Bhubaneswar reveals the antiquities of the sanctum both in inscription and architecture. The present shrine was erected later on the bank of the river Salandi.

This four armed, black stone deity, daintily carved with ornamental refinement displays sword in the top right hand and a skull in the top left and with the bottom right a holy child on the lap. Jaya and Vijaya are the Parswadevatas in the temple.

Towards the north of Bhadrak town, in the village Bhuyan Mahal, Bhadrakali was originally worshipped, according to the legends. During the invasion of Kala Pahad, the deity was taken away from the temple and concealed in the river bed of Salandi. A few days later, one Anga Prusty, a devotee of the goddess constructed the present temple. One Sri Balabhadra Nath, a yogi, was worshipper of this goddess. Later his son-in-law and daughter Abhaya dedicated their lives to the noble services of the goddess. Bhadrakali was so much pleased that she left the unfathomed bed of the river Salandi and followed the son-in-law of Bhadrakali to the place of present structure.

Kanta Devi

Kanta Devi is the tutelary deity of Bonai, Pallahada and Deogarh area, worshipped by both Adivasi and Non-Adivasi people during Durga Puja every year with pomp and gaiety. She remains hidden in a cave of Khandadhara mountain range near the village Sanjal of the Adivasi Bhuyans. She looks like a Siva Linga, made of copper, iron and gold weighing 500 grams approx. Every year, during Dasahara festival, Bhuyan priest or Dehuri invites goddess Kanta Devi from the cave, offering fowl as sacrifice, generally on Newmoon, *Pratipada* and *Dwitiya* of the month of *Aswina*. She moves in a procession from house to house, village to village, being worshipped in the courtyards with the sacrifice of fowl and goat. Kanta Devi is worshipped with wine and blood. In some of the families, she is kept immersed in the wine. She is worshipped for a period of six to seven days till she reaches the village Kantajodi on Mahastami, adjacent to the royal palace of Bonaigarh. She is thereafter, received by the royal



family through the priest of the palace (but not Dehuri) and taken to royal palace where she takes rest for a day in the arsenal of the palace. On Vijaya Dasami, she returns in a different route being worshipped by the villagers in their houses till she comes back to her cave on Kumar Purnima. Dehuri keeps the goddess inside the cave, covered with a piece of stone.

Gouri

Gouri of Ekamra pitha, Bhubaneswar, has been described in Swarnadri Mahodaya and Kapila Samhita of fifteen century A.D. She is considered to be supreme goddess of eight Chandikas of Bhubaneswar pitha such as Kapali, Gouri, Uttarayani, Ambika, Dwarabasini, Bindhya basini, Dakshina Chandi and Ramayani. Gouri of Bhubaneswar has got resemblance with Tripura Gouri of *Agni Purana*. She stands on a full blown lotus with her four arms displaying noose in the right-top, garland of leads in the bottom-right, goad in the left top and Barada Mudra in left bottom. The female partners, Jaya and Vijaya, stand on both the sides. To the left and right side of the legs, stand deer and lion respectively. Gouri is the goddess of Vaishnavites. Durga Puja is the best of all the festivals, the expenditure which is borne by the committee of Lingaraj temple. Lord Lingaraj is celebrated as the Supreme God and Gouri the Supreme Goddess.

The art and architecture of Gouri temple dates back to 9th century A.D. The temple was constructed by Subhakar Dev of Bhouma dynasty and his queen Tribhuban Mahadevi. The copper plates found at Boud and Dhenkanal reveal that Tribhuban Mahadevi renamed herself as Siddha Gouri and took over the reign of administration after her husband. So is the case with Mohini temple which was constructed by the queen Mohini Devi.

Bhubaneswar though a centre of Saivism, is considered to be one of the leading *pithas* of

Saktism in Orissa since 7th century A.D. giving birth to Baitala, Gopalini, Gouri, Mohini and Savitri shrines. The Sapta Matrika of Parshurameswar temple is oldest of all. The shrines of Mohini, Kapali, Bhubaneswari and Savitri of eighth century A.D. , Gouri temple of ninth century A.D. and Parvati temple of 12th century A.D. depict antiquities of Saktism in Orissa.

Influence of Saktism :

The worship of plants, trees and log by the remote tribal race gave birth to the concept of Saktism. *Navaratra* worship which involves *Navapatrika* (nine plants) presided by nine goddesses called Nava Durga, clearly depicts its relationship with vegetation and fertility. *Devi Bhagavat* and *Kalika Purana* speak of mountain-resorts of Mother goddesses such as Siva in Himalayas, Mangala in Vindhya and Nanda in Malaya. Hence the goddess of vegetation propitiated by the tribal race in woods and hills crept into Hindu Pantheon in course of time as Stambeswari, Samaleswari and even the prime deities of Jagannath temple, along with their festivals of vegetation and fertility such as *Janhi Osha*, *Bata Osha*, *Phuluri Osha*, *Budhei Sudhei* and *Khudurukuni* etc.

The worship of Durga with Madhab, Parvati with Shankar, Subhadra with Jagannath and Balabhadra shows the intermingling of Saktism, Vaishnavism and Saivism. Vimala, the prime deity of Uddiyan was accepted as wife of Balabhadra by the Vaishnavites. This gave birth to KAULAS, who go far beyond the bonds of different cults and divinities with the realisation of one undivided supreme.

Brundaban Dham,
Lokanath Road, Puri-752001.



Ramachandi : The Fort Goddess of Gadamanatir

Braja Paikaray

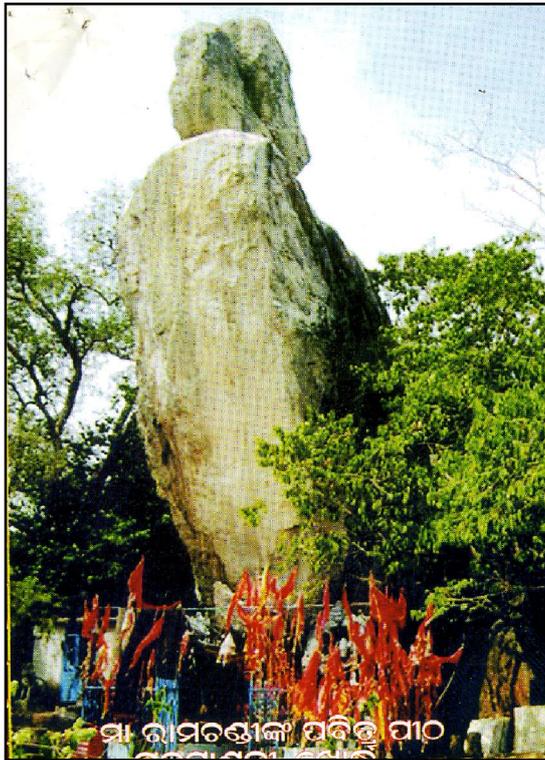
Gadamanatir, once a historically famous place of Orissa for its valiant Paiks and now well connected with its sub-divisional headquarters as well as district headquarters is well known as the abode of Goddess Ramachandi. The Abode of Goddess Ramachandi is also well connected by a fair weather metal road and is about 46 kilometers from Bhubaneswar, the capital city of Orissa.

G o d d e s s Ramachandi stands majestically and manifests herself on the top of the Ramachandi hill. The adjoining hill is popularly known as "Gobardhan Thali". There are about eighty (80) *pabachhas* (steps) which connects the ground with the hill top. The picturesque scenery, serene atmosphere, green trees and creepers, the beautiful caves, surrounded by mango groves and encircled with corn fields enhance the beauty of Ramachandi hill.

Being attracted by the natural sceneries, and the calmness of the place; visitors, tourists, artists, writers, poets and last but not the least, the devotees come here in large numbers from all the corners of the state. At the time of *Raja* and *Panchadola Yatra* (which are held at the foot of Ramachandi hill in the month of *Jyestha* and *Phalguna* respectively) more and more people gather to enjoy the beauty of the hill and to pay homage to Goddess Ramachandi.

Goddess Ramachandi is not installed inside a temple and has emerged from the earth in the form of a straight, solid and black granite stone with enormous height. At both

sides of the entrance gate of the hill top two fierce looking lion statues made of stone adorn the scene. Goddess Ramachandi with her elegant vastness would be more than one hundred feet in



Ramachandi, Garhmanitri



height. The *chalanti* deity (Representative of the original one) of Goddess is being installed inside a small temple at Gadamanatir. A family of *Adivasi* priests popularly known as *Janis* have the hereditary right of worshipping the Goddess. The *Jani* observes all the rites and rituals of Ramachandi throughout the year. The daily rites and rituals include bathing of the deity; the performance of *Majana*, the offering of *Bhog*, chanting of some *mantras*, dressing of the deity with *Kala Kachheni* (black robes) applying *Sindur* (vermilion), *Haladi* (Turmeric Paste) and *Chua* (black fragrant liquid) on her forehead. For the daily maintenance of the deity some "Jagir Land" (Rent free land) was granted by the Gajapati king of Puri.

In course of time some beautiful and interesting folklores and legends have come up in order to depict the *Mahima* (divine greatness) of Goddess Ramachandi. I would like to cite two common legends which are as follows.

"In the initial period when Goddess Ramachandi was emerging and manifesting Herself firm inside the earth, a nearby tamarind tree began to compete with the Goddess in growing fast and increased its height more than the Goddess. Seeing the height of the tamarind tree the Goddess grew more rapidly and crossed the height of the tamarind tree. There was dense forest and the *Adivasi* Priest (*Jani*) was the only person who was making the *Seva Puja* (worship). While the next day, the *Jani* came to the spot he found to his utmost amazement that the Goddess had become enormous in size and height. The poor *Jani* now became puzzled and disgusted as his hand could not reach the top of the Goddess and it was difficult to apply *Sindur* (Vermillion), *Haladi* (Turmeric Paste) and *Chua* (black fragrant liquid). And in a feat of rage the *Jani* gave a heavy slap to Goddess Ramachandi

and warned that if she would not cease increasing her height she would not be worshipped by him. Astonishingly the Goddess responded to the warning of the *Adivasi* priest and remained equal with the height of the tamarind tree standing near the Goddess equal to her height."

The second legend goes as follows:-

"Goddess Ramachandi had a pet tiger which was residing in a nearby cave of Ramachandi hill. Once the same tiger attacked and killed the bullock of the *Adivasi* Priest. When this incident came to the knowledge of *Jani* (*Adivasi* Priest) he immediately stopped the *seva puja* (worshipping) of the Goddess. In the night Goddess Ramachandi appeared before him in a dream and assured that he must not be worried due to the killing of his bullock. She directed the *Jani* that the next morning her tiger would wait for him in his agriculture field for ploughing the land. The *Jani* woke up and proceeded to his land with one of his remaining bullocks and found to his astonishment that the tiger of Ramachandi had stood like a pet bullock in a calm posture. The *Jani* tied the bullock in one side and the tiger in other side of the plough and finished the tilling of his agricultural land".

During the month of *Aswina* (October-November) at the time of "Durga Puja" people of far and near villages flock together in order to see and attend the famous "Maha Saptami Puja" of Goddess Ramachandi.

On the holy night of "Maha Saptami" large number of animals like sheeps, goats, buffaloes and fowls are sacrificed in front of the temple of *chalanti* deity of Goddess Ramachandi. A person of *Adivasi* community becomes the *Kalasi* (who acts as the living medium of the Goddess) who takes *Sura* (wine) and then the local drummers beat the drums surrounding him.



Due to the loud sound of the drums and being intoxicated and heavily drunk the *Kalasi* makes a fearful sound (*Kil Kila Radi*) and dances vigorously with a large sword to the tune of drums. The *Kalasi* is dressed with *Kala Kachheni* (black robes) with a big vermilion mark on his forehead and the garland of *Mandar* (Red China roses) and lily flowers adorns his neck. The *Kalasi* visits the whole village on foot and goes from door to door accepting the offering of *Bhog* the burning wicks and the eggs. The *Kalasi* never goes alone. He is always followed by a group of associates. These associates include one *Masaladhari* (one who holds a burning light), the *Jani* (Adivasi Priest), the *Dholkias* (local drummers), the *Ghatak* (the persons who kill the animals), one *Chhatradhari* (who holds an umbrella like thing decorated with red lilies) and two persons carrying the mobile deity of Goddess Ramachandi.

The *Kalasi* after finishing the *Bhog Khia* (Acceptance of Bhog offering) of the village, takes the *Bhog* of *Raj Kachery* (Bhog offered on behalf of the king of Puri) and then proceeds towards the temple. On the way back of *Kalasi*, devotees surrender themselves and fall at his feet seeking divine mercy which is always bestowed to them without any hesitation. Then after reaching and standing in front of Ramachandi temple the *Kalasi* foretells the future of corn harvest, the evils which would be faced by the country and its remedies

and lastly grants the desired boons to the people. Then by the order of the *Kalasi* the *Bali* (Sacrifice) of animals takes place. The *Ghatak* (killer) sacrifices sheeps, goats and fowls in large number. In the past about 75 years back during the British rule *Jhaleri* (Buffalo Sacrifice) was also offered to the Goddess. The *Kalasi* sucks the blood of the sacrificed animals and dances with a long sword showing different feats. The sacrificing of animal, the dance of *Kalasi* and the blood stained *Katari* of *Ghatak* (killer) create a dreadful atmosphere.

In the holy day of *Maha Astami* again an animal (either sheep or goat) is sacrificed before Goddess Ramachandi and the meat of the sacrificed animal is distributed among the *Paik Sardars*. On the day of Dasahara people belonging to *Paik* or *Khandayat* community observe *Khanda Puja* (sword worship) and in the evening practice different tricks of sword fighting, archery, wrestling and club fighting in front of the Ramachandi temple situated inside the village Gadamanatir.

Government Advocate and Notary Public,
Bhubaneswar Court, Bhubaneswar-14



Durga Puja in Sarala Temple

Pandit Upendranath Hota

Sarala is worshipped both as Durga and Saraswati. The Goddess possesses three qualities and she is also worshipped in three ways. She symbolises TAMAH when she appears as Maha Kali, RAJAH when She appears as Maha Laxmi and SATVA when she appears as Saraswati "She is the "LIGHT", She is the "LIGHT OF THE SUN and MOON", She is the "AIR" which animate all beings, says the Vedic hymn to the Goddess. This is the germ which after wards developed into Mother worship. The highest of all feminine types in India is Mother. Mother is the power that manifests everywhere, She who brings out this universe and She who brings forth the destruction. Destruction is only the beginning of creation. The top of a hill is only the beginning of a valley.

In Puri Sri Jagannath appears as Bhairava and Vimala as Bhairavi. Here Mahalaxmi is a perfect Vaishnavi. But Mother Sarala is Mahakali, all three in one. She is established here on a Sri

Chakra, She is Herself Brahma-Shakti, Bramhani, Vishnu Sakti, 'Vaishnavi' and Rudra Sakti, 'Rudrani'. She is adorned with nine qualities, 'Srim, Hrim, Budhi, Lajya, Pusti, Shanti, Tusti, Kshyanti and Aiswarya.

During Durga Puja, Sarala is worshipped with all sanctity. Durga Devi appears at the time of Janmastami. However, people mostly start it



Goddess Sarala

from the '*Pratipada*' *Sukla Pakhya* of Aswina' or '*Sasthi*'. People chant hymns of Chandi from the day of '*Kalpaarambha*' till '*Navami*'. as per the rules of Durga Puja *B o d h a n A m a n t r a n a* , *Adhibasa* and *Pujana* are observed here very

strictly. Sandhi Puja is observed on *Saptami* and *Astami* and at the end of *Maha Navami Puja*.

During Durga Puja sixteen day long ceremonial rites are observed at Sarala. Sarala is dressed differently for sixteen days, each day with a new *Vesa*. A grand procession starts from the temple of Sarala towards *Landa Deula* (an



ancient ruined temple) and again returns to the temple after the worship of Lord Ganesha and other deities. In this procession the *Chalanti Pratima* (moving deity) of the Mother takes part. People putting on different masks dance merrily showing different feats. Different drum, *Ghanta* and musical instruments are sounded. During *Maha Saptami*, *Maha Astami* and *Maha Navami*, the worship of the Mother is done with *Sodasa Upachar*. The worship of the Mother is done in 'Navarna Mantra' depicted in the Tantrik texts. "*Aum, Aim, Hrim, Klim, Chamandai Bliche*" is the sacred mantra of the Devi. Aim, Hrim, Klim represent Sandini, Sambit, and Power of the Devi respectively and *Aum* is the sacred symbol of *Brahman*. Sarala is the embodiment of these three sources of the primordial energy. This worship of the Mother dates back to *Savarnima Manwantara*, from very ancient times.

Upto 1946 it was the custom to offer a buffalo as sacrifice on *Mahastami* before Goddess Sarala. But this practice of offering a buffalo as sacrifice was discarded when Dr. Kailashnath Katju was the Governor of Orissa. From that period a pumpkin is offered in lieu of a buffalo. Sarala is the *Vak Devi* (Goddess of learning) and *Mahisasura Mardini* (Destroyer of the demon Mahisasura). Sarala is *Asta Bhuj*a (eight handed). She rides on a lion. She is *Parama Vaishnavi*. The great Oriya poet Sarala Das, was a devotee of Sarala Jhankada, Her abode is 57 Kms away from Cuttack. The present temple of Sarala is about 400 years old. Sarala is a famous Devi of Orissa and one of the eight famous *Sakti Pithas* of Orissa.

Qr. No. IV, 3/4,
Unit -I, Bhubaneswar.



Sarala Temple, Jhankada



Dasa Mahavidya

Umakanta Mishra

Mahavidya Tattwa with its intrinsic value over super conscious thought has got a special significance in *Tantra Vidya*. It covers a wide gamut of procedures of worship of the ten goddesses. The worship leads to *mantra chaitanya* or *mantra vidya* meaning divine knowledge. The meaning of *mantra* cannot be understood by reasoning. The inherent meaning of *mantras* are revealed to deserving *Sadhakas*. *Mantra sakti* opens the gate of truth revealing the true nature and essence of the universe. This is the underlying principle behind all the *Mahavidya upasana*. The ten *devis* of *Mahavidya* pantheon are Tara, Sodasi, Bhubaneswari, Bhairavi, Chhinnamasta, Dhumavati, Bagala, Matangini, Kamalatmika and Kali.

Tara

Tara is known as Nilasaravai and Ugratara. She is of dark blue complexion. She places her left leg on the chest of Siva, who lies like a corpse. She is of short stature and she appears in a tiger skin and puts on a garland of severed demon heads. She is in the prime of her youth and adorned with *pancha mudra*. She has four hands with the tongue spread out of the mouth. She wears a single braid of matted hair on her head. She is endowed with three eyes and she stands in the midst of funeral pyre. She laughs, engrossed in her emotion and is decked with valuable ornaments including a blue lotus in one hand, a *kartri* and a *khadga* in her other two hands and a vessel of skull in the third. There are snakes covering her body. She is also known as Tarani and her *dhyana mantra*





occurs in a number of Tantric texts to gain power over spirit, wealth, education and so on. The Jains and Buddhists also worship her with slight modifications in terms of appearance, colour and ayudhas in their respective temples.

Sodasi

Sodasi is identified as Tripura Sundari in the *Sodasi Tantra*. She has four arms and she holds a noose, an elephant hook, an arrow and a bow. Her colour is red. This goddess is extremely beautiful and of dazzling brilliance. She is also described as standing in the orbit of Sun. She has four hands; she holds a book, a rosary in two hands, the other two hands are in *Abhaya* and *Varada* poses. She is worshipped as *Para* and *Apara*.

Bhubaneswari

Her complexion is that of a rising sun. She wears a crescent on her forehead and crown over head. Her breasts are full. She is three eyed and her face is ever lit up with a smile. In her two hands, she holds the noose and the goad and in the other two, the pose of granting boons and assurance to her devotees to alley their fears. This is known as *Varada* and *Abhaya* mudras. She adorns herself with valuable ornaments. She seats on a lotus throne. She is the goddess having the moon diadem, large breasts and three eyes. She is also described in two forms as Saubhagya Bhubaneswari and Maya Bhubaneswari, in red and blue colour respectively. One can come across excellent icons in Srimandira, Puri. She is the protectress of the world. Her three eyes represent *icha*, *kriya* and *jnana sakti*.

Bhairavi

Bhairavi or Tripura Bhairavi wipes out all types of distress of *Sadhakas*, The letter *Bha* symbolizes *Bharana* or maintenance, *Ra* stands for *Ramana* or sport like creation and *Va* for

Vamana or release by way of either destruction or liberation. She resembles the luster of a thousand rising suns. Her three eyes resemble red lotus and the moon shines in her bejewelled crown. Her garment is red. She has a garland of heads round her neck. Her breasts are covered with blood. She holds a rosary and manuscript in her two hands. She is believed to be a kin of Bhairavi of Buddhist Tantric religion.

Chinnamasta

She is endowed with three *gunas-Satwa*, *Raja* and *Tama*. She is also known as *Trigunamayi*, bright as tens of millions of suns shining together. Her mouth is expansive. Her hair is dishovelled and adorned with varieties of fragrant flowers. In her right hand, she holds a sword and wears a garland of human heads around her neck. She is naked and of fearful appearance. Her right leg is in front while her left leg is a little behind. She wears a serpent as a sacred thread. She is on a standing posture with Rati and Kama embracing each other in enjoyment. This means that when the *Kundalini* in *Muladhara* is united with Siva in *Sahsrara*, realization or liberation flows, which is not other than the *Swarupa* of Devi herself. Yoginis like Dakini and Sakini are beside her.

Dhumabati

Goddess Dhumabati is to be invoked for purpose of destroying enemies. She is pale, tremulous and angry. She is rough, her robes are unclean and her hair is united. She is a widow and has only four teeth. She rides a chariot on which the banner depicts a crow. She is tall and has hanging breasts; she is harsh looking with a big nose. She holds a winnowing fan in one hand and shows *Varada* pose in the other. She is always hungry and thirsty, terrifying and quarrelsome.



Bagala

According to the *Sri Tatwanidhi*, she is of yellow complexion and is three-eyed. In her four hands she holds a trident, a cup, a mace and the tongue of the enemy. She has the features of a beautiful woman so far as her lips, neck and breasts are concerned. She is adorned all over with garlands and ornaments. Bagala symbolizes cessation of all dualities or *dwandas*, at the realization of which there would be no enemy and pure consciousness would emerge.

Matangini

Matangini is the goddess of royalty. She is the deity for defeating demons and establishing peace, tranquility and prosperity. In the *Matangini Tantra*, she is described as dark, with a white crescent in her garland. She sits on a dazzling jewelled throne. She holds a noose, a sword, a shield and an elephant nook. Her head is adorned with the moon. There are various forms of Matangini: Uchhista Matangini, Raja Matangini, Sumukhi Matangini, Vasya Matangini and Karna Matangini.

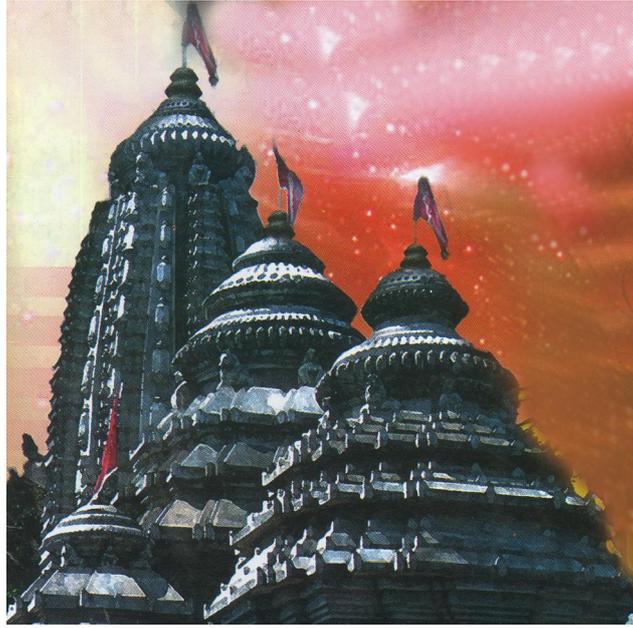
Kamatmika

She is the incarnation of Mahalaxmi also known as Sri. She is of golden complexion, bathed

by four white elephants holding golden jars of nectar in their upraised trunks. She holds two lotuses in her two upper hands. She wears a crown sparkling with gems. Her perfectly comely body radiates the highest degree of eroticism.

Kali

According to *Kali Stotra*, at the time of meditation, she is in a state of eternal bliss playing on the bosom of Siva. The surrounding is a cremation ground. She is black in colour because it is the seed stage of all colours and it represents *Tamoguna*. She appears cool and appealing as the light of million moons brought together. Her teeth is terrible but she is the benign mother



Durga Temple, Bolangir

conferring boon on all by raising her arm in Varada mudra. Her mouth is wide open. She is endowed with three eyes, representing *Trikala*. She wears a necklace of demon heads. She is the embodiment of *sakti, budhi, ridhi* and *sidhi*. She is known as Dakshinakali, Shyamakali, Hrudayakali and Rakshyakali. The sun and moon are her earrings.



Mahisamardini Durga Temple of Kusang

Sasanka Sekhar Panda

After this author joined as the District Information and Public Relations Officer in the month of July 1984, he got an information from the *Sarpanch* of Kusang Gram Panchayat, Sri Gangadhar Behera that there is a temple at Kusang, which is believed to have been made by divine architect Viswakarma overnight. To his utter amazement, when this scholar reached Kusang, the temple with its Gajalaksmi symbol on the door-lintel of the inner sanctum, the panel of Anantasayee Visnu, Nabagrahas, sculpture of Mandira Charini, Ganesa, Jatadhari Siva and Bhairava turned out to be a *Pancharatha* style of temple in the prototype of the gigantic structure of Lingaraj temple of Bhubaneswar. The temple is very thickly covered with lime plaster. This village can be reached via Loisingha by travelling thirty-five kms. to the north-west of Balangir town. There is a site near the temple where arrowheads, potteries and bricks are found. This site may be taken as that of a settlement of the pre-mediaeval period, situated on the Suktel river valley, a tributary of river Tel.

The Suktel takes its origin from the slopes of the Gandhamardan range and flows through the subdivisions of Patnagarh, Balangir in the district of Balangir and Sonepur district till it meets the Tel a few kms. south of its confluence with Mahanadi.¹

The temple of Kusangai is *Pancharatha* in plan, *Rathas* having multi-faceted projections.

The entire structure is divided into three parts namely the *Bada*, *Gandi* and *Mastaka*. This temple was repaired some fifty years ago by the then ruler of the erstwhile Patna-state Maharaja R.N. Singhdeo. Now it is standing on a stone platform of the height of about four feet from the ground and the *Pabhaga* is covered as a result of which nothing can be said about its design. The *Pabhaga* looks like a broad moulding. In the *Tala-Jangha* portion the *Kanika* and *Anuratha* are decorated by *Pidha-mundi* motifs. The Raha section in all three sides-east, west and south are converted into *Parsva-devata* niches.

The main *Parsva-devata* niches measure two feet and a half in height and two feet in breadth approximately. At present the *Parsva-devata* niches are occupied by Kartikeya, Ganesh and Hanuman which seems to be of recent origin. Most probably the original *Parsva-devatas* are now kept as detached sculptures in the *Jagamohana* of the temple. Images of four-handed Ganesa, seated in *Ardhaparyankasana*, his proboscis turned towards left eating something (Laddu ?) from the *Modaka-patra* held in his left upper-hand; a standing figure of four-handed Siva with *Jatabhara* on head and wearing a tiger-skin as well as that of a four-handed standing Bhairava both upper hands raised up, holding a *Khadga* (sword) in his upper right hand are placed in the niches of the present *Jagamohana*, which was constructed fifty years back during repair.



The *Bandhana* portion consists of two mouldings of *Khura* and *Pata* which occur in between lower and upper *Jangha*. In the upper *Jangha* portion again the *Pidha-mundi* motifs occur. Above the *Parsva-devata* niches in all three sides three moulding courses occur in the *Raha* portion, surmounted by small niches which are vacant now. Above the upper *Jangha* portion a broad band and five moulding courses make the *Baranda*, above which the *Gandi* of the temple stands in a curvilinear spire design. It has five *bhumi* stages, each stage consisting of six *Bhumi-barandikas*, crowned by a *Bhumi-amalaka*. In the *Raha* and *Anuratha* sections, just above the design of five *Bhumi-barandika*, *Angasikharas* adorn the *Gandi*. Above this *Angasikhara* design, in the *Raha* portion, *Vyala* figures are placed in all three-sides-east, west and south on projected platform. In the front portion of the temple a big *Anga-sikhara* surmounted by a *Gaja-kranta* figure on a project platform is depicted. Like the *Kanikas*, the *Raha* and *Anuratha* portions are also serrated, but have no *Bhumi* divisions. The *Gandi* is surmounted by a *Pancharatha Bisama*, consisting of the *Beki*, a huge *Amalaka*, a *Khapuri* and one *Kalasa*. In the *beki* portion crouching *Mandira-Charini* figures in the centre and sleeping *Vyala* figures are placed in all four corners. Another such *Mandira Charini* figure is now placed in a niche of the *Jagamohana*. These *Mandira Charini* as well as the *Vyala* figures very commonly occur in the *Beki* portion of the Lingaraj temple of Bhubaneswar as well as other smaller temples constructed in the Lingaraj temple complex.

In the northern outer wall of the *Jagamohana* is fitted a panel depicting the *Bhoga sayana Murti* of Visnu. Here the Lord is seen used his right hand as pillow, by placing it below his head touching the *Kirita Mukuta* and the left hand placed parallel to the body, touching the thigh. Near his head, goddess Lakshmi, His consort is seen to be seated touching his shoulder and *Bhumidevi* is seen to be seated near his feet,

touching his left foot. Demons *Madhu* and *Kaitabha* are also depicted near his feet. This panel is very badly eroded and also plastered by lime to such an extent that details are lost.

Another important panel fitted to the eastern outer wall of the *Jagamohana* is that of the *Navagrahas*. Except in the cases of *Surya* (1st), *Rahu* (8th) and *Ketu* (9th), four *Grahas* are seated in *Ardhaparyanakasana*. *Surya* is seated in *Padmasana* and *Ketu* on the coiled snake-seat his own body being of a snake below waist. *Surya* is seen holding lotus in both hands, but in the cases of *Chandra*, *Mangala*, *Budha*, *Brihaspati*, *Sukra* and *Sani*, they are seen to be carrying vase in their left hands. *Kirita Mukuta* is adorning their heads. This scholar was told by the old persons of the village that this panel was originally fitted above the *Gajalakshmi* panel, in the centre of the door-lintel of the inner sanctum of the shrine. Bricks of very big sizes, measuring mostly one foot by eighteen inches are lying scattered all around in the temple precinct.

Such *Navagraha* panels are found in the lintel portion of the Baud group of temples, numbering three, namely *Bhubanesvara*, *Kapilesvara* and *Siddhesvara* temples, which are believed to have been constructed around the 10th century A.D. Such *Navagraha* panels are found in the *Dasmati Ghat* of *Sonepur*, on a stone-panel now fitted to the stone-slabs used to construct stone-embankment of the river *Mahanadi*; at *Deulgudi* and *Sauntpur* temple ruins and in the door-lintel of the *Siva* temple at *Bausuni*. At *Baud* and *Bausuni*, it is fitted above the *Gajalakshmi* panel of the door lintel of the inner sanctum.

In both these places *Dvarapalas* are also seen on the base of both sides of the doorway of the inner sanctum. Goddess *Kusangai* is called *Ugaratara* by the local people. A big stone-slab on which eight-petalled lotus design is depicted is now fixed in front of the Goddess on the floor. This stone-slab might have been fitted in its original state as the roof of the inner sanctum as occurs in



almost all ancient temples of the Upper Mahanadi valley.

This writer was told by Shri Jugal Kishore Panda, an old man of the village Kusang aged about sixty-five years that the temple was repaired by the erstwhile ruler of Patna-state by engaging one Shri Bhagirathi Maharana, a sculptor in around 1937-38 and at that time one three-plated copperplate grant inscription was also found to be kept inside this temple which was taken away to Balangir and preserved in the Durbar Office.

In the same temple-precinct there is another temple called Kosalesvara Siva temple which is a modern construction. But three sculptures kept inside the temple deserve attention. There is a standing figure of two feet height, which is that of Bhairava. In the upper right hand he holds a *Gada* (club) and in the left hand a *Damaru*. Similarly in the lower right hand he holds an *Ankusa* while in lower left hand a *Khetaka* (shield). Other sculptures are those of a six-headed Kartikeya, a seated Ganesa and a four-handed Parvati. Parvati figure is so much eroded that it is beyond recognition.

In design Kusangai temple is a proto-type of the Narasimhanath temple at Paikmal and has got much similarity also with the Lingaraj temple of Bhubaneswar. Thirteen number of gold coins of the Kalachuri king Gangeyadeva of Tripuri have been discovered from Padampur, which is very near to Narasimhanath. From the Amoda Plates of Prithvideva-I it is known that his vassal king of Utkala on behalf of his master Gangeyadeva. In all probability, after his successful expedition to the Narasimhanath region of the Somavamsi empire, Gangeyadeva circulated his coins for a few years till the Kalachuris were driven out by Yayati-II as stated in the Brahmesvara temple inscription.² We know from the annals of temple records, *Madalapanji*, that the construction of Lingaraj temple was commissioned by Yayati Kesari, who has been generally identified by scholars as the Somavamsi King Yayati-II,

Chandihara (C.A.D 1025-40).³ Prof. Thomas E. Donaldson has rightly suggested that both the door-jambes having the Gajalakshmi motifs in the centre of the *Dvaralalatabimba* and the exquisitely carved three bands of scrollwork of *Kutula*, *Gelaba* and *Jalapatra* motifs, now fitted to the entrance of the *Jagamohana* hall of the Narasimhanath temple are stylistically datable to the late 10th century or early 11th century A.D.⁴ The present *Jagamohana* of Narasimhanath temple is a late construction, where the materials of the original temple were used. This writer agrees with Charles Fabri that the inscription of the Chauhan king Vijjala-II dated to 1413 A.D. has been incised in the wall of the *Jagamohana*,⁵ which might have been reconstructed by him by using the beautiful door-jambes and the pillars of the dilapidated *Jagamohana*. Nowhere the Chauhans are known to have constructed a temple of the same architectural pattern of Narasimhanath in the 15th century A.D. Famous historian D.R. Bhandarkar was also of the opinion that Vijjaladeva "stuck into" the wall of the *Jagamohana* which was repaired and rebuilt by him.⁶

From architectural point of view the Narasimhanath temple can be taken as a proto-type of Lingaraj. During digging of plinth of a room, some rare sculptures of Visnu as well as the head of a queen was discovered from underneath the earth just near the Narasimhanath temple. These sculptures as well as the antiquities of the four pillars now fitted to the *Jagamohana* hall make us to believe that from the time of queen Vasata, mother of the great Sirpur King Mahasivagupta Balarjuna of the Panduvamsi lineage, Narasimhanath flourished as a famous centre of Vaisnavism. Queen Vasata, who was a devout worshipper of Lord Purusottama-Narasimha might have built the first temple at Narasimhanath in the 8th century A.D. The four pillars of the *Jagamohana* can be taken to be of the original temple. The two door-jambes as well as the *Navagraha* panel, Lakshmi-Narayan in *Alingana mudra* as well as the present temple



can be assigned to the early part of the 11th century A.D. to the time of the Somavamsi king Yayati-II Chandihara who was ruling from Suvarnapur, the capital city. His name Chandihara, which we get in the Brahmesvara temple inscription suggests that he was a devout worshipper of Chandi (Durga) and Hara (Siva). The Goddess Bhagabati Panchambari Bhadrabika was his *Ishtadevi*, whose seat of worship was Patana Suvarnapura, situated in the confluence of rivers Mahanadi and Tel, as known from his Jatesinga and Dungri plates.⁷

An image of ten-handed Durga is worshipped at Kusangai by the people in the Kusang Temple. It is of a height of about five feet. The buffalo is seen lying on the ground in the right side of the pedestal, its head being cut-off and Mahisasura, staring back while running away is seen fighting with the Goddess by carrying a sword in his right hand and a shield in the left. Lion's head with a front gaze is seen to be in the right hand side of the pedestal. The Devi holds *Khadga* (sword), *Chakra* (wheel) and *Gada* (club) in her right hands from upper to lower portion, in the first, second and third hands respectively. Object in Her fourth right hand is not clear. Similarly *Padma* (Lotus), *Khetaka* (Shield), *Sakti* and *Sarpa* (Snake) are in Her left first, second, fourth and fifth left hands respectively. Here Goddess Durga is seen to be piercing the long *Trishula* (Trident) on the body of Mahisasura by holding it in Her right hand and third left hand.

Behind Devi's head a beautiful semi-circular shaped *Prabhavali* is carved, depicting lotus-petalled motifs encircled by lined designs with dots in between. In the top portion, flying *Vidyadhara* couples holding garland in hands are depicted in both sides. The colour of the image has turned light black due to heavy application of oil and vermilion etc. From time to time, but on close observation it will be seen that the actual colour of the image is light red. Therefore, there is every likelihood that like other sculptures of the Somavamsi period, the image of Kusangai was also sculptured with a finishing in stucco, a

phenomenon commonly followed in plastic art. Other significant sculptures attached to the Kusangai temple are the Gajalakshmi motif in the centre of the door-lintel of the inner sanctum, Anantasayee Visnu panel, *Navagraha* panel and the figures of Mandira Charini. In the *Beki* portion just below the *Amalaka*, there are lions in resting pose in all four corners, near the *Amalaka* of the smaller temples which are built inside the Lingaraj temple complex. This art of *Mandira Charini* belongs to the 11th century A.D. Kusangai temple can be placed in the last part of the rule of mighty Somavamsi rulers of Dakshina Kosala and can safely be assigned to the early part of the 11th century A.D.

There is every probability that the existing temples of Narasimhanath and Kusang were erected by the Somavamsi king Yayati-II Chandihara Mahasivagupta-III in the first half of the 11th century A.D.

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Shakti Worship in the Land of Orissa - An Overview

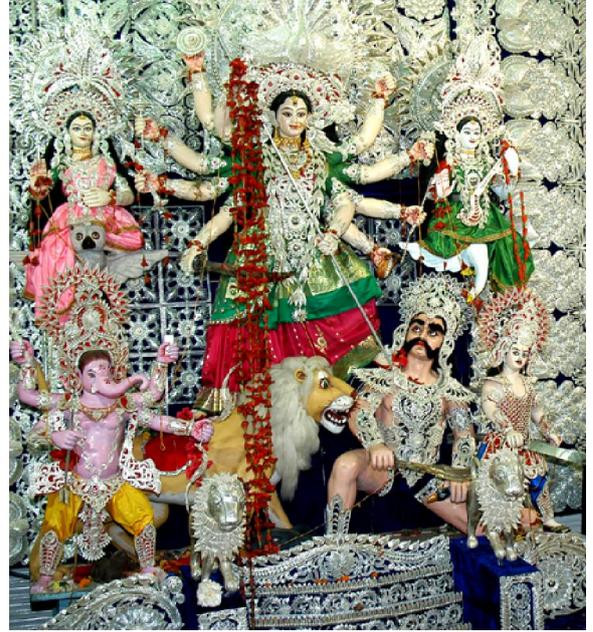
Dr. Bijaya Kumar Nanda

Orissa has a long tradition of Shakti worship. Shakti worship in Orissa dates back to the Pre-Christian era and is being celebrated since the Vedic period. Like the Hindus elsewhere in India, the Oriyas believed that Shakti or Goddess Durga is the embodiment of all power and energy. She is adored by all the gods and goddesses of the Hindu Trinity. Brahma, Vishnu and Siva worship her because without her They can wield no power.

*Shibah Shaktiyayukto Yadi bhavati Shaktih Prabhabitum.
Nacheddevan devo na khalu kushalah spanditumapi.*

(Ananda Lahari)

Devisukta of the *Rig Veda* is the primary source of Shakti cult. In the *Rig Veda*, there is the description of a goddess named Aditi. She is depicted not only as mother Goddess, she is also an emblem of the divine spirit. For the Vedic sages, she was the sky, the mother, the father, the suns, the gods, the goddesses, the gandharvas, the manes and the demons. Whatever is born and would be born is also Aditi (*Rig Veda*- 1/819/10). Thus Aditi was equated with the entire universe. In the *Kathopanishad*, Aditi typifies all the gods and goddesses (2/1/7). She is the omnipotent Divine Spirit. She is all light, lustrous and invincible (*Rig Veda*, 1/136/3). She devours all during the Pralaya at the end of the world. (*Aditi and other Deities in the Veda Sri*



Aurovindo, P.6.f.n.D.) In the *Yajurveda* and *Atharva Veda* she has been invoked as the goddess who gives protection and bliss.

Shakti has other names as well. She is called Ambika in *Yajurveda*. She is depicted as the consort of Rudra in *Taittiriya Aranyaka*, "*Ambika Pataye Uma Pataye, Pashupataye namonamah'* (10/18/1). In this *Aranyaka*, the name Durga is also mentioned. Her colour is that of fire, she is extremely bright and worshipped by all.



In the *Puranas*, Durga has been described as Vana Durga, Mahishamardini Durga, Jaya Durga, Sulini Durga, Bindhya Vasini Durga, Maha Durga and Anala Durga etc. In her different images, the number of her hands varies. She is portrayed and shown as having two, four, eight, ten, twelve, sixteen, eighteen, and thousand hands. In Orissa, three types of images of goddess Durga are seen.

1. Durga in the state of killing a he-buffalo. The he-buffalo stands for the demon Mahisasura who was the very incarnation of evil. Goddess Viraja worshipped at Jaipur depicts this image. She has two hands. The spear in her right hand has pierced the body of the he-buffalo while her left hand pulls its tail. Bhadrakali worshipped at Bhadrak has a similar iconography.
2. Durga killing the demon Mahisasura, having the head of a he-buffalo and the body of a man. Goddess Sarala worshipped at Jhankada has eight hands instead of two.
3. Durga killing Mahisasura, half-emerged from the body of a he-buffalo. Such an image is seen at Narayanikhola of Ganjam district. This goddess has ten hands.

There are eight main shrines in Orissa where Shakti is worshipped. The eight deities are collectively called *Ashtakila* or *Ashta Chandika*. Their temples were built by kings and *Shodasha Upachar Puja* (Worship with 16 ingredients) is performed in these temples. These deities are worshipped as Bimala at Puri. Samalai at Sambalpur, Bhagavati at Banapur, Charchika at Banki, Gouri at Bhubaneswar, Ramachandi at Konark, Mangala at Kakatpur and Viraja at

Jajpur. Apart from these deities there are many others like Sarala at Jhankada, Chandi at Cuttack, Barunei at Khurda, Taratarini in Ganjam and Taradei at Bhusandapur etc.

In most of the Shakti shrines of Orissa Durga is worshipped with special offerings on the days of Mahasaptami, Mahastami and Mahanavami in the month of Aswina. The Puja offered on the day of Mahastami is most significant. It is said that if one worships goddess Durga on the day with due process and devotion, he will certainly get a place in the divine abode of Lord Vishnu.

In a few Shakti shrines in Orissa, animal sacrifice is still in vogue. There are many others where no such practice is prevailing. These shrines are called 'Parama Vaishnavi' shrines. Gouri at Bhubaneswar is worshipped as Vaishnavi. Animal sacrifice at Shakti shrines is a later day practice. This was perhaps a result of the influence of Tantra cult on Shakti cult. Durga, being the mother of the world can never thirst for the blood of innocent animals.

Goddess Durga is merciful. She descends on the earth in order to kill the demons, to save religion and redeem the virtuous people. We pray and worship her. May she fill our world with truth, justice, piety, kindness, love and tolerance. May she kill the demon in us and bestow us with divine qualities.

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Sakti Shrines and Kapalika Practices in Orissa

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Saktism, the worship of Sakti or the female principle, which is the primordial factor in the creation of the Universe, occupies a unique position in the religious system of India, originated directly from the primitive Mother Goddess the Sakti Cult gradually crept into the mainstream of Indian religions and the indigenous folk-tribal faiths incorporating local godlings of aniconic and iconic forms, heterogenous elements, customs, rites, beliefs, worship patterns, interesting myths and legends etc. No other religion can claim to have continuous and colourful history right from the Indus Valley civilization with richest source of mythology, *tantras* and numerous manifestations as Saktism. From the Vedic period onwards Sakti represents different phenomena which are manifested in emancipations, each signifying particular aspects of nature.

The cult and the secret practices and philosophies were systematised by the sage Matsyendranath in his *Kaulajnananirnaya*. The parents were disgusted with their peculiar son, deformed and having bad habits. He was thrown into the sea, where a fish swallowed the boy. While in the belly of the fish he could listen to *Dhyanyoga* and *Jyanayoga* from Siva and Gauri. When Siva came to know of the fact he called him *Vipra* and named him as Matsyendranath. Having been blessed by Siva

and Gauri, Matsyendranath practised *yogini kaula* in the company of women. He expounded his *Mahat Kaula* in Kamarupa, where every woman was a *yogini* in the company of whom he discovered his new cult. Sakti is *Kula* and Siva is *Akula*, union of the two is *Kaula* and the process of establishing the relationship is *Kaula Marga*. This philosophy is reflected in the *yogini* temple. Siva in *yoga* pose is encircled by 64 *yoginis*. The images echo the reconciliation of the impassiveness of *yoga* with the lyricism of sex. Matsyendranath prescribes the evoking of the power of *Sakti* to attain *Pasostambhah*, *Nigrahanugraha*, *Yoginimelana*, *Marana*, *Vasikarana* etc. He applies eight *vidyas* to propitiate *yoginis*.

In order to practise such a hideous cult a Saivite sect known as Kapalika Sect acquired the occult knowledge. As regards the Kapalikas and their association with Yoginis and Chamunda we have some literary and archaeological evidence. *Lalitavistara*, a Buddhist text of early Christian era, describes *Kapalikas* besmearing their bodies with ashes, wearing red garments and carrying a triple staff (*tridanda*), a pot, a Skull, a *Khatvanga*. By the 6th/7th century A.D. the Kapalika Sect became prominent. Hieun-Tsang speaks of the *Kapaladharinis* in the following words, "the dress and ornaments worn by non-



believers are varied and mixed. Some wear peacock's feathers; some wear as ornaments, necklace made of skull bones have no clothing but go naked some wear leaf or dark garments, some pull out their hair and cut off their moustache; other have bushy whiskers and their hair braided on the top of their heads. The custom is not uniform, and the colour, whether red or white, not constant."

Harsacharita and *Kadambari* of Banabhatta mentions about the association of Savara tribe's magic and tantra which were amalgamated with the secret practices of the *Kapalikas*. The *Malatimadhava druma* of Bhababhuti describes that the pilgrimage site of Kurnool district of

Andhra Pradesh was the home of the *Kapalikas* and *Kalamukhas*. *Kapalikas* play two villain roles of the *Kapalikas* and their secret vows. *Brahmanda Purana*, *Vayu Purana* and *Matsya Puranas* narrate stories of *Kapalikas*.

The name of *Kapalikas* find mention with different sects on the two famous inscriptions of Sravanabelgola in Karnataka. Two inscriptions of the Chalukya King Nagavardhan (7th century A.D.) record the donation to the Kapaleswari temple and the *Kapalikas*. The copper plate grant of Tilakwarda near Baroda (1147 A.D.) refers to *Kapalikas*. The Vaital temple of Bhubaneswar (8th century A.D.) is a shrine of Kapali (eight

armed Chamunda). Remnant of a stone *Yupa* in front of the Vaital temple, the terrific tantric images alongwith Chamunda and the intensely dark cellar suggest the practice of animal and human sacrifice. The *Kapalikas* being the extreme cult must have been associated with the *Yogini* shrines. The penance of the *Kapalikas* is known as

Mahavrata, which prescribes the killing of a *Brahmana* as a part of Mahavrata for removal of sin. The *Matsya Purana* describes lucidly about the practice of *Mahavrata* through stories.

The doctrine of the *Kapalikas* is known as *Somasiddhanta*. Terrific Bhairava is their personal god. The basic principle of the *Kapalikas* is *Bhakti*

or imitatively aiming at the communion of the worshipper with the god. Through this process they attain superhuman magical powers. The *Kapalikas* are specialists in human sacrifice. The custom of human sacrifice was prevalent in ancient India, particularly associated with the tantric shrines, where the *Kapalikas* attained *siddhi* through occult practices of human sacrifice and *Panchamakara*.



Mahisamardini Durga, Parasuramesvara Temple, Bhubaneswar, circa 7th Century A.D.,

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Sapta Matrikas

Bharati Pal

The *Sapta Matrikas* or the seven divine mothers, representing the *saktis*, or the energies of the important familiar deities are Brahmani (Saraswati) Mahesvari (Raudani) Kaumari (*Karttikeyani*) Vaishnavi (Lakshmi) Varahi, Indrani and Chamunda (Chamundi). According to a legend described in the *Isanasivagurudevapaddhati*, the *Matrikas* were created to help Lord Siva in his fight against Andhakasura. When the Lord inflicted wounds on Andhaka, blood began to flow profusely from his body. Each drop which touched the ground assumed the shape of another Andhaka. Thus there were innumerable *Asuras* fighting Siva. To stop the flow of the blood, Siva created a goddess called Yogesvari from the flames issuing out of his mouth. Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswara, Kumara, Varaha, Indra and Yama also sent their *saktis* to follow Yogesvari in stopping the flow of blood. Thus the *Sapta Matrikas* originated and Andhakasura finally lost his power and was defeated by Siva.

In the *Suprabhedagama*, the *Matrikas* are said to have been created by Brahma in order to kill Nirrita. The *Agama* literature gives a brief description of these goddesses : that Brahmani should be sculptured like Brahma; Mahesvari like Maheswara; Vaishnavi like Vishnu; Varahi as a short woman with an angry face and bearing a plough as her weapon; Indrani like Indra and Chamunda as a terrific woman. This last-mentioned goddess should have her hair in a dishevelled condition, should possess a dark complexion and have four hands. She should

weild the *trisula* in one of her hands and carry a *kapala* in another. All the *Matrikas* are to be seated images and should have two of their hands held in the *Varada* and *Abhaya* poses, while the other two hands carry weapons appropriate to the male counterparts of the female powers.

The *Varaha Purana* states that these mother-goddesses are eight in number and includes among them the goddess Yogesvari. It further says that these *Matrikas* represent eight mental qualities which are morally bad. Accordingly, Yogesvari represents *kama* or desire; Mahesvari, *krodh* or anger; Vaishnavi, *lobha* or covetousness; Brahmani; *mada* or pride; Kaumari *moha* or illusion; Indrani, *matsarya* or fault finding; Yami or Chamunda *paisunya*, that is tale bearing; and Varahi *asuya* or envy.

The *Sapta Matrikas* are mentioned in the *Rigveda*, *Gobhilasmruti*, *Markandeya Purana*, *Matsya Purana*, etc. Varahamihira's *Brihat Samhita* also mentions about the images of *Sapta Matrikas*. The sculpture of the *Sapta Matrikas* are referred to in the *Krityaratnakara*. The *Devi Purana* mentions the name of the flowers used for the worship of *Matrikas*.

Prevalence of the worship of the divine mothers is believed to be as early as 3rd millenium B.C., when the Indus Valley Civilization flourished. The earliest epigraphic reference to the *Matrikas* is to be found in the Gangadhara inscription of Vishwa Varman, in Malwa Samvat



480 or 423-424 A.D. The *Matrikas* also figure in the Viharstambha inscription of Skandagupta. Kadambari mentions that the *Matrikas* were worshipped in every village.

The several *Tantra sastras* such as *Svachhanda Tantra* and *Yogini Hridaya* contain a detailed description of the *Sapta Matrikas*. As the *Matrikas* are stated to be sitting in *lalitasana* posture, they are adorned with heavy ornaments, necklaces and circular ear-rings. From the *Sadhana* in the Buddhist literature it appears that the Tantric Buddhism had also incorporated the *Sapta Matrikas* in its religious fold. This is amply corroborated by the discovery of a composite figure of the seven mothers at Nalanda.

A brief description of the *Matrikas* are given below :

Brahmani

The first *Matrika* in the series is yellow complexioned and has four faces, three of which are visible in her sculptures, the fourth one is at the back. Two of her arms in *varada* and *abhaya* gestures and she carries *kamandalu* and *akashamala* in two other hands, She is seated upon a lotus, has *hamsa* (swan) as her *vahana*. She wears a yellow garment (*pitambara*) and her head is adorned with a *Karanda Mukuta*. Her place is under a *palas* tree.

Vaishnavi

Vaishnavi is dark in complexion, carries in one of her hands the *chakra* and in the corresponding left hand the *sankha*; her two other hands are held in the *abhaya* and the *varada mudra* respectively. She has a lovely face, pretty eyes and she wears a yellow garment. On her head is a *Kirita Mukuta*. She is adorned with all the ornaments generally worn by Vishnu and the emblem of her banner as well as her *vahana* is the Garuda. Her place is under a *Raja Vriksha*. In the *Devi Purana*, she is represented as possessing four hands in which she carries the *sankha*, *chakra*, *gada* and *padma*. She wears

the *vanamala*, the characteristic garland of Vishnu.

Indrani

Indrani has three eyes and four arms; in two of her hands she carries the *vajra* and the *sakti*, the two other hands being respectively held in the *varada* and *abhaya* poses. The colour of these goddess is red, and she has on her head a *Kirita Makuta*. Her *vahana* as well as the emblem of her banner is elephant, and her abode is under the *Kalpaka* tree. According to the *Vishnudharmotra*, she should have a thousand eyes and should be of golden colour and should have six arms. *Devi Purana* states that she carries the *ankusa* and *vajra* only and in the *Purva Karanagama* it has been mentioned that she has only two eyes and she holds lotus in one of her hands.

Mahesvari

Mahesvari is white in complexion, she has three eyes. She has four arms, two of which are in the *varada* and the *abhaya* poses, while in the remaining two hands she carries the *trisula* and *akashamala*. Her banner as well as the *vahana* is Nandi (bull); she wears a *Jata Makuta*.

Kaumari

Kaumari is yellow in complexion and has four hands, in two of which she carries the *sakti* and the *kukkuta*, the remaining two hands in the *abhaya* and the *varada* poses. Her *vahana* is the Peacock. Her abode is under a fig tree. According to the *Vishnudharamottara*, she has six faces and twelve arms, in which she carries the *sakti*, *dhvaja*, *danda*, *dhanus*, *bana*, *ghanta*, *padma*, *patra* and *parasu*. The *Devi Purana* adds that her garlands are made of red flower and the *Purvakarnagama* adds that the goddess is so sculptured as to suggest the ideas of valour and courage.

Varahi

Varahi is dark complexioned, with human body and the face of a boar. She wears on her



head a *Karanda Makuta* and is adorned with ornaments made of corals. She weilds the *hala* and the *sakti* and is seated under a *Kalpaka* tree. Her *vahana* as well as the emblem of her banner is the Elephant. The *Vishnudharmottara* states that she has a big belly and six hands, in four of which she carries the *danda*, *khadga*, *khetaka* and *pasa*. The *Purvakaranagama* says that she carries the *hala* and *musala* as her weapons. She wears on her legs *nupuras* (anklets).

Chamunda

Goddess Chamunda has four arms, two of which are in the *varada* and *abhaya* poses and in the other two hands she carries the *kapala* (skull) and the *trisula*. The Devi is destroyed the two demons, Chanda and Munda. She has a very emaciated body, aunken belly and a terrifying face with a grin. She wears a garland of skulls. Her garment is the tiger skin and her abode is under fig tree. As the mother goddess she is the fertility aspect of Durga. She has been praised as the tutelary goddess of Vindhya mountains. She has a very heavy *Jata Makuta*. In the *Purva Karanagama* it is mentioned that she should have her mouth open and should wear on her head the digit of the moon as Siva does, that her *vahana* is an owl and the emblem of her banner is an eagle. In one of the left hands she carries the *kapala* which is filled with lumps of flesh, and in another left hand she holds a snake. She wears in her ears *kundalas* made of conch-shell.

The sculpturing of the *Sapta Matrika* group of goddesses found in the cave temple of Ellora conform largely to the description given above. They, however differ in few points. For instance the group is invariably made of seven mothers flanked on either side by Virabhadra who is seen playing upon a *vina* and Vinayaka. There is being some blood-thirsty ghost surrounding Chamunda.

A stone slab of the early Kushana period, from Dhanagaon near Mathura now in the Mathura Museum, represents the *Matrikas* as

ordinary females without any distinguishing symbol or vehicle. In Orissa certain varieties of the *Matrika* figures in developed forms have been found. An early group of *Sapta Matrikas* with the two associates, Genesa and Virabhadra are found on the northern wall of the Parasuramesvara temple (605 A.D.) at Bhubaneswar. The ceiling of the *Jagamohana* of the Muktesvara temple also contains beautiful figures of the *Sapta Matrika*, each occupying one of the petals of the eight petalled lotus at the center conceived in the form of a canopy. These figures constitute a group of the *Sapta Matrikas* with Viresvara. In the inner walls of *Vaital deula* there are a group of *Sapta Matrikas* headed by Viresvara, with the largest image of Chamunda which is the presiding deity of the shrine. A group of *Matrika* images like Vaishnavi, Varahi, Indrani and Chamunda found in the Orissa State Museum. All the *Matrikas* are seat in *Lalita* attitude. An interesting relief in the Orissa State Museum, bearing the figures of the *Matrikas*, depicts Chamunda having emaciated body, sunken belly, wearing a garland of skull and seated in an easy posture, on a prostrate human being.

There is an interesting *Saptamatrika* panel in the Allahabad Museum. They were found at Gorgi in the Rewa dist of Madhya Pradesh. All the seven divine mothers along with Virabhadra and Ganesa have been rendered as dancing vigorously.

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The Concept of Mother Goddess in the Art and Literature of Orissa

Jayanti Rath

The concept of Mother Goddess probably accommodates the largest number of paradoxes. She is a virgin and yet she is also the mother, a mother goddess. She is the Saivite Parvati and also a Vaishnavi. She is the purest of the pure. She is blood-thirsty Kali and also the very embodiment of the merciful and beautiful Amba or Lalita. She is invincible; she is the slayer of demons. She is Durga, with many arms. She is Sakti, the divine principle. This multiplicity of paradoxes proves the continuous popularity of the Sakti cult in India over the centuries.

The very word *Sakti* denotes power. She can be seen through the different phenomenon of life. *Durga Saptasati* says that everyone has inherent power called *Sakti*, which is a manifestation of *Para Sakti*, the supreme goddess. In the *Sakta* scheme of cosmogonical evolution, the unmanifested *prakarti* alone existed before creation. She wished to create, and having assumed the form of the great mother, created Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. Referring to the Mother Goddess cult of Mohenjodaro, Marshall rightly observed that it was in the later *Sakta* phase of the primitive Mother Goddess cult that the Devi became the manifestation of the all-powerful female principle, viz. the *Prakriti* or *Sakti* having associated with the male principle, the *Purusa*. She becomes Jagadamba or Jagatmata, the mother of the universe and the creator of gods. She is Mahadevi, the consort of Siva.



Saktism gained prominence in the epic period when gods receded into the background. In the *Mahabharata* Aditi is regarded as mother of the Adityas. She is also the mother of Vasus and Rudras. In *Harivamsa*, she is identified with Durga. Later Vedic goddesses, however, received greater importance in the epics while goddesses



like Usha, Aditi, Bhru etc went into oblivion and were reduced to insignificance. Most of them are brought in relation to Vishnu or Siva. Lakshmi-Vaishnavi play an important part in the subsequent religious history of India. The goddess mentioned in the two great epics have been identified with Saraswati, the consort of Brahma. As the goddess of fluency and eloquence, the goddess Saraswati is mentioned in the *Mahabharata*.

The goddesses like Ambika, Aparna, Bhadrakali, Durga, Gouri, Kali, Kausiki, Sakambari, Uma etc were of Saivite affiliation but later they all had been identified with the Supreme Goddess of the *Saktas*. The *Mahabharata* also mentions some of the prototypes of Devi or Sakti. It narrates among the various names of the Goddess- Kumari, Mandaravasini, Kalaratri, Kaushiki, Sakambari, and so on. She is called the favourite of Narayana, born of Yasoda holding sword and shield, four-armed and four-faced, the destroyer of Mahisasura, who resides in the Vindhya. Uma, also known as Parvati, the daughter of Himalaya and the wife of Siva, is mentioned in the *Ramayana* and in the *Mahabharata*. Her name recalls *Maa* or the mother and her conception goes back to the primitive and universal cult of the female principle. The epithets used are Giriputri, Girija, Nagakanya, Salarajaputri, all indicating her association with Himalayan region. Uma is equated with Durga in the Durga *stotras* of *Mahabharata*. Her name is Durga as she saves people from difficulty. She is called Mandaravasini, Kumari, Kali, Chandi, etc.

In the *puranas*, a lot of information has been given about Saktism. The glory of the Goddess is revealed in its fullest form there. In *Devi Bhagavata Purana*, the *Sakta* Goddess is conceived as the *Adya Sakti* that resides in Brahma as the creative principle, in Vishnu as the sustaining power, and in Siva as the destructive

force. This *Adyasakti* pervades all space and annihilates all things of this phenomenal world. The Goddess is unmanifested and takes three forms of Mahalakshmi, Mahakali and Mahasaraswati representing *raja*, *satvika* and *tamasa* attributes.

The *Matrikas* or divine mothers play an important role in the Devi legends. In the *Mahabharata*, we come across numerous *Matrikas*. In the *puranas* they are regarded as the offshoots of the goddess Kaushiki or Chandika, namely Yogesvari or Vaishnavi, Brahmani, Kumari, Indrani, Maheswari, Chamunda and Varahi each having a separate identity.

In later period Saktism became almost identical with tantricism. Tantric ideas profoundly influenced the principles and practices followed by the *Saktas*. The evolution of Yogini cult gives ample evidence to this and all these forms of Devi have been duly represented in the art and literature of Orissa. The contribution of Orissa to *Sakta* cult and *Sakta* art is rich and significant both from literary and historical points of view.

Architectural Representation of Mother Goddess in Orissa

The walls of Vaitala, Sisiresvara and Markandeswara temples of Orissa contain exquisite images of Mahisamardini Durga.

The panel of Parsurameswara temple of Bhubaneswara represents a fine specimen of Kalyana Sundara murti, i.e the marriage scene of Siva and Parvati. A good number of sculptures of Orissa depict the Ardhanarisvara form in which the right half comprises all the iconography features of Siva, and the left half those of Uma.

In mediaeval Orissan temples the Gajalakshmi motif is carved on the shrines. She is elaborately depicted even in separate niches. Sri or Lakshmi as the Goddess of Wealth and



Prosperity occurs in the innovational stanzas of many inscriptions. The Hathigumpha Inscription of Kharavela throws light on the conception of this deity in the first century B.C. Of the important Orissan Gajalaksmis, we may refer to those on the tympanum of the Anantagumpha, on the doorway of the Muktesvara temple, on the eastern doorway of the *Jagamohana* of Konark, and on the wall of the shrine at Mahavir Chowk in Jajpur. On the door frame of Ratnagiri Mahavihara another beautiful mediaeval Gajalaksmi is found. The association of Lakshmi with Narayana is alluded to in literature and inscriptions. The Hindol plate of Subhakara Deva makes a reference to Lakshmi adoring the lap of Vishnu. We have fine specimen of Lakshmi- Narayana image found at Kendupatna in Cuttack district and Chaurasi in Puri district. Lakshmi is specially associated with Varaha and Narasimha incarnations of Vishnu. In connection with the former, she is installed in the Varaha temple at Jajpur and in connection with the latter she is found on the Lingaraja temple at Bhubaneswar. Her tantric Mahalakshmi form is represented in an eighteen armed image at Jajpur in the front of Trilochana temple. In the Lakshmi temple inside the inner courtyard of the Jagannath temple at Puri, the goddess takes specific *veshas* on various occasions.

Images of goddess Saraswati, the deity of learning stands on a lower pedestal in the sculptural representation of Orissa. There is an image of the goddess inside the Jagannath temple, but compared to that of Lakshmi, it is quite insignificant. That goddess Sarala of Jhankada bestowed poetic power on Sarala Das, the great poet of mediaeval Orissa, is a well-known fact. And it is to be noted here that she is identified with goddess Saraswati.

A piece of sculpture from Khiching is unique. It shows the half-length figure of a seven hooded nagini wearing a *karanda-mukuta* and playing on a *veena*. The pattern of this image signifies that the deity is not an ordinary snake

maiden, but a goddess with iconographic affinity with Saraswati.

Goddess Ekanamsa, mythologically associated with Vishnu-Krishna, is worshipped as the principal deity in the Ananta Vasudev temple at Bhubaneswar. Descriptions of this goddess are found in *Brhatsamhita*, *Vishnu Dharmottara*, etc.

The growing importance of Saktism brought the *Matrikas* into greater prominence. The images of the eight mothers from *Mukti Mandapa* near Jajpur and the eight mothers with Sivaduti on the bank of Baitarini indicate their popularity. At present, we have two sets of *Matrikas* at Jajpur. An inscribed image of Chamunda also comes from Jajpur which was installed by queen Vatsadevi of Bhaumakara dynasty. The Parsuramesvara temple of Bhubaneswar contained a group of *Saptamatrika* on the north west corner of the northern wall of the *Jagamohana*. The Vaital temple contains a terrible Chamundi figure as its presiding deity. In the inner wall of the *Jagamohana* we find a group of *Saptamatrikas*, all of them sitting in *yogasana* pose on a full blown lotus with their different attributes. In the Muktesvara temple, the presentation of seven mothers occurs on an eight petalled lotus carved on the ceiling of its *Jagamohana*. The figure of a four- armed Vaisnavi with Garuda beneath her seat hailing from Khiching deserves special mention. The goddess gracefully holds *sankha* and *chakra* in her back hands. She has her front right hand in the *abhaya* pose and child in her front left.

The Yogini cult also revived on account of the increasing influence of the cult of seven or eight mothers. Initially their numbers increased from eight to sixteen and then to sixty-four and more. In Sanskrit literature, the *yoginis* have been represented as the attendants of various manifestations of Durga, engaged in fighting with



Sumbha and Nisumba and the principal *yoginis* are identified with *Matrikas*. There is a temple of sixtyfour *yoginis* at Hirapur. All of them are in standing postures. There is another temple of sixtyfour *yoginis* at Ranipur-Jhari in Bolangir district.

That Orissa had long association with Tantricism is evident from its identification with Uddiyana, one of the four famous Tantra *pithas* of ancient India. Innumerable images of Tantric goddesses have been found from different sites. Mention may be made of images of Tara (Jajpur-11th century A.D.), bronze images of Hariti and Kurukulla (Banpur), now preserved in Orissa State Museum, images of Vasundhara from Khiching and those of Arya Saraswati and Aparajita from Ratnagiri.

The Tantric influence is so deep that it is felt in the worship of some Hindu goddesses. Tantric rituals are observed for Goddess Bimala, the principal female deity of Jagannath temple, Puri. The very shape of the image of Stambhesvari, the presiding deity of Sonapur, also establishes the fact. Here the goddess is being worshipped in the form of a pillar. The temples of Mohini, Kapalini and Gauri at Bhubaneswar, Bimala at Puri, Kichakesvari at Khiching, Biraja at Jajpur, Mangala at Kakatapur, Charchika at Banki, Ugratara at Bhusandapur, Varahi at Chaurasi. Sarala at Jhankada, Samalesvari at Sambalpur and Tara Tarini in Ganjam show the wide prevalence of Sakti-cult in Orissa.

Saktism in Literature

Madala Panji gives details of the cult of seven mothers whose images were installed by Bhima Keshari. It also makes a mention of the construction of the Samalai temple at Sambalpur by one Yadukesari. Sarala Das's *Chandi Purana* deals with the *puranic* and popular legends of the Devi. In his *Bilanka Ramayana*, Sita is identified with the great goddess who killed Ravana. Goddesses such as Ugratara, Baseli,

Mahesvari, Kalika, Karikali, Ahimukhi, Jambaki, etc. are mentioned in the *Mahabharata*. Jagannath Das, the mediaeval poet of Orissa, composed a work on *Saiva-Sakta* doctrine which came to be known as *Tula-Bhina*. In *Bata Abaksha* of Balarama Dasa, Lord Jagannath is described as being attended upon by sixty-four *yoginis*: Katyayini, *Sapta Matrika*, Bimala and Biraja. The work also makes a mention of seventy-six local goddesses identified with different aspects of *Sakti*. The *Prachi Mahatmya* of Dvija Trilochana mentions deities like Candaghanta, Rama Candi, Bhagavati etc. The Orissa State Museum contains several Tantric manuscripts and in this context reference may be made of Jagannath Acharya's *Durga Yajna Dipika*, Kesava Rath's *Tarinikula Saradarcana Paddhati* and Raghunath Das's *Vanadurga Puja*.

Thus Saktism evolved out of the prehistoric Mother Goddess cult, and symbolized the facts of primitive life manifest in various forms. Its development here is manifold like a number of streams, issuing from a single source. The significance of each of these streams has to be understood in the context of the prevailing religious beliefs and practices.

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Goddess Bimala at Puri

Shrinibas Tripathy

The title of this article is the translation of a famous line in Sanskrit from an important scripture, *Bimala Purusottame* which means that Bimala stays at Purusottama or Puri. This supposes that the proper name Bimala used to be a very familiar name of Goddess Durga during the time when the scripture was written. It also means that the name stood for the supreme importance of the deity. Another line in Sanskrit states that Bimala is a great goddess and Jagannath is an awesome appearance of Lord Shiva : *Bimala tu Mahadevi Jagannathastu Bhairava*. That Bimala is a great goddess being an appearance of Durga goes without saying. But to say that Jagannath or Vishnu is an appearance of the awesome aspect of Shiva and for that matter Bimala is his consort needs explanation. The question raised is how Vishnu can be Shiva. But the answer is not difficult to find. The three primordial principles of creation, preservation and destruction representing the Hindu deities of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are not mutually exclusive, but inclusive. They are not watertight compartments, but are continuous and all-embracing wholes. In other words, Vishnu is not different from Shiva. So Ramakrishna Pramahansa once declared that Jagannath is only Shiva and his idol is only a Shivalinga and should be worshipped as such. Similarly, one can say that Bimala is Laxmi, the consort of Vishnu,



because both are parts of the same mother principle. It is because of this reason again that Puri is regarded as a meeting point and melting pot for the worships of both Vishnu and Shiva, of Durga, Laxmi and Saraswati, an idea which finds extensive elaboration in scriptures. The *Brahma Puran* in particular speaks of the sameness of



Vishnu and Shiva in its account of sage Markandeya. So let us come back to our basic argument. Bimala is a great goddess whose worship at Puri is of supreme importance for the Hindus. Out of the fifty-two places sacred to the worshippers of the mother principle, the very first one is Puri where the feet of Goddess Sati, an incarnation of Durga fell on earth when Vishnu chopped her body off with His wheel in order to pacify Shiva, who was angry due to his first consort Sati's untimely death. In this story we see a philosophy, a synthesis between principles and a comprehensiveness and the all-embracing nature of Hinduism. It also speaks of the oneness of godhead in a diversity. So Bimala's presence at Puri not only makes this sacred place the first of the holy spots for the worshippers of the mother principle, it also preaches comprehensiveness, the basic tenet of a great religion. The last but not the least question is why Sati's feet should fall at Puri and not at any other place on earth. In answer one may say that this is the postulate of a scripture which cannot and should not be questioned. You may either accept or not accept it.

Bimala's temple is situated at the right hand western corner of the tower of Jagannath, just by the side of the Rohini Kunda. The temple's closeness to the Rohini Kunda is a testimony to its ancientness, because Rohini Kunda is one of the two most ancient relics existing in the precinct, the other being the holy banyan tree named Kalpavata. The Bimala temple is similar in structure and height to the Nrusimha temple near Muktimandap which, according to historians, was built in the ninth century. As one enters the Bimala temple one sees the idol of a majestic lion, Durga's animal vehicle riding an elephant which signifies the victory of good over the mighty evil. The great Salabeg, a Muslim poet of the seventeenth century, sings the glory of the spot in one of his beautiful songs on Jagannath written in Oriya

language. The entrance to the *sanctum sanctorum* is decorated with figures of Shaivite and Shakta deities. The various appearances of Goddess Durga as well as paintings depicting the goddess's role in subduing the demons attract the devotee's attention most.

The inner temple houses the principal idol of the goddess which is said to be a sixth century structure because it is bereft of elaborate decorations. The goddess possesses not too comely and not too angry a face and wields two arms holding a pitcher said to contain nectar in one hand and a rosary in the other. That she does not wield weapons is an evidence of the benevolent nature of the goddess. She is, therefore, a goddess of goodness, of godly traits of long life and devotion. So she is in the most peaceful appearance of Goddess Durga. No separate food items are usually cooked for the goddess for ritual offering. But the cooked food offered to Jagannath in various rituals becomes *mahaprasad* or the famed Jagannath rice only after being specially offered to Bimala. So after the *puja* of Jagannath a little of his offering is given to Bimala in a ritual. Bimala is described, therefore, in scriptures as a goddess who lives on the remnants of Jagannath's food. There is a legend in the background of this practice. Once Shiva, a god of the Hindu trinity, went to Vaikuntha in order to meet Vishnu. But the latter had just taken his food, a few grains of which had fallen on the ground. Shiva picked up a sacred grain and swallowed it quickly, hoping supreme good. But a half of the grain had fallen on his beard of which he was completely oblivious. Next, Shiva went to his abode after which Narada, the sage of devotion, came to him. When the latter saw the sacred grain on Shiva's beard he quickly grabbed it and swallowed within no time. After this came Shiva's consort Parvati who knew through her mind's eye that Shiva had first



swallowed the precious thing without giving her a share to which as Shiva's consort she was entitled. She was crestfallen and suffered a great remorse. Next she went to Vishnu and complained. Vishnu told her that in the Kali Age she would sit as Bimala at Puri and eat everyday the remnants of his food. From the very first day of the Kali Age this practice is continuing.

Mahaprasad or Jagannath rice which is offered to Bimala in the ritual in order to add extra sanctity to it is strictly a vegetarian stuff. But Bimala is offered separately non-vegetarian food stuff once in the span of a year. The time is Durga Puja which is celebrated in the month of *Asvin* or October, the period when Bimala is remembered for good she brought to mankind, as the great *Saptashati Chandi* describes, by slaying the demon Mahishashura. It is believed that during the period this benevolent Bimala displays a destructive appearance, due to which for pacification she is not only offered non-vegetarian food stuff but also given animal sacrifice both of which are very secret rituals observed strictly in the presence of selected worshippers. When the *puja* is performed the doors of Jagannath, a non-violent and vegetarian god, are bolted. His Vaishnavite worshippers are debarred from entering the temple. The animal, one he-goat, is brought across the outer south-western corner boundary wall and sacrificed in between the idol of lion and the outer temple of Bimala. Fish caught from Markand pond are also cooked at one side of the Bimala temple, offered to the goddess according to Tantric rituals and subsequently distributed among the selected worshippers. This is called Bimala *parusa* or Bimala's cuisine. All these rituals should be completed before dawn when Jagannath's doors are opened for *arati*. Now-a-days this practice of offering non-vegetarian food items to Bimala and the animal sacrifice is vehemently objected to by critics. But

those who defend the tradition point out that this is in agreement with the all-embracing nature of Jagannath cult. If human kind will dispose off violence and non-vegetarian food altogether, the practice will go, as Jagannath temple is nothing but a mirror to our society.

As Bimala assumes her awesome aspect during the Durga Puja, women are debarred from entering the temple during this period, since menfolk think that they, being the fair sex, will be afraid of seeing Bimala in her destructive appearance during the period. And in the past, some weak-hearted women might have been mentally harmed by visiting Bimala during the period. This simple practice is believed and observed by thousands of women worshippers. But once an interesting event took place. A respectable Bengali lady who happened to be the wife of a powerful Union Minister insisted on going inside the temple during the Durga Puja. She was of course told about the practice. But perhaps due to her misplaced socialistic and feminist leanings she told that the practice was an outcome of a male-domination and discrimination which she wanted to fight through direct action. So she cried hoarse and foul and created an ugly scene. However, with much of difficulties she could be pacified by the devotees and at last she went back without hurting the age-old practice of the temple. It should be remembered that it is the temple traditions, whether reasonable or much harmlessly half-reasonable and unreasonable which separately or together have saved the Jagannath cult, the great Puri temple, its attractive rituals and festivities throughout ages. They survived the onslaughts of various happenings in history. Hence to abolish them whimsically at the spur of a moment is not perhaps correct.

This is one side of the drama. There is the other side too, which is a piece of my personal



experience. Once near Muktimandap during one of my occasional sojourns to the Jagannath temple a well-educated and well dressed Bengali couple asked me in a flawless English accent where the Bimala temple is situated. I pointed my finger at the temple and also accompanied them, as my next destination was the same temple. In course of our conversations I came to know that the couple were officers of the Indian Administrative Service. When I heard this I kept a distance and kept mum assuming that they must be sceptical people, taking Hindu gods and goddesses as objects of fun. But to my utter surprise, they observed all the formalities; they respectfully touched the idol of lion; purchased the local candle stuff and garlands for the deity. And at the appropriate spot started reciting from the scriptures in immaculate Sanskrit. Both were adept in pronouncing Sanskrit words flawlessly. The temple dome reverberated their recital; the atmosphere of the temple was filled with an extra religious piety for the moment. I was further surprised because of easily known reasons. I exclaimed, a modern affluent couple could be so knowledgeable and so pious ! My devotion to Bimala was increased a thousand fold. I bowed to her most respectfully and walked by with my heart full of religious piety.

It is for this reason that the people of Orissa take pride in having the Bimala temple in their place. They say that it is the first of the sites sacred to the goddess and a visit to it is a must for all types of devotees. So people throng the temple in large numbers singing the super hymns of the great *Saptashati Chandī*, composed by the ageless sage Markandeya, *Debyapara-dhakshya-mapanastotram* by the great saint of Kerala, Shankaracharya and *Vimalastakam* by Purusottam Rakshit. So let us conclude this essay by singing a hymn to her by the last named devotee

You are the maker of beams of the rising moon.

You are the destroyer of fear.

You are the goddess of the site where the feet fell.

You are the object of the wooden Brahma Jagannath's joy

And are the owner of three worlds.

You are indeed the true consort of Shiva

You stir the devotee's emotion; you are supreme.

You cover the whole universe; you are the Mother.

Save me Bimala; for you are the giver of eternal joy.

You are the very queen of Laxmi's sovereignty.

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The Shakta Temples of Sonepur

Sangeeta Mishra

From the very ancient times, Sonepur is considered as a holy city. The *Kosalananda Kavya* of poet Gangadhara Mishra, written in 1664 A.D., describes the temple city of Sonepur as the second Varanasi of India. Sonepur came under the Chauhans during the days of Ramaideva, the founder of the Chauhan rule in western Orissa in the middle of 14th century A.D. But Sonepur got the status of a separate state in the first half of 17th century, with Madana Gopala Deva as its king. The work of the court poet, Kavi Gangadhara Mishra shows that there were many temples at Sonepur prior to the Chauhan rule.¹ The Somavamsi charter also corroborates this fact.

The copper plate inscription issued in the 17th regnal year of the Somavamsi king Janmejaya (850 A.D.-885 A.D.) states that the temples of 'Sri Kesava' and 'Adidtya Deva' were very famous.² This inscription has been unearthed near the Stambesvari or Khambhesvari, situated in the heart at the present Sonepur town. The Maranjamura Copper Plate of Yayati II, the Somavamsi ruler, issued in his 3rd regnal year from his capital Suvarnapura, also makes a reference to the temples. The description of Suvarnapura, identified with modern Sonepur, in this inscription is simply wonderful. According to the inscription, there were several temples and gardens, which enhance the beauty of the town.

After that there are no references about the temples of Sonepur till the coming in of the Chauhans in mid-14th Century A.D. The temple building tradition might have continued in Sonepur, but no inscripational or architectural evidences are available with us. Further research may throw more light on this.

Almost all of the temples now standing at Sonepur were built during the Chauhan rule. On the basis of their cult images, the temples of Sonepur can be divided into three thematic divisions i.e., the *Saiva*, *Vaisnava* and *Sakta* temples.

Ancient Sonepur was a famous seat of tantricism. Even now Sakti worship is more prominent at Sonepur than any other cult. Some of the most important Sakta temples are Sureswari, Stambhesvari or Khambesvari, Bhagavati, Samelesvari, Budhi Samalei, Manikesvari, Narayani, Sitalei and Landesvari.

The temple of Sureswari is situated on the left bank of the river Tel towards the north of Suvarnameru temple and south-east of Ramesvara temple. It is difficult to determine the time of the installation of the deity. However it seems that, Sureswari was the presiding deity of the Suvarnapur fort during the Somavamsis in about 9th century A.D. The present Satabandha,



Gudialibandha and Jilabandha or tanks and the adjacent mud ridges were probably the water moats and walls of the fort. According to the *Bratacharita*, Suresvari Devi was being worshipped as the guardian deity of the fort at the entrance gate of the Satabandha.

According to legends the legendary hero Parasuram built the temple on the request his mother to make him free from the sin of killing the *Kshyatriyas* of the world, after performing a *Yagnya*. A noteworthy fact about this is the presence of an ancient and big altar, which is believed as the altar of Parasuram by the local people. Some people believe that, this is the seat of Renuka, mother of Parasuram herself.

The present temple of Suresvari devi was constructed by the Chauhan king Achal Singh Deo, with an eight armed Chamunda image as its presiding deity. Goddess Suresvari is offered fish everyday. It is a must for her. The same practice is prevalent in the Varahi temple at Chaurasi. The main festival of the temple is the *Bali Parva* which covers fifteen days starting from *Asvina Amavasya* to *Purnima*.

The temple of Stambhesvari or Khambesvari is situated in the centre of the town. When this temple was built is not known. It is said that wife of Raj Singh Deo, mother of Achal Singh Deo brought her deity Khambesvari from the house of her father, the Raja of Kimidi. Later King Raj Singh built a temple for the deity to honour the goddess of his wife's forebears.³

According to Dr. N.K.Sahu, Stambesvari is the oldest *Sakta* deity of Orissa. Monarchs belonging to different dynasties like Sulki, Bhanja, Tunga had described themselves as the *Padabhakta* or devotee of the deity, in their charters from 8th to 11th century A.D."⁴

From the above fact it can be said that Stambesvari worship was prevalent in this region

much before the coming of the Chauhans. Generally Stambesvari is taken as the tutelary goddess of the Dumals and Kandhs.⁵ The word Stambha or Khamba means pillar. A black wooden post symbolizing the deity was initially being worshipped⁶ and later on an image was installed. According to the court poet Gopinath Panigrahi, the image of Stambesvari is built after the Vanadurga icon. He again opines that, there is the tradition of keeping two *Nisana*, that is a type of musical instrument made of iron, hidden. So, there must be two *Nisanas* kept hidden here also.⁷

The Bhagavati temple is situated on the eastern part of the town. Nothing definite is known about the date and builder of the temple. But it is regarded as an ancient monument by the local people. The presiding deity of the temple is called Bhagavati, a form of Durga. The icon, though blurred, exhibits an antiquarian look. Some scholars identify the deity with Panchambari-Bhadrambika, as mentioned in the Maranjamura plate of Mahasivagupta Yayati II.

The temple of Samalesvari is standing on the right bank of river Mahanadi towards the south-east of the royal palace. Goddess Samalesvari was the tutelary deity of the Chauhan dynasty of both Sambalpur and Sonapur. Maharaja Sobha Singh (1771-1786 A.D.) constructed the present edifice.

The Bruddha Samalei or Budhi Samalei is situated towards the north of the Dadhivamana temple facing north. As the Goddess is installed here from an ancient time, she is given the name of Bruddha Samalei. Initially she was worshipped in a thatched house. The present structure is the creation of Maharaja Prataparudra Deva (1891-1902 A.D.).

The Manikesvari temple stands on the right side of the Sonapur-Manamunda road.



Manikesvari was the tutelary deity of the fisherman community. The present temple was built by the headman of the said community named Chamar Mahalik during the reign of Maharaja Prataprudra Singh Deo.⁸

The Narayani temple is built towards the north of the Gopinath temple. It was built by Maharaja Prithvi Singh Deo. But it is not known, when and by whom the Sitalei temple was built. Its *Mukhasala* was however, constructed by Maharaja Vira Mitrodaya Singh in 1935 A.D.

In the bed of the Mahanadi, there is a small rock called Lankesvari and the deity installed there is also known by the same name. Lankesvari is the presiding goddess of Lanka, the old Sonepur and is worshipped daily even at present by the boat-men. The deep gorge in the Mahanadi near the Lenkesvari hillock is called Lankesvari Darha⁹ and it is referred to as *Lankavarttaka* in old inscriptions. The deity was being worshipped on the rock, in a small niche like structure but recently, it has been shifted to a highrise structure on the same place apparently to protect it from flood waters during rains. The new structure rests on a pillared platform negotiable by a flight of steps.

Sakta Images

Being a stronghold of Sakti worship, a large number of Sakta images are found in the temples of Sonepur. Some of them appear as the presiding deities and the others are found in niches as the Parsvadevi. Some images are also carved on both exterior and interior walls of the temples. But due to the thick coating of vermilion and sandal paste, some of them are not in a condition to be identified. Fortunately enough, still there are a few images, which have distinct features at present.

The image of Mahisamardini is found in all the temples dedicated to Sakti worship in

Sonepur. Mahisamardini is the main incarnation of Durga. Generally she appears in standing pose with ten arms and scattered hair. She usually holds sword, arrow, knife and kharpara in her right hands and shield, bow, disc and mace in her left hands. The Mahisasura or the buffalo-demon is seen lying at her feet. The Goddess is depicted killing the demon by a long trident, by holding it with two hands. Such images are found in the Samalesvari, Suvarnameru and Ramesvara temples. In the Bhagavati temple, the presiding icon is Mahisamardini. The attributes are indistinct but her third eye is visible on her forehead. The presiding deity of the Suresvari temple also corresponds to the above description. Devi Mahisamardini also appears as the Parsvadevi in the northern niche of the Vimana of the Ramasvara temple. This six-armed image is depicted in her conventional archer's pose. She assumes alidha position. The Goddess is shown killing the demon Mahisa by piercing the trident by holding it in her lower left hand. The demon is absent in the sculpture. Her right leg is on the back of her mount lion. She holds a mace in her uplifted right hand whereas the upper left and middle right arms are broken. The Goddess is wearing a karanda mukuta.¹ She is also found in the niche of the Jagamohana of the Samalesvari temple. The four-armed Devi holds conch and disc in her upper back arms and a trident in front arms.

A unique image of goddess Durga is found in the western side niche of the Khambesvari temple. The uniqueness of this icon is the number of arms i.e., fourteen, which is yet to be found anywhere else. It is a standing image holding battle-axe, bow, disc, pasa, kharpara, shield in her left arms and mace, arrow, ankusa, sword etc. in her right arms. She is embellished with ornaments like kirita mukuta, kundala in ears, bangles in hands, anklets in feet etc. The deity



stands on a pedestal and below it stands her mount lion, in a marching position. Two female attendants are standing on her both sides. In the northern niche of the same temple, another eight-armed standing Durga is enshrined as the Parsvadevi. Her weapons are disc, knife, bow and battle-axe in left hands and sword, arrow, trident and dagger in right hands. She is flanked by two attendants while her mount lion is found below her.

An icon of Durga is also found in the lintel of Budhi Samalei temple of Sonapur. Here she is sitting on a tiger, endowed with her usual ornaments. This eight-armed deity is holding disc, trident, sword in her right three hands and the fourth one is in varada mudra while her left hands hold conch, mace, bow with arrow and a lotus. Her very countenance is quite graceful.

The most interesting images found at Sonapur are a group of Matrikas installed in niches around the inner wall of the Jagamohana the Samalesvari temple. The Matrika images are usually found in a set generally of seven (Saptamatrika) and occasionally eight (Astamatrika), though individual images of some Matrikas such as Chamunda and Varahi are frequently found as presiding deities in Sakta temples. The set usually consists of Brahmi, Sivani, Kaumari, Vaisnavi, Varahi, Indrani and Chamunda and when the eighth one is added it is either Nrisimhi or an aspect of Chamunda. But in Sonapur only one set of eight Matrikas is found in the niches of the interior walls of the Samalesvari temple where Nrisimhi replaces the image of Brahmi and the eighth one is of Daksina Kalika. The Matrikas here are not depicted in their conventional passive mode i.e. with a child on their lap but as warrior goddesses who include a garland of skulls in their body ornamentation. Narasimhi, riding on a lion holds a vajra and a

sword in her right hands and blows a conch held in one of her left hands. Varahi assumes an alidha pose and stuffs a demon into her gaping mouth with her uplifted back hand. The eight-armed Chamunda stands on a prostrate corpse while the other matrikas are riding on their respective mounts. Sivani holds a vajra, rosary, trident and a parasu while the two-armed Indrani carries an ankusa and either a bell or a vajra. Vaisnavi is riding the Garuda and Kaumari is shown with her mount Peacock. The eighth image of Daksina Kalika is found seated in intercourse on the corpse of Siva. The matrikas are accompanied by Mahisamardini and Hanuman. The images are partially covered with whitewash and paste. So their features are indistinct.³

Another image of Kali is also found as the Parsvadevi in the eastern niche of the Bhagavati temple. Standing on a corpse, the four-armed deity carries a spear and a sword in her uplifted hands and a kharpara in her lower left hand. Exhibiting a fierce look, she wears a garland of human skulls. The presiding deity of the Suresvari temple is also Chamunda. This six-armed image is standing on a corpse. She is holding a sword, rosary and a small trident in her right hands respectively where as in her left hands, she is holding a *skull-cup* and a shield while biting the finger of her remaining left hand.² A garland of *Skull* is hanging from her neck. A second image of the ferocious Chamunda is found towards the north of Suresvari temple. The four-armed standing icon is depicted with hanging breasts, shunken belly and skeletal body. She carries a spear and a sword in her uplifted hands and a human skull in her lower left hand. She wears a garland of human skulls. A jackle under her feet is dragging the corpse upon which the image stands. Another icon of Varahi is also found in the western niche of the Suresvari temple. In the Suvarnameru temple compound, some loose



sculptures are kept. One among those is that of a six-armed Chamunda. In her up-raised upper right hand she holds a sword whereas she is seen biting the finger of her upper left hand. In her middle left hand she is holding a long khatvanga while her middle right hand is on her right breast. She is seen wearing a jatamukuta. Her left leg is raised up to the knee level.

The present Sonepur town may not be in focus in modern context but it bears testimony of a long and glorious past, literary accounts speak volumes of her rich cultural and sculptural antiquities. Being a seat of Tantric Saktism, it was once upon a time at the peak of esoteric practices, the impact of which can be felt even today during Duga puja.

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Courtesy : *Orissa Review*, September, 2000.



Asta Chandi, Sonepur



Mother Goddess and Her Worship in Orissa

Dr. Krishna Chandra Acharya

Indian Mother Goddess popularly known as Durga is variously worshipped in India. But the root is to be found in the concept of Durga as the goddess of vegetation and fertility. According to the scholars the Navaratra ceremony of Devi Durga is nothing but a harvest festival. In Western India, various kinds of grain are worshipped in honour of the Mother Goddess, and she is invoked to enter the seedlings which are worshipped and finally thrown into water. In Uttar Pradesh special agricultural rites are performed on one of the *Navaratra* days. The tribal peoples such as the Oraons, Bhuiyans and Kols too believe in the Corn Mother and sacrifice chickens and pour a libation of wine on the corn field after the harvest or before the sowing season. In Kashmir and Punjab, during the *Navaratra*, plants of barley and wheat are placed in the earthen pot and offered to the Mother Goddess. In South India, the Goddess is conceived as residing in seeds and plants and worshipped as *amma* (cf. Skt. *amba*) or mother.

The worship of *Navapatrika*, which is an important aspect of Durga worship, clearly shows that the Goddess is concerned with vegetation. The *Navapatrika* consists of nine leaves or plants; Rambha, Kaccvi, Haridra, Jaanti, Bilva, Dadima, Asoka, Manaka and Dhanya. Each of the plants is associated with goddess; Rambha with Brahmani, Kaccvi with Kalika, Haridra with Durga, Jayanti with Kartiki, Bilva

with Siva, Dadima with Raktadantika, Asoka with Sokarohita, Manaka with Camunda and Dhanya with Laksmi (of *Matsyasukta* quoted in *Pranatosani*, V). The nine Goddesses presiding over the nine plants are tied up with an Aparajita creeper, bathed in a tank or a river, and then worshipped independently. Thus in the Durga worship, a very close relation between the Mother Goddess and the vegetation may clearly be observed.

Another aspect of the Indian Mother Goddess is to be found in her different epithets like Himavati, Girija, Sailasuta, VindhyaVASINI, Mandaravasini etc. which clearly point to her association with the hills. This reminds us of an episode narrated in Kenopanisad where she is described as an abstract goddess who imparted *Brahmavidya* to India. But it is difficult to say whether Uma of the said work is same as that of the *Kumarasambhava* or of the *Puranas*. Scholars ascribe the names such as Parvai and Durga to Himavati of the *Upanisad*. The *Puranas* mention several mountain resorts of the Mother Goddess. According of *Devipurana* she lives in the Himalayas as Siva, in the Vindhya as Mangala, in the Malaya mountain as Nanda, in the Kiskindhya hills as Bhairavi, in the Kola mountains as Mahalak, in the Sahyadri range as Kalaratri and in the Gandhamardana hills as Amba. In Orissa there is a beautiful Oriya poem in praise



of Mother Goddess popularly known as *Mangala-Stuti* which enumerates the numerous shrines of the goddess in Orissa each having a different name of her and worshipped in that name such as Viraja at Jajpur, Samalai at Sambalpur, Sarala at Jhankada, Vimala at Puri, Charachika at Banki and Bhattarika at Baramba, and so on.

The name Uma appears to be of non-Sanskritic origin, the derivation of which is not met with anywhere. Kalidasa in his *Kumarasambhava* gives a curious derivation which is obviously not based on usual practice of deriving a word (cf. *u=ma* of *Sarga 1 Sloka 26*). The word *ma* or *amma* in the sense of mother is found used in various parts of the world. The Babylonian word for mother is *Umma* or *Uma*, the Accadian *Ummi*, and the Dravidian is *Amma*. These words can be connected with each other and with *Uma*, the Goddess was also conceived as dwelling in Mountain. Thus Uma, resembles the mountain Goddesses of other countries not only in form but in name as well.

The epithet Sakambhari again of the Mother Goddess suggests her familiarity with vegetation and fertility. But her association with the mountain not only suggests the world of vegetation but also her ferocious nature which is noticed in her character as the destroyer of enemies with her deadly weapons. Here she appears as the Goddess of War vanquishing demons for the sake of gods. This feature is absent in the conception of Parvati-Uma who belongs to the benign group of Goddess. The terrible group is represented by such Goddessess as Chandika, Kali and others. These two independent stream later united into one, and the conception of Durga, benign and terrible, is composite one which may have served the purpose of bridging the gap.

Regarding the goddess as Mahisamardini *Kalika Purana* describes an episode which is briefly as follows :

"In olden times, in the period of Manu Svayambhuva, in the beginning of the first age of men, the great Goddess, the Yoganidra Mahamaya, Supporteress of the Worlds, in whom the worlds are contained, was constantly praised by all the gods with view to the annihilation of demon Mahisa, through desire for the welfare of the living beings; being provided with sixteen arms, she became famous by the name of Bhadrakali.

She appeared in the northern shore of the milk ocean, a mighty figure with the luster of the flax blossom, with earrings made of flaming gold, adorned with long twisted hair and with three diadems together with the crescent being provided with a snake as a necklace and adorned with golden necklaces;

She continually held trident and a discus and a sword, a conch- shell, and an arrow. A lance and a thunderbolt and a staff in her right arms; the Goddess was splendid through her radiant teeth; she continuously held a shield, a hide and a bow, a noose and also a hook, a bell and an axe (and) a mace in her left hands; She stood on the lion, flaming violently with her three eyes which were of the colour or blood, keeping on to pierce Mahisa with her trident and to tread upon him with her left foot, she, the Supreme Lady, in whom the worlds are contained."

Elsewhere the same *Purana* describes the Goddess in the name of Durga with almost the same characteristic features. The demon Mahisa obviously representing the predominance of animal instinct propitiates her and chooses a boon, for being worshipped along with the Goddess in the form of Durga. The Goddess readily grants him the boon saying :

"When you have been killed by me in the fight. O demon Mahisa, you shall never leave my feet; In every place where worship of me takes place, there (will be sorship) of you; as regards your body, O *Danava*, it is to be worshipped and meditated upon at the same time."



Durga in the shape of *Mahisamardini* sometimes with two arms, sometimes with four arms, sometimes with six arms, sometimes with eight arms, sometime with ten arms and rarely with twelve arms is worshipped in several *Pithas* in Orissa.

Tantra seems to have been very popular right from the pre-medieval days in Orissa. With the help of *tantra* goddesses were worshipped. Thus many *devipithas* were converted to *Tantrapithas* in Orissa in course of time. During the rule at Bhauma kings the influence of *Vajrayana* was felt in the rituals. The animal sacrifice and even human sacrifice were taken resort to for fulfilling one's desire. Anointing the body of the worshipper with the sacrificial ash was the usual practice. The *pancha-makara-sadhana* gained momentum in the matters of worship.

The image of the goddess Durga having two arms and as *Mahisamardini* is to be found in Viraja temple at Jajpur. This image is pretty old and goes back to the early phase of Vajrayana culture. Here the goddess holds the tail of Mahisa with her left hand. With her right hand he holds the raised sword. Viraja of Puranic fame belongs to this place. Here the practice of animal sacrifice was in vogue for a pretty long time. But this has been discontinued in modern times.

In Jajpur on the bank of the river Baitarani an interesting image of *Saptamatrka* holding a baby in the lap is to be met with. The worship of *Saptamatrka* is said to be prevalent in Orissa right from the time of Sailodbhava kings.

Another famous Mother Goddess is Vimala Devi in the Sri Jagannath temple. Here the goddess is four armed and in a standing posture. The practice of sacrificing buffaloes and goats here was once upon a time very popular, but it was gradually discontinued in favour of Vaisnavism as the Lord Jagannath is conceived as Visnu. At present, only at the time of Durga

Puja in the midnight of *Mahastami* a goat is sacrificed behind the temple premises and offered to the goddess. It is interesting to note that a famous Sanskrit treatise styles Vimala as Bhairavi and Jagannatha as Bhairava.

Mother Goddess in the name of Bhagavati is famous at Banapur where she is in the shape of *Mahisamardini* Durga with eight arms. The human sacrifice was practised here in early times. Now it has been stopped but the sacrifice of buffaloes and goats at the time of Durga puja is still in practice here.

A very interesting feature of Mother goddess is noticed in the image of Goddess Sarala at Jhankada. The well known Oriya poet Sarala Das is said to have attained the glory of writing poetry by propitiating this goddess. He has described the greatness of the goddess by paying high tributes in his *Mahabharata* and *Chandi Purana*. This goddess, though eight-armed and *Mahisamardini*, holds a book and a lyre unlike others and thus combines both Durga and Sarasvati. She is dressed in three different postures at three different periods in a day - in the morning a virgin, in the noon a grown up lady and in the evening an old woman. Her imposing natural beauty inspires devotion among one and all at the very sight of her. The mode of worship prevalent here is also tantric in nature.

Another two famous shrines in Orissa are : (1) the temple of goddess Bhattarika at Baramba and (2) that of goddess Charchikai at Banki both in Cuttack district. Here also the worship follows the *tantric* way. The prachi valley abounds in relics of *Devi pithas* which again point to popularity of the worship of Mother Goddess obviously patronised by the Orissan rulers from time to time.

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A Yogic Interpretation of Mahalaya

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Mahalaya is a combined word. It is formed by the combination of two words i.e *Maha* and *Alaya*. *Maha* means *Virat* (Grand), *Alaya* means *griha* (Abode). This Mahalaya is the body itself where the soul resides. This body is exposed to outside stimulations. The soul becomes impure which has a corresponding desecrating impact on all the actions. Man has a propensity to stoop to unrighteous enterprise in life which often turns him to beast and 'soils' his soul. Man's corporeal frame or physical body is a veritable *durga* or fort. The saviour of this *durga* is Durga.

Durga Puja starts from Mahalaya and continues till the 'Vijaya Dasami'. On the Mahalaya day we offer ablutions or *tarpan* to our *Pitru purusa* (forefathers). The *tarpan* commences ritualistically with the mantra, *Pitarah Trupyatu*. This body can not be fit for worship of Goddess Durga unless it is liberated from "Pasusamskar" and "Jiva Samskar". The evil qualities are always distracting man from his divine path. This is only one road that leads to God. The real significance of Mahalaya can be understood through "Kriya Yoga Sadhana" (re-integration through action).

We are the cause of our suffering. Sufferings originate from desire. The desire for material things should be converted to the desire for spiritualism. Matter is meaningless in the spiritual world. Kama (desire), Krodha (anger),

Lobha (greed), Moha (infatuation), etc invade this body and cause human suffering. To get rid of these vices we must cultivate firm determination. Firm determination can only bring about success. Success in every field will come when we unite ourselves with the divinity. We should welcome Goddess Durga to make our life blissful. Without oneness with Goddess Durga we can not enjoy our life. She is the source of all energy and all power. Sri Ram defeated Ravana, the mightiest king of Lanka by worshipping Goddess Durga. Sri Ram invited Ravana to "Ravana Maran Yajna". To annihilate demonic qualities, a Ravana is necessary who shall become the priest of Ravana Maran Yajna. To overpower evil we have to become the priest. No other person can remove evil from our body. We ourselves can rectify us. We can eradicate our own vices and amend our follies. For this, strong determination is imperative. The Mahalaya entails upon us to take a firm pledge for exonerating us from desecration.

'Susumna Nadi' is called the Durga Kshetra. It is the symbol of purity. Durga is being worshipped in 'Sad Chakra'. The six Chakras are- Muladhara (the parts about the pubis), Swadhisthan (the umbilical region), Manipura (epigastrium), Anahata (the root of the nose), Visuddha (the hollow between the frontal sinuses)



Fourteen handed Durga, Khambeswari Temple, Sonapur

and Ajna Chakra (the fontanelle) of union of the coronal and sagittal sutures). 'Akala Bodhan' of Devi means arousing the dormant Bodhi Sakti. The 'Bodhi Sakti' can only be aroused if all ignorance is dispelled. Only after making this body or Alaya pure we can meditate upon and be united with the divine Goddess. In the beginning of Durga Puja there is a 'Mahati Puja'. By this ritual we can understand the greatness of divine power. The purpose of Durga Puja is to sanctify oneself. Perceive Durga within yourself and realize her existence outside the body. She is the controller of our body and the light of our body.

On the 'Saptami day' (The 7th bright day) we worship Manomaya Durga. This Durga resides in the heart on a two-petalled lotus. On the right petal-*vindu-para* or *Satwika Prakriti* resides and on the left petal resides *vindu-apara* or *Rajasika* and *Tamasika Prakriti*. These are two folds of energies. The five senses are controlled by *Nikrista Prakriti*. The *Nikrista*

Prakriti is attracted by *Sparsa* (touch), *Rupa* (form) *Rasa* (taste), *Gandha* (smell), *Sabda* (Sound) etc. *Kama*, *Krodha* and *Lobha* are due to the play of this *Prakriti*. The union of the lower *Prakriti* with higher *Prakriti* occurs on the seventh day. Mind is a bird, and it is always in the dancing position. To perch it at fixed point is very difficult. Mind can be arrested by Yoga through proper mobilization of wind (*Vayu*) in body. *Vayu* in fact is the controller of all *indriyas* or senses. The power that controls the mind is the Durga Sakti.

The speedier the "Swasa-vayu" more active become our *indriyas* or senses to evil deeds. The moment the *indriyas* are controlled, all our actions become divine. Divinity will dwell in us and we shall feel the existence of divinity everywhere. Seeing Durga everywhere is our real achievements-the sole purpose of Durga Puja. On the Astami day (8th bright day) we worship Buddhirupa Durga i.e Kutastha Durga. Pure mind begets pure Buddhi (intellect). On the eighth day the priest worships 64-Yoginis. These Yoginis are 64-*Vrittis* (Modes of life or conduct). It is rightly said in Saptasati Chandi :

*Ya Devi Sarvabhutesu Vritti Rupena Sansthita,
Namasthasei Namastasei, Namastasei Namah.*

On the 'Ninth day' we worship Vindu Rupa Durga. Durga is realized in the Sahasrara. The 'Sadhaka' (Worshipper) feels Durga within and everywhere outside on the 10th bright lunar day. Finally the Sadhaka says " I worship you. I realize you. You are present within me-Your are present in the 'Sahasradala Padma' (thousand petalled lotus). "This place is the most suitable place of your abode. So long you are there, I will be realizing you. It is you who can bring me to life, who can glorify me, who can give me strength and who can bring good fortune for me."

Courtesy : Orissa Review, October 1992.



Cult of Varahi in Orissa

Dr. H.C.Das

Varahi, one of the Mother Goddesses, a manifestation of 64 Yoginis and the counterpart of Varaha-Vishnu was created to annihilate the powerful demons like Chanda, Munda, Sumbha, Nisumbha, Raktavirjya and the *tripuravijayi* Mahisasura. The goddess Varahi associated with the other mothers-Brahmani, Maheswari, Koumari, Vaisnavi, Indrani and Chamunda assisted Ambika in her combat against the demons. Since she is linked with other mother goddesses, her origin is also associated with them. Worship of the goddess in her individual form has been prevalent in Orissa and other parts of India.

Similar to other gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon her origin is traced from the *Puranas*, the last great authority of Indian religion. The *Skanda*, *Markandeya*, *Matsya*, *Devi*, *Brahmavaivarta*, *Devi Bhagabata*, *Varaha* and *Linga Puranas* have lucidly narrated interesting

legends of Matrikas' origin, their iconographic features, and their role in the religious life. These *Puranas* record the names of numerous *Matrikas*. But the seven mothers have been accepted universally, supported by the iconographic texts.



Varahi, Samlei Temple, Sonepur

The antiquity of the worship of the mother goddess is traced from the Indus Valley Civilization (flourished in 4th/3rd millennium B.C). In fact, the worship of Siva and Sakti in the Indus Civilization is proved by the archaeological treasures unearthed from excavations at Harappa and Mohenjodaro. While speaking about the religion of the Indus people, Sir John Marshall (the famous archaeologist and the excavator of the sites) remarks that Sakti worship was of great antiquity in India; it originated out of the mother goddess and was closely connected with the cult of Siva. The continuity of the Sakti cult since then till the beginning of the historic



period is attested by the stray finds and excavation at Rajghat, Rugar, Kausambi, Pataliputra and in the south has retrieved remains pertaining to the Sakti cult. The epics particularly the *Mahabharata* highlighted the *Sakta* principle. The two *Durga stotras*, one chanted by Judhithira and the other by Arjuna in the form of eulogy are considered basically the genesis of Mahadevi-Durga manifestation, which was fully reflected in the *Puranas* and *Upa-Puranas*. On the basis of iconographic conception as recorded in the *Puranas*, the manifestations of Sakti were carved in sculptures and worshipped in the temples.

Of the numerous Puranic legends, I touch upon in short, a few of them to signify the importance of the Sakti in different forms. The *Makandeya Purana* (compiled in the 4th century A.D.) relates that the *Matrikas* were created by Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, Indra, Kartikeya etc. to fight the demons as the assistants of the Mahadevi-Durga. Particularly the demons like Chanda, Munda and Raktavirjya were endowed with quality of multiplying into demons equal to themselves in strength and prowess no sooner their drops of blood oozed out from the wounds touched the ground. To kill the demon Raktavirjya, Siva created from his energy the goddess Yogeswari and similarly the other major gods created Saktis from their energies. It was with the assistance of the *Matrikas* Mahadeva was able to kill the demon Raktavirjya. This story is recorded in different forms in other *Puranas*. The account of the *Matsya Purana* runs that when Siva discharged his Pasupata weapon against Andhaka demon, numerous demons of similar stature sprang up from the drops of blood gushing out of his body. In order to assist him in the combat Siva created as many as 132 goddesses of formidable countenance, who drank all the bloods of the demon finally killing him in the battle ground.

Thereafter, the ferocious goddesses started their campaign of destroying the whole universe. Having no other alternative to subdue the goddesses Siva prayed to Narasimha who appeared instantly with his claws besmeared with the blood of Hiranyakasipu, his tongue flapping out like the spark of electricity, with the formidable fangs sparkling like a thousand Sun. He created 32 *Matrikas* who were more terrible than the goddesses created by Siva. The earlier mothers asked to stay in different parts of the world and look after the human beings and animals as their children. This indicates various manifestations of the Sakti conceived iconographically and were propitiated. To highlight each of them *Upa-Puranas* and interesting legends were composed.

It is pertinent to note that the *Matrikas* were created as the war goddesses iconic forms. They are seated at ease either in *Lalita* or *Yogasana*, associated each with a child on the lap (except Chamunda who is seated in *Rajalilasana*) and flanked below by their respective *vahanas*. They bear forms and cognisances of their male counterparts. According to the *Markandeya Purana* these are the female counterparts who are armed with the same weapons, wear the same ornaments, and ride the same *vahanas* and carry the same banners as the corresponding male gods do. Accordingly Brahmani should be sculpted like Brahma, *Maheswari* like Maheswara, Vaisnavi like Vishnu, Varahi a short-statured women with the face of a boar (like Varaha-Vishnu), Indrani like Indra, Koumari like Kumara (Kartikeya) and Chamunda created from the 3rd eye of Mahadevi represents a skeleton in appearance-flesh dried up, bones and sinews shown through the dried skin, eyes sunken and abdomen contracted, with hairs shooting upwards in the shape of flames tied with snakes, with the tongue and teeth protruding out, wearing a garland of skulls, and a tiger skin,



sitting on a deadbody flanked by an owl or vulture and jackals drinking blood dropping from the severed head of the demon.

According to the iconographic features Varahi has the face of boar and colour of the storm cloud. She wears on her head a *karandamukuta* and is adorned with ornaments made of corals. She weilds the *hala* (plough) and the *sakti* and is seated under a kalpa tree. Her *vahana* as well as the emblem on her banner is the elephant. To this description *Vishnudharmottara* adds that she has a big belly. According to this authority she has six hands, in four of which she carries the *danda*, *khadga*, *khetaka* and *pasa*. The two remaining hands being held respectively in *abhaya* and *varada* poses. The *Purvakarmagama* relates that she carries the *saranga dhanu*, the *hala* and the *musala* as her weapons.

Leaving aside the iconographical references we have the archaeological treasures of the *Matrikas* from the Gupta period. The Gangadhar stone inscription of Kumara Gupta speaks of the *Matrikas*. In the chronological sequence the inscription of the early Chalukya ruler, we come across the names of seven mothers. The *Matrikas* appeared in the sculptural representation throughout India. In the succeeding period the Sakti cult became so prominent that the Mothers appeared in the mainstream of Indian religion in some form or other.

Orissa became a prominent centre of Saktism in Eastern India. According to the *Hevajra Tantra*, the Sakta-Tantrism flourished in four major centers of India-Uddiyana (Orissa), Purnagiri, Kamarupa and Jalandhara. The *Kalika Purana* (11th century A.D.) emphasizes that the first Brahmanical tantric *pitha* in India originated and developed in Odra Desa (Orissa), the presiding deities of which were Jagannatha and the goddess Katyayani. The archaeological

evidences prove the prevalence of Shaktism in Orissa from the Gupta period, Viraja being the earliest Sakti goddess (in Mahisasuramardini form). The earliest group of *Sapta Matrikas* is sculpted in the Parasurameswar temple (7th century A.D) of Bhubaneswar. The images here are seated in *Yogasana* flanked by Ganesa and Virabhadra. The next in order of chronology comes *Matrikas* of Vaital temple (8th century A.D). Here the images beautifully sculpted bearing the art tradition of the Bhaumakaras. They are all seated in ease in *Yogasana*. They are not associated with the child. Chamunda is the presiding goddess locally known as Kapali. Dr. K.C. Panigrahi referring to the grim atmosphere created in the dark cella of *Khakhara* (Vaital) temple and a stone *yupa* in front of the temple suggests the prevalence of Kapalika form of worship in the temple. Chamunda was the presiding goddess of the Kapalika sect of Saivism. It is interesting to note that in Orissa a separate order of temple known as the *Khakhara* was erected in honour of a form of the Sakta deity. The Vaital shrine is the earliest shrine of this order. We have in Orissa as many as thirteen extant *Khakhara* temples in different stages of preservation. No male deity was ever enshrined in such temple. We have a separate Silpasastra in regard to this type of temple along with the temples of Rekha and Pidha order.

Varahi in the group of *Matrikas* in the Vaital temple is a sow-faced deity holding a fish and an axe in her two hands. She may be identified as Matsya Varahi. The ceiling of the Mukteswar temple (C. 10th century A.D) contains a set of *Saptamatrikas* on an eight-petalled lotus, each petal having a *Matrika*. For the first time here we find the association of a child each (except Chamunda). Child was perhaps associated with the mother from about 10th century onwards. All



other *Matrikas* set to be discussed in the succeeding pages are linked with children.

Contemporary to this group there is a set of *Saptamatrikas* on the edge of the Markandesvara tank in Puri town (assignable to the Somavamsi period) and the *Saptamatrikas* of Sathalpur near Jagatsinghpur town. Facing to the temple is enshrined a beautiful image of Ajaikapada Bhairava in a separate structure signifying the tantric aspect of the *Matrikas*. The association of Bhairava with the *Matrikas* reminds us of the concept of *Sakta Pithas*. There is a set of *Saptamatrikas* in the front façade of the Simhanath temple near Vaideswar (in Cuttack district) on the river Mahanadi. Here the *Matrikas* on the door jamb flanked on either side by Ganga and Yamuna is a novel feature in Orissan architecture. The *Saptamatrikas* of Khiching in the district of Mayurbhanj are beautiful pieces of art of the Bhanjas. Chamunda of the *Matrika* group is worshipped as Kichakesvari, the tutelary deity of the Bhanjas. The other *Matrikas* are preserved in the Khiching museum. At Belkhandi in the district of Kalahandi there is a group of *Saptamatrikas* (only lower portions are available) belonging to the early Somavamsis ruling from Sirpur (now in Chhattisgarh).

The Orissa State Museum preserves four beautiful *Matrikas* from Dharmasala. From the point of view of artistic imagery these are the best images so far discovered from Orissa. These images may be assigned to the late Somavamsis or the Gangas. Similar in style and workmanship are the two sets of *Matrikas* at Jajpur. The *Matrikas* of colossal stature kept in the compound of S.D.O's residence are by far the biggest sculptures of this order in India. In broken stage they look terrific, but elegant. Another group of *Matrikas* (seven) is enshrined in a modern structure on the Dasasvamedha ghat on the Vaitarani.

In the door lintel (now detached) of the Durga temple at Shergarh in the district of Balasore we come across in miniature form a set of *Saptamatrikas* flanked by Ganesa and Virabhadra. The temple is of *Khakhara* order assignable to 9th century A.D. A set of dancing *Saptamatrikas* is engraved in relief form in a part of the door jamb now preserved in the Balasore Museum. The workmanship of the images is of low order indicating their execution in a period of decadence.

Yoginis are basically the *Matrikas*. The 64 Yogini temples at Hirapur near Balkati and at Ranipur Jharial in Balangir district contain the images of some *Matrikas*. The above survey relates the prevalence of the cult of *Saptamatrikas* in Orissa. Of the seven *Matrikas*, Varahi and Chamunda became very popular in Orissa as their individual manifestations are found in different places.

A life-size image of Varahi (6 ft. 1 in. high and 2 ft. 9 in. wide) is enshrined in the temple of her name at Chaurasi in Prachi valley. She is in perfect state of preservation. Seated in *lalitasana* on a cushion placed on a plain legged seat with her hanging right leg resting on a life-like crouching buffalo, the figure holds in her right hand a fish and in the left a blood-cup. Decked in finger rings, anklets, valayas, armlets, two kinds of necklace, large ear studs and a tiara over the hair which rises upwards in spiral coils, the three-eyed deity is pot-bellied and is clad in a *dhoti*. The plain halo is oval, and the back side of the figure is cut out of the oblong back-slab. The temple enshrining the image of Varahi comes in the order of *Khakhara* and bears resemblance to the Gouri temple at Bhubaneswar. On stylistic ground the temple and the image are assignable to the early part of 10th century A.D. In the *Jagamohana* of the temple are seen two loose sculptures of Varahi



seated in *Maharajalilasana*, having a skull cup and a fish in two hands. The other is four armed holding in the lower left a skull cup, in the upper left a rosary, a water-pot in the lower right (upper left broken) associated with the mount buffalo and kneeling devotee. These two images were probably enshrined in some other temples in the locality.

An image of Varahi (3' 6" by 2' 2") in chlorite stone, two armed, seated in *Maharajalilasana* holding a fish and a wine cup is enshrined in a modern temple in the village, Bonchuo in Anandapur Sub-Division of Keonjhar district. She is worshipped as a *pitha devi* and is considered as important as Tarini of Ghatagaon. A colossal sculpture of Varahi (in broken state measuring 8 ft. in height) at Narendrapur of Bhadrak district is the biggest image in Orissa. Narendrapur of Bhadrak district is famous for Patani Mangala who is enshrined in a modern temple built by the Raja of Kanika.

Orissa has the distinction of having a shrine of Panchavarahi at Satbhaya. Out of five one is lost and is replaced by an image of some other goddess. All the existing four images are of the same stature, seated in *Rajalilasana* holding a skull-cup and a fish each. Stylistically these sculptures are assigned to C. 11th century A.D. J.N. Banerjee is of opinion that the cult of Panchavarahi flourished only in Orissa as no other such shrine is seen anywhere in India. The images are locally named as Batakumari, Panchurai, Vimalai, Kamalai and Janjali. This shrine has no history but is associated with a legend. Initially the goddesses acted as the protectress of the forest clad area in the previous Kanika state.

People of the locality were not aware of them. The deities while wandering in the forest thought the way to receive homage from the people. They caused blazing fire in the jungle at night. People were terrified to see such unusual fire continued for days together. The Raja of Kanika was informed of the happening. At last under the orders of the king the jungle was cleared. Surprisingly the fire extinguished. The goddesses told the king in a dream to worship them. A temple was constructed and worship was introduced. However, this is a very important Sakta-tantric centre of Orissa.

An image of Varahi (two armed holding a fish and a wine cup) is worshipped in Balisahi of Puri town. Her workmanship is bold and similar in style to that of Varahi of Chaurasi.

The above survey reveals that Varahi not only flourished with the Saptamatrikas and 64 Yoginis but also rose to eminence as an independent cult. Most of the individual images of Varahi were carved and installed during the Bhauma cultural epoch (736-940 A.D.). This cult alongwith other Sakta-tantric cults developed with the spread of Tantrism. It was during the Bhauma period Saivism, Saktism and Buddhism were amalgamated with tantrism resulting in creation of gods and goddesses of tantric character based on the *Tantras*.

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Stambhesvari Cult in Orissa

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Stambhesvari, the Goddess of the Post or Pillar, is one of the famous formless autochthonous deities widely worshipped in the hill tracts of south and western districts of Orissa. She also goes by the local colloquial name of Khambesvari. She is worshipped as a manifestation of Sakti in the forms of wooden posts or pillars and also through stones. She was the tutelary deity of some ruling dynasties like those of Tushtikara, the Sulkis, the Bhanjas and the feudatories of the Somavamsis like Ranaka Sri Jayarnnama in the early mediaeval period. The antiquity of the Stambhesvari cult may be traced back to 5th century A.D. Since then the cult of Stambesvari alias Khambesvari is wide spread and popular particularly in western Orissa and the Ghumusar region of South Orissa. She is still the presiding deity in most of the villages of Ghumsar, Boudh, Sonapur, Angul, Talcher and Dhenkanal regions¹ which consist mostly of hill and forest tracts.

Stambhesvari was originally an aboriginal Goddess worshipped by the non-Aryan tribes of hinterland Orissa. In course of time she was like many other tribal deities given a place in the Hindu pantheon. She was adopted and worshipped by the Aryan invaders who had settled amidst the non-Aryan tribes.² Subsequently she was transformed from a nomadic cult to Sakti cult. Gradually when the Aryan chiefs established small kingdoms of their own they had to depend upon

the sturdy tribals for the consolidation and the defence of their newly established kingdoms. The Aryan kings also needed the lands of different tribes and their services for promotion and extension of peasant agriculture which would yield enough surplus crops to meet the requirements of the increased civil and military personnel. Thus the kings were dependent upon the support and the loyalty of the tribes. Therefore, they kept them in good humor through the gradual process of inclusion of tribal groups into the Hindu caste system and the absorption and adoption of some aspects of the tribal religion and culture into the Aryan fold. Pargiter had observed that 'the Aryans met with the religious practices and beliefs among whom (the tribes) they ruled over or came into lasting contact with, and have assimilated some of them gradually thus modifying their own religion to a certain extent'.³ In this process the dominant tribal deities like Stambhesvari were Aryanised and patronized by the kings as their tutelary deities. Patronage of the dominant autochthonous deities enabled the kings to consolidate their power and its legitimation in the Hindu tribal zone of the hilly hinterland of Orissa.⁴

In this process of Aryanisation the Brahmanas who were granted rent free lands in the tribal area, played an important role. They settled in the forest tracts through land grants and came into contact with the forest tribes which



resided in the dominion of the Aryan kings.⁵ The Brahmana defined and codified the duties of the tribes which were to lead a recluse living in the forest and serve their king in various ways.⁶ Prof. R.S.Sharma has rightly stated that " the significance of land grants to Brahmanas is no difficult to appreciate. The grantees brought new knowledge which improved cultivation and inculcated in the aborigines a sense of loyalty to the established order upheld by the rulers."⁷ The coexistence of Brahmanical and tribal cultures led to the inter-action between these two.⁸ So much so the deities like Stambheswari worshipped by the non-Aryan tribes entered the Brahmanical pantheon.⁹ It may be mentioned that the hill tribes who believed in matriarchy were worshippers of Sakti.¹⁰ Stambhesvari is also worshipped as a manifestation of Sakti in the hill tracts of Orissa or atleast in tribal surroundings. Stambhesvari is the best example of the aboriginal goddesses of Orissa which underwent the process of Aryanisation in earlier times.

The first royal patron of Stambhesvari was Maharaja Tushtikara. He ruled over the Kalahandi, Sonapur, Boudh and Ghumsar regions in the 5th century A.D. These regions cover the hill tracts of western and southern Orissa. The earliest reference to Stambhesvari is found in the Teresinga copper plates¹¹ of Tushtikara. In this inscription Tushtikara has styled himself as *Stambhesvari Padabhaktah*. The inscription reveals that Maharaja Tushtikara in order to cure his ailing mother Sri Sobhini, worshipped at the feet of Goddess Stambhesvari, the *Istadevi* of his family.¹² At Aska in the Ghumsar region of the Ganjam district there is a temple of Stambhesvari, locally called as Khambhesvari, on the bank of river Risikulya. It is interesting to note that some of the place names occurring in the Teresinga plates have been located by S.N.Rajguru¹³ in the Aska region. In view of this it may be suggested that the Goddess Khambesvari at Aska was

enshrined at first by Tushtikara in Circa 5th century A.D.

Stambhesvari was also the tutelary deity of the Sulki dynasty (Circa A.D 600-900) of Kodalaka Mandala, corresponding to the present Dhenkanal-Angul-Talcher region, a tribal belt. All the Sulki rulers have combined their names with that of their tutelary deity. Their names end with the word *Stambha*, such as Kanchanastambha, Ranastambha, Kulastambha and Jayastambha. In their inscriptions¹⁴ the Sulkis claimed to have received their kingship in their capital Kodala and achieved success and prosperity through the grace of Goddess Stambhesvari. Thus in the Dhenkanal plates¹⁵ of Kulastambha we come across the phrase *Stambhesvari Labdha Vara Prasadah*. Similarly in the Puri plates¹⁶ of Ranastambha we find mention of *Stambhesvari Datta Vara Prasadat*. Ranastambha in another of his copper-plate Grants¹⁷ is said to have received boons from Stambhesvari (*Stambhesvari Prapta Vara Prasadat*). Stambhesvari is declared as the witness (*Sakshini*) of the Dhenkanal Grants¹⁸ of Ranastambha. The Sulkis were most probably the members of the Saulika tribe which according to the Brihatsmhitā and Markandeya Purana lived between the Kalingas and the Chedis (of Dakshina Kosala). Therefore, it is quite obvious that the rulers of the Sulki dynasty had acknowledged and royally patronized the dominant autochthonous Goddess of their own region, the Stambhesvari, as their tutelary deity.¹⁹ It is interesting to note that the worship of Stambhesvari is widely popular even at present in the Dhenkanal, Angul and Talcher regions, once ruled by the Sulkis. Stambhesvari shrines are found at Barimul near Badamba, Bamur and Taras near Angul, which is not far from the capital of the Sulkis. Khambesvari represented by a simple stone or wooden post is worshipped in the cultivating season in different villages in the Angul region by the *Dehuris* belonging to the Kondh tribe or the Suddha caste,



a caste of tribal affiliation. This worship is named *Kaduali Puja* (Worship of the cultivating season).²⁰

In the 9th and 10th centuries A.D. the Bhanja dynasty of Khinjili Mandala corresponding to the present Sonepur-Baudh-Phulbani and Gumsar region, a predominantly tribal area, patronized Goddess Stambhesvari. In their copper plate grants like the Taspakera plate²¹ and Singhara copper plate²² of Ranaka Ranabhanja. The Bhanja kings have been said to have received boons from Goddess Stambhesvari (*Stambhesvari-Vara-Labdha*).

The Kamalpur copper plate grant²³ of Ranaka Shri Jayarnnama, a feudatory of the last Somavamsi king Karna Deva (Circa A.D. 1100-1110) records that the donor Jayarnnama received boons from Khambesvari (*Shri Khambesvari Vara Labdha Prasada*). This is the first inscription in which the Oriya word Khambesvari is used for the Sanskrit *Stambhesvari*. It is significant to note that the Somavamsis who were staunch Saivites showed tolerance towards the Khambesvari cult worshipped by their feudatories.

From the middle of the 13th century a branch of the Bhanja dynasty ruled over Ghumsar in the Ganjam district till its occupation by the English in 1835 A.D.²⁴ Ghumsar is a region inhabited by the non-Aryan tribes like the Kondhs, Kuis and Savaras. The Bhanjas of Ghumsar patronized Khambesvari worshipped by these tribes. They made liberal grants to the worship of Khambesvari at Aska which was regarded as the presiding deity of the southern gate (*Dakshina Dvara*) of the Ghumsar kingdom. One of its rulers, Dhananjaya Bhanja (C. 1636-1702 A.D.) renovated the Khambesvari temple at Aska.²⁵

It is suggested²⁶ that the representation of Stambhesvari was probably made out on a *Stambha* (pillar) indicating a Siva Linga. Such a

Linga with the representation of Sakti is no doubt found among the sculptural remains of eastern India.²⁷ It should, however, be pointed out that whatever might have been the form of the Goddess worshipped in the early medieval period, the deity is at present worshipped by different castes under the Prakritic name Khambesvari in the form of the post or pillar of wood or stone without any reference to Siva Linga.²⁸ The stone posts representing the Goddess have been anthropomorphized and converted into images which are worshipped in open space under the bushy groves or under a tree on the road sides or hutments in the middle of the village or in its close vicinity. Some images are also worshipped in temples. Animal sacrifices are offered to propitiate this Pillar Goddess. Tradition asserts that human sacrifices were also made in the past to this Goddess. The priests of the Khambesvari shrines, both male and female, are not Brahmins. They are affiliated to different tribal groups. The male priests call themselves Sudra Muni, Muni, Jani, Mali, Dehuri, Devata, Raula etc. The female priests are generally called Janiani and Maijani. The Puja is performed in some shrines everyday and in some others only once in a week or in a month, preferably on a Tuesday, Thursday or Saturday. It is believed that Stambhesvari protects human being, cures diseases, ascertains fertility and confers every form of mundane benefit.

The Khambesvari temple at Aska in the Ganjam district is famous among the shrines of the autochthonous deities of Orissa. It is regarded as a *Sakta Pitha*. An interesting legend²⁹ of this temple says that once Goddess Khambesvari appeared in a dream before Khambamuni who lived in the forest and desired that she should be worshipped by the latter. As per the stipulation of Khambamuni she lived in his hut as a daughter. But this unfortunately caused suspicion among the people passing through the forest by the side of



the hut about the old man living alone in the company of a young girl. Khambamuni was very sorry to know about this and one fine morning to save himself from defame revealed the true self of the girl, who (the Goddess) convinced the people of the truth disclosed by Kambamuni by miraculously disappearing from the spot. From thence forward she made a lot of fun and frolic with her foster father, such as she would purchase bangles and met the old man pay for it and frightened the old man by her sudden appearance before him holding in her arms a baby cut into pieces. At last the old man lost his patience and out of annoyance slapped her as a result of which her face turned to one side. After this incident she declared that her childhood play (*Balya Lila*) or disguise was over, that her foster father (Khambamuni) would die and that she would be worshipped on the spot, i.e. in the forest by the tribal people. Thus the legend accounts for the affiliation of the tribals to Goddess Khambesvari. The feature of the baby cut into pieces conveys the idea of human sacrifice or at least tantric practices associated with the Goddess.

The Goddess Khambeswari at Aska is worshipped both as an image in the Garbhagriha and as a wooden pole presiding over the sacrificial pit in front of the main image opposite the main door of the sanctum. The main image consists of a stone pole which has been anthropomorphized by the addition of a disk as head. She has a slightly carved nose and mouth, while her three eyes and the protruding tongue are made of gold. There is a thick layer of pasty vermilion on her face painted from time to time. She has been adorned with gorgeous silken dress and heavy gold ornaments. "Her image confers both the impression of real Hindu image, whose body and limbs are mostly not to be seen because of the dresses and ornaments and the impression of the pole, whose form is still evident in spite of the dress".³⁰ The

priests of the temples are Sudras, who have tribal origin. In the past the priests were known as Sudra Munis. But the present generation of Priests prefer to call themselves as Muni only, omitting the term Sudra apparently with a view to make their tribal or low caste origin less known so as to alleviate their social status. Animal sacrifices are offered to Khambesvari on festive occasions like the *Dasahara* and the non-vegetarian *Bhoga* cooked by the Sudra priests is taken by all the devotees irrespective of caste. Wooden posts representing Khambesvari are also found at many places among which the one at Gandharadi near Baudh is famous. The wooden posts are renewed every ten years and the ceremony of the renewal is known as *Dasandhi* which is like the *Navakalevara* of the Jagannath trinity images. In the Jagannath shrines making of images out of wood has continued to be a practice. Stambhesvari also continues to be carved in wood at some places of western Orissa since time immemorial. Some scholars³¹ have linked Khambesvari with Subhadra on account of the similarity in their iconography and iconology to a certain extent and stated that the Hinduised iconography of Khambesvari might be taken as the proto-type for the development which led to the figure of Subhadra, which is worshipped with the *Bhubaneswari Mantra* (Sakta Mantra) in spite of her appearance as a Goddess of the *Vaisnava* pantheon.

Thus Stambhesvari is one of the best examples of the autochthonous Goddesses of Orissa which underwent the process of Aryanisation in earlier times. Having no specific iconographic features nor appearing in Brahmanical all Indian theology of the society in whose contact the tribes lived.³² As a link between Hinduisation and local tradition Stambhesvari has played a significant role in the folk religion of Orissa.



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Chhatra Yatra of Manikeswari

Umesh Chandra Satapathy

Kalahandi merged with the state of Orissa on the 1st January 1948. The sixth Raja of Kalahandi was Harichandra Deo. His son Ram Chandra Deo was crowned as seventh king of Kalahandi at Jugsaipatna by a Kondh who is called Pat Majhi. The mother of Ram Chandra Deo (Ranee Maa) along with Goddess Manikeswari came to Kalahandi, which is now the family goddess of the Naga family.

Goddess Manikeswari is the prominent presiding deity of Kalahandi district. The temple of the goddess is situated in the premises of the ex-Rulers of Kalahandi used to observe the *Saradiya Puja* of the goddess known as *chhatra yatra* (vijaya utsav) with much pomp and gaiety. Jugsaipatna, Thuamul Rampur and Bhawanipatna are also famous for Manikeswari Temples. Animal sacrifice is prevalent in the Shakti shrines of the district. These are done generally, on the Mahastami day of the Durga Puja festival. Every human being has a Shakti, although women have more than men. The name Shakti is used for the supreme goddess herself. Thus shrine of Maa Manikeswari is a major shakti pitha.

The Khond ritual practice of renewal of post-worship (Nabakalevara) has been also practiced in Manikeswari worship in a modified manner. Manikeswari has been believed to be "Chhinamastha" a goddess of Dasamahavidya Group. Kalahandi being the store house of ruby

stone (*Manikya*) the name of the deity Manikeswari or Goddess of Ruby is justified.

Maa Manikeswari comes out from the Garbhagriha on *Mahastmi* mid-night to *Jenakhal*, which is 3 kilometers away from the alma mater. On Maha Navami auspicious morning *Chhatra Yatra* starts with *Nagarparibhramana*. The effigy of Manikeswari is installed on a bamboo and covered with black spotted cloth. At the top on silver plate *Dasamahavidya Yantra* is installed as a deity of Tantric Hinduism. One can witness unique and beautiful tribal dance with ethnic terracotta instrument *Ghumura Veer Badya*. The dancers tie the *Ghumura* on their shoulders and hang them tight on their chest. On the way devotees of bounteous Mother Goddess Manikeswari, with their folded hands and delighted hearts offer prayers with offerings of Goats, sheep, fowls, flowers, rice, and coconut. Words are inadequate to express the divine flavours until or unless someone see on her eyes directly and the disciplined mammoth gathering of the most revered and ancient deity of this virgin land Kalahandi.

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Twin Goddesses Tara-Tarini on Purnagiri

Damodar Padhy

The shrine of the twin Goddesses Maa Tara-Tarini is situated on the top of a hillock called Purnagiri, which is a part of Kumari hills, 708 feet high, on the south of the River Rushikulya. A flight of 999 steps on the eastern side of the hill leads to the top of the mountain where the shrine of Tara-Tarini is situated. This part of the hill is called *Dahihandi*. There is also a zig-zag motorable road by which one can approach the shrine situated at the hill top. The view of the surrounding landscape from the hill top is quite enchanting. The verdant hill girdled by the quietly flowing Rushikulya and the long stretch of fertile plain encircled by mountain is a beholding sight.

The place has achieved tremendous fame for the worship of the Twin Goddesses Tara and Tarini. Both the deities are about 10' high and are crudely fashioned in stone but attached with silver eyes. Two fully elaborated brass heads enshrined in between them represent their *Vijepratimas*.

The Tara - Tarini *Pitha* is considered as a *Shakti pithas* out of 51 *pithas* Tantric cult. It is believed that at this *pitha* two breasts of Sati fell for which the two deities have this peculiar shape. This famous *Shakti Pitha* had a tradition of human and animal sacrifices even till the advent of the British in Odisha. The temple erected for

the deities, is of modern origin. With the rush of visitors to this place in recent years, several new constructions in the premises have come up in the shapes of *Mandapas* and *Dharmasalas*.

Associated with legends and beliefs with some Puranic corroboration, the

place has gathered much mythological importance through centuries. Pilgrims visit this place throughout the year. The four *Melas* held on the four Tuesday of the month of *Chaitra* (March-April) every year attract a large number of devotees. The tonsure (*Mundan*) of babies are conducted in large numbers, particularly as auspicious days on payment of a fee to the Tara- Tarini Trust Board



Twin Goddesses Tara-Tarini



which manages the affairs (*Nitis*) of the temple. A big fair is held here in the month of *Chaitra*. The local authorities look to the sanitation and public health works. A large number of people gather here on *Mahavisuba Sankranti* day (mid- April)

The place is well connected with the bus services from Brahmapur and Chatrapur equally distance about 30 kms. Buses from Brahmapur and Purusottampur stop at the Tara-Tarini junction from where one has to walk a distance of about 2 kms to reach the place.

Twin Goddesses Tara-Tarini are enshrined in heart of Ganjam district, pastly popularly known as flourishing Kalinga Kingdom. They are said to be set up on the hill top on the bank of the river Rushikulya, by one great Pandit Basu Praharaj as per a popular legend. This hill top is popularly known as "Dahihandi" (pot of milk curds). The Aryanised Goddesses or *Shakti* with the name of Tara- Tarini came to be worshipped in a shrine, initially began as a *Tantra pitha* where Tantric devotees attained their salvation through the practice of *Tantra* worship of mother Goddesses known as Tara Devi, Kali, Mahalakhmi, Bhairabi, Bagala, Matangi, Chinnamasta, Dhumabati, Bhubaneswari became a famous place of pilgrimage in Odisha. Ganjam was not only a cradle of human civilisation, it was equally so of culture- particularly for its religious faiths, cults, beliefs, festivals, rituals, rites, temples, shrines, monasteries, monuments and institutions. The shrines made of stones, bricks and mortars, were constructed here in different periods of historical times. The worship of trees is said to be the earliest one and next to it began the worship of the Mother Goddesses i.e. *Matruka Puja*. From the time cycle it is clearly observed that *Matruka Puja* started in the tribal forms i.e - Tarapenu and Stambeswari. Stambeswari or *Khamba* or wooden pillars, trees symbolises the Mother Goddess. Who choose the trees or pillars

as the abodes of her divinity, which is still in vogue in the Sonepur region i.e. Western Odisha and Aska Southern Odisha. When the Aryanisation of tribal Goddesses started, different Goddesses in different places were installed and worshipped as Narayani near Nirmalajhar in the vicinity of Khalikote, boarder of Ganjam-Khurda-Puri; Tara-Tarini near Purusottampur on the right bank of the Rushikulya river, Byaghradevi in Kulada, Kuraisuni near Mujagada, Balakumari in Chikiti on the hill top, Budhi Thakurani Mahamayee in old Brahmapur, Siddha Bhairabi in Mantridi, Mahurikalua near Mohuda, Singhaseni in the dense forest in the boarder of Polasara and Banapur, Ranaghanta(Warbell) at Tilisingi inside forest near Bhanjanagar, Bimalai in Nirmalajhar, Ratni in Polasara and also Ekapada Bahairabi worshipped in the Swapneswara temple at Polasara which is said to have been built by the Ganga King Chodaganga Deva in the 12th century A.D, Durgadevi in Ganjam town etc.

It is very peculiar that Tara-Tarini Goddesses are not set up by any king or tribal community. Almost all *Shakti pithas* of Ganjam are built or and all Goddesses worshipped by any king as their *Istadevi*. One great Sanskrit scholar of Brahman cast having profound knowledge in *Tantra, mantra* Pandit Basu Praharaj set up Devi Tara - Tarini at the top of the mountain i.e. Purnagiri. Near Purusottampur, in a small village Kumbhari on the left bank of the River Rushikulya Basu Praharaj was born in 1707 A.D and died in 1782 A.D. He was a great Sanskrit Scholar who read at Birajagannathpur sasan. He earned good name and fame as an eminent *Sastragyna Pandit*. But he was very unhappy due to his childless life. He devoted most of his time in meditation and *Shakti Sadhana*. One night Basu Praharaj dreamed to get twin daughters. A great *Habana Yagna* was conducted and twin Goddesses Tara-Tarini came out. Basu Praharaj kept them with much care as his daughter in his house. When he



became old twin Goddesses vanished and told in a dream to Basu Praharaj to set up them on the top of Purnagiri mountain. Two sisters are worshipped on the mountain top by almost all people of Ganjam and other parts of different districts of the Odisha as presiding deity or Istadevi. In front of Maa Tara Tarini, *Ghanta Chhamundia* i.e. Bell *Samiana* and long swords are kept which represents the motherly affection of Goddesses. In due course of time childless trader Citi Ramaya of Brahmapur constructed 999 steps (*Pahacha*) from the foot of the mountain to top and also he was blessed with a daughter by Maa Tara - Tarini. After some years Purusottampur Policestation O.I.C and later C.I. of Chhatrapur Abhimanyu Pradhan utilised most of his time with devoted mind for the construction of motorable road from the mountain foot to top and provision for pipe water supply and electricity.

Now Maa Tara - Tarini are worshipped by *Sipati* community popularly known as *Sudra Sevak Mali*.

As per mythological and local tales the life span of Basu Praharaj comes to 1707-1782 A.D. but much before Basu Praharaj, Adikavi Sarala Dash mentioned the name of Tara - Tarini in *Chandi Purana* 'Yogini Chapter'. In right side Tara and left side Tarini is popularly known as Great *Stana Pitha* as per the narration of *Tara Prasad* publication which appears in between 1688 - 1716 A.D.

Whatever it may be Maa Tara - Tarini are twin sisters but they are one *shakti* and known as *Sankata Tarini Abhayapradayini*. Some have also pointed out the association of Tara, the primordial deity of the Mahayana Buddhist Pantheon and her transformation into Tara - Tarini.

Devotees of different parts of Odisha and neighbouring Andhra Pradesh visit Maa Tara-Tarini throughout the year, especially during cultural *yatra* in Chaitra month Tuesday five to

six lakhs of pilgrims and tourists visit this place. In the post Independent era the shrine has gained prominence as a major tourist destination.

The total need of the time is to develop Tara - Tarini complex as a spiritual, cultural and tourist center of national eminence due to its tremendous potential for tourism, the locational advantage (Green hill and River Rushikulya around it), the cultural fame of the shrine and unflinching devotion of the people of Odisha.

The Tara - Tarini Development Board (T.T.D.B) was constituted and registered under the Society Registration Act 1860 during 2003. The R.D.C (S.D) Brahmapur and D.M. and Collector Ganjam are the Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively. Eminent citizens of Brahmapur and nearby areas are its members. To undertake various work for the improvement of Tara - Tarini Temple Complex and surrounding areas, the total cost would be approximately 3 crores rupees. Tara- Tarini hill has already been installed with the rope car with private initiative from the foot hill to the top of the hill, construction of multipurpose Kalyanamandap and strengthening of the water supply for 24hours. Without affecting / displacing the deities from the original position, 65 feet tall main temple with *Mukhasala* and a *Bhogamandap* have been constructed with stones. A very nice arched gate of the height 22 feet like Mukteswar Temple Gate at Bhubaneswar has been constructed with cost of 11 lakhs rupees. The entire area will be well facilitated with wide road and bright light. Presently O.T.D.C Panthasala and Diganta I.B are situated on the foot of the hill. Very soon *Kalyanamandap* and *Yatrinivas* will be constructed by T.T.D.B.

District Information & Public Relations Officer,
Puri.



The Shrine of Goddess Bhairavi of Puruna Katak, Boudh District

Niyati Panda

In the heart of ancient Utkal was the famous Tantra Pitha, which is situated at Puruna Katak in Boudh District, known as "Devi Bhairabi Pitha". Devi Bhairabi is the Istadevi or presiding deity of the then Chatrapur Gada Samanta, Mohapatra Royal Dynasty. During 895 A.D. the Somavanshi Maharaja Swabhaba Tunga was the king of Kosala. His only daughter, very wise and learned, was also the chief queen of the Bhoumakara dynasty, Maharani Tribhubana Mahadevi. She expired and her baby son Gandhamardan Dev was brought up by Swabhaba Tunga with the help of his brother Jajati Keshari. Gandhamardana Deva ruled over the kingdom with the capital at Dhrutipur. At that time his *Samanta* king of Mahapatra royal dynasty ruled over Chhatrapur Garh. When Samanta Mohapatra dynasty started the rule in this area, Goddess maa Bhairavi became the presiding deity or *Istadevi*.



Goddess Bhairavi, Puruna Katak

But much before the Bhairabi Pitha became famous as Isthadevi Pitha, the shrine of Goddess Bhairavi was famous in entire Utkala as a Tantrapitha. As per the *Madalapanji* - "*Navischa Utkal Desa - Bhairabi Kshetra Muchyate*".

The famous shrine of Goddess Maa Bhairabi Siddha Tantra Pitha at Puruna Katak is almost closer to all devotees for Goddess of mercy. All *nitis* of Maa Bhairabi is strictly followed and observed as per the guidelines of *Madala Pothi*. In which form Goddess Bhairavi is worshipped here, it cannot be found anywhere in the process of *nitis*. So it is a different *tantra pitha* than others.

From ancient ages Mahadevi Bhairabi is worshipped at Puruna Katak under the dense bamboo and mango forest. She is the presiding deity or *Istadevi* of Boudh. It is an integrated place of *Mantra, Yantra* and *Tantra*. Who ever



visits to this place once, he feels the eternal importance of Goddess Bhairavi. Many scholars, philosophers and *tantrikas* have attained the enlightenment of divine power of Goddess Bhairavi. It is only 29 kms away from Boudh town, 42 kms from Phulbani 199kms from Bhubaneswar. Maa Bhairavi is situated just on the N.H.224 of Khurda-Bolangir National High Way.

Sati committed suicide in the *Yagyankunda* as she couldnot tolerate the insult wordings spoken by her father Dakhya Prajapati against her husband Shiva. Shiva carried the half burnt dead body of Sati and moved here and there. Lord Vishnu applied Sudarshan Chakra to cut into pieces the body of Sati. *Navi Mandal* of Sati fell in the forest and flowed in the spring water. The *Navi kamal* settled on the foot of the mountain, in the Padma Narasingha thorny forest. Lord Shiva kept this *Navi kamal* of Devi Sati in his heart and started *Tandaba* Dance and at last, he was fully attracted and satisfied to this Padma Narasingha thorny forest and set up the *Navi kamal* in this Puruna Katak place, and proceeded to North. The different parts of Body of Sati fell in 108 places of India and these places are named by different names as *Shakti Pithas*. The *Kamal Navi* of Sati settled in Padma Narasingha thorny forest and named as Devi Bhairabi. Previously this *pitha* was far away from devotees and was located in Jhadakhanda which is situated on the right bank of the river Mahanadi, now known as Boudh. This kingdom was streched from Drutipur to 100 Kosa and four Samanta Raja's (Vassal King) were in charge of smoth adminstration in four places, (1) Kusanga (2) Chhatrapur (3) Dharmagada (4) Bausuni. Chatrapur gada, the capital of Mahapatra Samanta Raja was situated 29 kms away from Boudh and was between two villages i.e. Salakata and Jiakata. Still now the ruined of the fort of Chatrapurgada

is found near Salakata village which is extended in an area of 8 acres of land. During March 1986 March a copper plate was exavated from this place. Chatrapur Samanta king was older than the Gupta Raja's of Golden Era. The Mahapatra Samanta Rajas of Chatrapur Gada worshipped Maa Devi Bhairavi as their dynasty presiding deity i.e. *Istadevi*. Devi Bhairavi is situated in the middle of the *Argalia* mountain forest range near *Gadadurga* of Chatrapur kingdom. Mahapatra Samanta Raja's were happy and powerful with the blessings of Maa Devi Bhairavi, the Goddess being installed near the entrance of his Royal Fort. Two brothers Kenhya Ray and Danei Ray were appointed as royal commanders for the worship and development of Maa Bhairavi Pitha. During *Dushhera Saradiya Puja*, great festival was organised. Still now it is a great festival day for Maa Devi Bhairavi. When non-Brhamin Kshatriya Raja Mrutunjaya Bhanja was the ruler of Boudh, at that time steps were taken to keep Devi Bhairavi in a thatched house but it was a wonder that before completion of the cottage it was burnt by fire. Later on this proposal for construction of thatched house or cottage for Maa Devi Bhairavi was abandoned by King Mrutunjaya Bhanja. Again new priests (*sevaka*) for the *Upasana* of Maa Devi Bhairavi were engaged. Within few days they expired. Then none dared to come to worship. Ramakrushnadev became the King of Boudh and devoted himself for religious works. After him Raja Gangadhar Dev ascended the throne of Boudh. He exavacated the new tank named Chandrapur Sagar and also many village tanks. The King of Boudh Chandrasekhar Dev placed order to Paramananda Mishra of Palasa village to go to Puruna Cuttack for the seva of Maa Devi Bhairavi and also allotted 27 villages as *jagir*. The priest Paramananada Purohit proceeded with his wife and two infant sons and at Puruna Katak third son was born. The eldest son Bhagaban Purohit was granted Rajjngi village,



middle Basudev Purohit, Puruna Katak and the youngest son Jagamohan Purohit the Salakata village.

King Pitamber Dev engaged Pradyumna Dehuri for the worship of Maa Devi Bhairavi as an assistant *Sevak* of Paramananda Purohit . On special occasion of festivals, Purohit was engaged for worship of Maa Devi Bhairavi and *Dehuri* was engaged for daily *Nitis* and *Sevas* of *Shakti Pitha* of Maa Devi Bhairavi. During *Saradiya Sodasa Puja* and other festivals, *purohit* attained the *seva puja*.

Till 1965 Devi Bhairavi was worshipped in a cottage. Then Sitaram Agarwal and Nandulal Agarwal constructed a new temple with the blessings of Maa Devi Bhairavi in 1969, along with other rooms for *Bhoga* kitchen and rest house for other *Sevakas*.

During *Saradiya Sodasa Parva Puja* Boudh, King engaged 16 village heads called *Gauntias* to perform one each beginning from *Aswina Krushna Mulastami*. These *Gauntias* belongs to village (1) Puruna Cuttack (2) Salakata (3) Jiakata (4) Kamalpur (5) Ranji (6) Gurudi palli (7) Ratnapur (8) Saradhapur (9) Phulajhari (10) Balanda (11) Indrapur (12) Pitambarpur (13) Jajpur (14) Chamarapur (15) Bhabanipur (16) Chhatrapur / Udayapur. Still now the villagers of the 16 villages provide all puja materials for Maa Devi Bhairavi for *Saradiya Sodasa Puja*.

In the shadow of bamboo and mango trees Devi Bhairavi temple is a nice and peaceful place for all devotees. Devotees dedicate animals for sacrifice during the main festival on *Mahastami*. *Sahada* tree is dezzled with vermilion (*Sindura*). The animals meant for sacrifice are kept here. Under the tall banyan tree *Pithasena* *Devis* are worshipped. They are gate keepers of Maa Devi Bhairavi i.e. *Dwarapala*, *Khetrapala*

and *Mahapala* with sixtyfour *yoginis*. In the middle of these, *Balipitheswari* is seen. Animal sacrifice *nitis* are held here till now.

After *Darshana* of *Khetrapala* and *Dwarapala*, one can enter into temple of Maa Devi Bhairavi crossing five steps. Mahavir Sardula is standing in the main temple and lion faced, tiger faced gate keepers are found in the temple of Maa Devi Bhairavi. Inside the temple along Maa Devi Bhairavi following *Devis* are worshipped. They are - Maheswari, Khambeswari, Dakhinakali and Durgadevi with *Chalanti Pratima* and *Bije Pratima*.

During *Kartika Dipawali Amavasya* i.e. Diwali Maa is worshipped in the form of Shyamakali, during *Magha Krushna Chaturdasi* Maa is seen as Ugratara and during spring *Chaitra* month *Sukla Astami* to *Dasami* Maa *Basantika puja* is celebrated and the Goddess is worshipped as Bhubaneswari, Bagala and Dakhinakali in three days respectively. Maa Devi Bhairabi is seen as Kaumari during the month of *Bhadrava Krushna Astami*. It is the birth day puja of Maa Bhairavi. On *Bhadrava Krushna Chaturdasi* Maa Bhairavi is seen as Digambari, Kanyakumari, during *Bhadrava Amavasya* or *Saptapuri Amavasya* Yogmaya Besa is seen during *Bhadrab Sukla Ekadasi*.

It is also a nice picnic spot for its natural scenario and enchanting environment. So tourists and devotees from all over the state visit Maa Devi Bhairavi through out the year.

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Tradition of Shakti Worship in Orissa : Sarala in Perspective

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Dr. Lalit Lenka*

Indian sub-continent has been an ancient and ideal melting-pot since time immemorial. So many streams of faith, so many facets of culture have merged and mingled themselves in it. There are innumerable moments of crisis in Indian history when such forces have posed real threat to the very life and continuance of Indianness or Hindutva. But this blessed land has exhibited its incredible resilience and thrived in the face of such assaults and threats.

Notwithstanding all crises and threats India has maintained itself as a predominantly Hindu state with all its liberal and secular base. Again, among the myriad creeds and isms that Hinduism itself boasts of, Shakta as a creed remains popular and powerful. Shakti-worship is a major and a dominant faith among the Hindus. The Shakti-worshippers are, as it were, basically from the Sadhaka community. They worship Shakti, the wife of lord Shiva. All their faiths, rites and rituals are popularly known as Shakta Dharma. This has a very ancient tradition in Orissa. As per the Brihat Samhita, the manifestation/ appearance of Ekanshankara between Krsna-Balaram marks the beginning of the shakta tradition in Orissa (Dr. B. D. Mohanty. History of Oriya literature. Vol. II P. 354). There are very strong and ample evidence that Shakti worship was there in India as early as the pre-Vedic age. As the evidences are galore among the ruins of the excavation (of the Indus Civilization), Shakti-worship was popular and dominant in those ancient days. Down the ages,

it has been the initiative of the suffering millions to invoke the Goddess to relieve them from the torture and atrocities of some evil force. We get umpteen examples to prove this from the Puranic literature.

As the literary historians believe, it is the wonderful fusion of the creed and life-style of the Aryans and the post Aryans that created a faith in and perpetuated the tradition of Shakti-worship in this sub-continent. As a matter of fact, during the tenure of the Bhaumakara dynasty the popularity of Shakta religion or Shakti-worship reached an all time high and its epi-centre was the Biraja Kshetra of present Jajpur. (P.K. Mishra. Evolution of Orissa and Her Culture, 74). Even till as late as 15th century Shakti-worship maintained its popularity as the Mahabharata of Sarala Das so often projects. At many points and on many occasions poet Sarala Das calls goddess Sarala as Durga, Aparna, Parvati, Narayani, Bhavani, Katyayani, Saraswati, Chandi, Bhairavi, Bhagavati, Mangala and Hingula etc.

As Sarala Dasa writes,

"Along the river there is a ferry-point- Parsuram by name over there you see a hamlet called - Kanakavati close to that is a village called - Sarala And there manifests Herself mother Maheswari - as Sarala Chandi. She is the gretest yogin and the most - perfect Vaistnavi. She gives away boons and maintains he meditative - stature

(Sarala Mahabharata, Adi Parva) : Translation :
Dr. Das



We can see through Sarala's writings a clear impact of the pan-Indian Shakta tradition. Sarala, as we see, frequently calls out mother Sarala as Chandi, Maha Yogeswari, Parama Vaisnavi and Maheswari etc. The Devi Durga of Chandi Purana is treated as Prajna Paramita or the Goddess of knowledge in the Buddhist scriptures. Initially Prajna Paramita had two hands. But in course of time she got four, six, eight and finally ten hands (Dasa Bhuj). This proves the pan-Indian character of Shakti-worship. The Sapta Matruka (seven mothers) as we find in Jajpur and at many places was once upon a time the deity of the Buddhists. In fact as the matter stands most of the deities are now being worshipped by the Hindus were originally being worshipped by the Buddhists.

To look at it from the angle of religion, all the ancient poets have given adequate attention to the fundamental issues like Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha in their works of art. And in the process, they voice the spirit of their time in their works.

The age of Sarala is known for its open popular revolt against the rigid and atrocious Brahmanic rituals and culture. At the same time a strong reaction was also built up against both the modes of Buddhism, Natha Dharma and Tantra Yana. Besides, this period also significant by marks its preoccupation with the consciousness of the Pinda Brahmanda Tatva. Notwithstanding that, there is a clear trend which facilitates the thought and consciousness of shakta worship during this period that gets unmistakably manifested in Sarala's works and ideas. We would like to focus on that in this dialectic precisely.

Generally speaking, the Sadhakas who worship the Goddesses (Druga, Kali, Mangala etc) are broadly known as Shakta. As we see, poet Sarala has expressed his gratitude to mother Sarala for the inspiration that he got to compose the epic and other writings. As he candidly confesses :

I have no learning as
I am ignorant from birth
Nor do I know any mantra,
whatever she gives me I write
under the Kalpabata.

(Sarala Mahabharata, Kalpabata).

This amply indicates how much poet Sarala was indebted to Mother Sarala and he was basically an inspired poet. In the poet's vision mother Sarala is the possessor of all power and all knowledge (Mahavidya). She is again Maha Saraswati and the prime source of all knowledge and power. We get ample evidence of the poet's devotion and commitment to the Goddess from his works like Chandipurana, Vilanka Ramayana and Mahabharata. In one of the discourses on the mystery of creation in the great epic Mahabharata, there is an elaborate and exhaustive treatment of Shakti Upasana. The poet writes so lucidly and with such clarity the very beginning of creation thus :

Out of the Vacuum (Maha Sunya)
There came the wind,
From the wind
The power (Sarala Mahabharata,
Sava Parva)

Although Sarala's Chandi Purana or Septasati Chandi, this text is acknowledged as an important contribution to Shakta Dharma and Shakta worship. Besides featuring the arrival of Goddess Durga and the killing of demon Mahishasura, Sarala's Chandipurana makes special mention of the Goddesses who are popularly worshipped in Orissa such as Ugratara, Mangala, Chamana, Sarala Chandi, Maheswari, Tripura, Vasuli, Barati, Hingula, Tarini, Ambika, Charchika, Kamala etc. Further, poet Sarala mentions in Chandipurana how all the sixty-four yoginis are born from different parts of mother Durga like Narayani coming out of the sweat of the mother, Dakeswari from her shouts, Chandrakanti from her naval, Kamala from her



chest, Bikarali from her womb, Kankali from her finger etc. Presently all the sixty-four yoginis are being worshipped in Ranipur Jharial of Orissa. This gives a powerful indication about Sarala's strong inclination towards Shakta Dharma. In his epic the Mahabharata Sarala gives an interesting episode on the worship of Sapta Matraka. Even now Sapta Matrukas are being worshiped in Jajpur Town, the famous Biraja Kshetra under the erstwhile undivided Cuttack district. It would be an under statement if we simply say that poet Sarala was a Shakta worshipper. As a matter of fact, Sarala had profound knowledge in the intricacies of Shakta philosophy and the related original scriptures.

If we examine Sarala Mahabharata we find the poet dealing with the Shakta philosophy quite often whenever he has got an opportunity. That reminds us of the ethos and the mood of the period that gave a place of eminence and distinction to Shakta religion through many other creeds prevailed around the same time. We may recall, in this context, poet Sarala's effort to trace the previous life of Draupadi in the Mahabharata. As the Mahabharata mentions Draupadi who was born out of fire through, in her previous birth she was Ketuka Chandi. This version is exclusively that of poet Sarala which reinforces the belief that he was a champion and a promoter of Shakti worship. In the Mahabharata Vyasa presents an exciting session in which he himself (as the narrator) gives the account of the previous life of Draupadi to king Drupada. Again, in the vicious open parliament of the Kauravas, (in the context of Draupadi's humiliation) the sage Agasti is found narrating to yet another giant Vaivasuta Manu the four incarnations of Draupadi.

Four incarnations that Draupadi does take,
Ketuka being in the first,
Parvati being her second,
She is born in the home of Dakshya, in the
third, and in her fourth she is the daughter of
Drupada. (Sabha Parva P. 511)

In one of the deluges/ Pralayas (known as Kruta Sarva) lord Narayana was in his deep meditation. He was in his ananta Sayana posture upon a serpent called Virala Chakra. That was the time when there was no sign of heaven, earth or the nether-world, not even the Sun, the Moon, or the wind was born. Lord Narayana was deep in His Yoga Nidra with His head on the crown of the serpent. The only other presence around the lord was mother Adi Shakti who was serving him. Whenever the spell of lord Narayanas' Yoga Nidra would break for a moment the lord's glance of nectar would instantly create fifty Brahmas from the deep Blue Ocean. Once it so happened, one of those Brahmas started flirting with Goddess Saraswati (Adi Shakti) who was in the full-bloom of Her youth and beauty. When Adi Shakti stared at those Brahmas an extremely beautiful daughter was created. When the former asked this girl "ke tu" (who are you?) her name became ke tu ka. When this baby girl asked for food Saraswati (Adi Shakti) commanded her to kill all the Brahmas. Ke tu ka struggled for fourteen thousand years to kill fourteen Brahmas and ate their flesh and blood. And she started chasing the rest of the Brahmas to kill. To save their lives, all those Brahmas started calling out to the lord to save them from ke tu ka. And just on time the lord's spell of yoga Nidra broke and He took the Brahmas in and protected them for the time-being. It was so desired by Him that ke tu ka would eat them only in Dwapara Yuga. And those Brahmas would take their birth as Dushasan and ke tu ka as Draupadi in the age of Dwapara.

Further, it was so ordained that Dushasan would drag Draupadi with her lock of hair and attempt to strip her off. And to avenge this, Bhima, one of Draupadi's five husbands, would ampute the arms of Dushasan and paint the forehead of Draupadi with Dushasan's blood. At that moment Draupadi would be contented by taking her bath in the blood of Dushasan and drinking that too.



Not in Dwapara alone, in Tretaya too Draupadi's incarnation has been spelled out. In this age she would be born as the only daughter (Ekavala) and doing her perance on the bank of river Malati. Goddess Gayatri would be visiting that spot. Her husband Swami Niranjana Purusha was closely following Goddess Gayatri in the form of five bulls. Seeing this, Ekavala Parvati started suspecting the chastity of Goddess Gayatri. For this Kapila (the mother of Gayatri) cursed Parvati that she would be marrying five husbands in her next life as Draupadi.

In her third incarnation, Draupadi was born as Sachee and was married to Indra. It so happened one day Maharishi Twasta felt slighted in the court of Indra as the latter failed to receive him with due respect. He promptly asked Maharishi Vrutta to worship Rudra and to grab the throne of Indra. Eventually Vrutta Rishi threw the Indra out and occupied his place in Heaven. But again, with the assistance and grace of Lord Narayana once again the Indra could reclaim his position by killing Vrutta rishi. At this turn of event Maharishi Twasta got wild and rushed to Heaven to kill Indra. When Indra got this terrible news (from Narada) he was panicked and found a way out. He split himself into five parts; the first he got fused with Dharma, the second with the wind, the third with the space, the fourth with Aswini (the divine physician of the Heaven), and the fifth with Kumar (Kartikeya). After splitting away his soul into five different segments, Indra sat on his throne with the dross body, and soon Maharishi Twasta came and burnt Indra into ashes with his curse. On the death of Indra his wife Sachee sat on the bank of Akas Ganga and wailed. Lord Shiva and mother Parvati were passing that way when they heard the wailing. Sachee, seeing mother Parvati, entreated her "please give my husband back, mother" and the latter was merciful enough to bless Sachee saying "Thou shalt have five husbands". Sachee was crest fallen and was shell-shocked to hear that. But mother Parvati

promptly explained to her that in Dwapara Yuga she would be born as Draupadi and marry Indra (whose soul has been split into five) who would be born as five Pandava brothers.

That precisely explains the story of Ketuka being reincarnated as Draupadi in Dwapara. As we see, Draupadi, as a character, plays a major and decisive role in the epic the Mahabharata. The humiliation of Draupadi in the open Parliament of the Kauravas becomes the immediate cause of explosion that moves the existing bitterness between the two hostile Camps to a disastrous war when Dushasan made an attempt to outrage the modesty of Draupadi. There itself the latter took the vow not to rest till she drinks the blood of Dushasan and that marks the ultimate point of the great Mahabharata war which is painted by poet Sarala in his epic in a horrifying manner :

When Bhimasen kills Dushasan it appeared as if there is a cloudburst of blood from the Heaven that fell on the head of Draupadi. Blood burst out of Dushasan's forehead and oozed out of both his nostrills. And Panchali drank those blood in absolute contentment. (Karna parva, 102)

(Prose Rendering; Dr. Das)

In view of the above discussion we can safely draw the conclusion that poet Sarala was an avowed and a committed Shakta believer who contributed considerably to Shakta concept and philosophy.

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Saktism at Bhubaneswar Through Ages

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The Puranic *Ekamra Kshetra* or the modern Bhubaneswar is famous as a *Saiva Kshetra* in the religious history of India. Innumerable *Saiva* shrines have been erected here at different times by numerous rulers of Orissa. Side by side many Sakta shrines also raised their heads in this temple city as Saivism and Saktism are inseparable from each other from time immemorial. There are many Sakta shrines like Vaital temple, Gouri temple, Mohini temple, Bhubaneswari temple, etc. having Sakta goddesses as presiding deities.

Besides the images of numerous Sakta goddesses are also carved on the walls of almost all the shrines of Bhubaneswar.

The history of Sakta religion at Bhubaneswar can be traced back to first or second century B.C. on the basis of archaeological evidences. There are depictions of Yaksha-Yakshini or Naga-Nagini on the walls of the ancient monuments of Buddhism, Jainism

and Brahminism. Even in the modern age some crude-formed Yakshinis and Naginis are worshipped at nearby places of Bhubaneswar. The earliest form of Sakti worship in Orissa in the form of Stambhesvari is also visible at

Bhubaneswar in the Bhuasuni temple.¹ Due to the popularity of Saktism in 7th-8th century A.D. number of Sakta monuments had been constructed under the patronage of the Bhaumakaras at Bhubaneswar. Even some important Sakta shrines have been built by them in the vicinity of the temple city. With the spread



Vaital Temple, Bhubaneswar

of Sakta religion different manifestations of Sakti such as Mahisamardini, Sapta-Matrukas, Parvati, Gauri, Chamunda, Bhubaneswari, Savitri, 64-Yoginis, Katyayanis, Ardhanarisvara, Uma-Mahesvara, etc. appeared either as presiding deities or Parsva-devatas in the temples of Bhubaneswar. It will be more systematic if we discuss the development of Saktisim at Bhubaneswar through ages. Parasuramesvar



groups are regarded the earliest group of temples at Bhubaneswar. K.C. Panigrahi assigned C.A.D. 650 as the date of these temples and these shrines were erected by the Sailodbhavas² who were devout worshippers of Lord Siva. Though Parasurameswar is a Saiva shrine, yet it contains the images of numerous Sakta deities as Parsvadevatas on its walls. For the first time the depiction of Sapta-Matrka images is found here. The images of Chamunda, Varahi, Indrani, Vaisnavi, Kaumari, Sivani and Brahmi with their two associates Ganesa in the beginning and Virabhadra at the end are beautifully carved out from the south-west corner of the northern wall up to the middle. Except Ganesa all other eight deities are associated with their respective vahanas. A six armed Mahisamardini Durga (four-armed according to K.C. Panigrahi) and eight-armed dancing Ardhanarisvara, an image of Siva-Parvati and the images of Ganga and Yamuna are also seen on the wall of this temple. Thus the Sailodbhavas who worshipped Lord Siva as their family deity had also respected the Sakta elements of different gods.

The reign of the Bhaumakaras ushered in a new era in the religious as well as architectural history of Bhubaneswar. It is during the Bhauma period that Saktism first made its appearance in Bhubaneswar.³ During this time an amalgamation was made in Saivism, Saktism and Tantric Buddhism in the religious life of Bhubaneswar. Hence Tantric Saktism appeared in the religion of this place. Mainly the Bhauma queens patronized this new religion and for its widespread popularity constructed number of shrines of this cult in and around Bhubaneswar. Among those shrines the Vaital temple (C.A.D. 775) is the most important and popular. This shrine is otherwise known as Kapalini temple. Probably this temple was constructed by the Bhauma queen Tribhuvana Mahadevi who is otherwise known

as Katyayini She, in order to worship Katyayini or Durga, had constructed that shrine at Bhubaneswar. This monument is also known as Vaital temple. This name has been derived from the word Vetal or spirit with the help of which the Kapalikas and the Tantrikas wanted to attain their siddhis. So undoubtedly it was a tantric shrine. The presiding deity is a ferocious Chamunda with sunken eyes and the hood of a snake on her head and a corpse under her feet with a jackel dragging it. Other Sapta-Matrkas with Viresvara and Ganesa are also depicted with Chamunda with their usual attributes. Besides the images of Seven Mothers another female deity is also depicted in the middle of the western wall which has been identified with Sivaduti. Thus, for the first time the appearance of eight Matrkas is seen at Vaital. Moreover a four-armed Durga appears in the central niche in the south. It holds a japamala, a sula, a khadga and a vase in its four hands and has two attendants on either side and a pair of flying Vidyadharas above the head. In the northern central niche has been enshrined an eight-armed Mahisamardini with a sword, a trisula, vajra and sula in her right hands and khetaka with a loose handle, a bow and snake in the left. The snake forcibly draws out the tongue from the mouth of the buffalo-headed demon into whose chest the goddess thrusts the long trident held in one of the right hands. The lion bites the right elbow of the demon. An image of Ardha-narisvara is also depicted in the central niche of the western side.

The most important aspect of Saktism at Bhubaneswar during the Bhauma epoch was the rise of a mysterious cult popularly known as Yogini cult. The Yoginis were sixty-four in numbers worshipped by the Tantric Acharyas in order to attain their siddhis. All Yoginis are terrific in nature and were worshipped in open and circular temples. Under the patronage of a Bhauma queen Hira Mahadevi such a temple was constructed in



the village Hirapur at a distance of ten kilometers from Bhubaneswar. Perhaps in order to worship the Yoginis in a calm atmosphere this temple was constructed not at proper Bhubaneswar which was populous and noisy, but at a calm, quite and lovely place like Hirapur. This sixty-four Yogini temple of Hirapur is a landmark not only in the field of Saktism, but also in the spheres of sculpture and architecture during the Bhumra age. The sculptural representation of the Yoginis are very elegant and balanced made of black granite. All yoginis are in dancing position, with all their attributes and vahanas. Among them the presiding deity is Mahamaya big in size and ferocious in appearance. Besides the yogini images Bhairavas have also been represented in different forms, as they are associated with the yogini cult—a cult in Saktism—became very popular at Bhubaneswar under the Bhauma epoch. During this period four other Sakta shrines were also constructed on the four sides of Vindu Sarovara. Among these the Mohini temple is situated on its southern bank. This temple is of Parsurameswar type and was built by Mohini Devi, the queen of the Bhauma ruler Sivakaradeva II.⁴ This shrine is called Mohini temple after her name. The presiding deity in the temple is a ten armed dancing Chamunda. This temple was constructed in about A.D. 687.⁵ The next Sakta shrine situated on the north bank of Vindu Sarovara is the Uttaresvara temple. Chamunda, terrific in appearance, as in Mohini temple is also its presiding deity. The other two Sakta shrines on the eastern and the western banks contain two images of Mahisamardini. This fact is narrated in the Svarnadri Mahodaya that four Chandikas are enshrined on the four sides of the tank. Two other Chamunda images of terrific appearance are now found enshrined in the modern temples, one is called Bhuasuni temple on the bank of the river Gangua and another newly constructed small temple situated near the house

of Satyapriya Mohanty. All these Chamunda images bear the characteristics of the same age. They are depicted in tantric form with sunken bellies, emaciated body garlanded with skulls and seated on corpses with jackels by their side. None of the preceding temples contains Chamunda or any other Sakta image as presiding deities and in the succeeding groups the Sakta temples which contain Sakta images as presiding deities not in their terrific form, but in their pacific forms. Therefore it may be concluded that Saktism made its first appearance at Bhubaneswar during this period and began its existence along side the main cult Saivism.⁶

The most important Sakta shrine at Bhubaneswar is the Gauri temple. According to K.N. Mahapatra this was constructed by the Bhauma queen Gauri Mahadevi following the noble examples set by her predecessors Madhavi Devi and Mohini Devi around A.D. 790.⁷ But K.C. Panigrahi is of opinion that this temple was constructed by the Somavamsi ruler Nahusa-Indraratha or Indrakesari.⁸ It is a Khakara type temple like Vaital having Gauri as its presiding deity which is in pacified form. Sisireswar Temple, another shrine of the Bhauma epoch also contains a Mahisamardini image in the northern central niche of the vimana. Another mutilated Mahisamardini in the southern niche kills the buffalo-headed demon in the same manner as its close prototype of the Vaital temple does with same ayudhas in different hands. Thus, the Bhauma period is the most glorious phase in the establishment and spread of Saktism in Bhubaneswar and her vicinity.

Somavamsis who occupied Utkala after the Bhaumakaras originally belonged to South Kosala. They had contributed a lot for the spread of Saktism and Tantricism. The sixty-four Yogini temple at Ranipur-Jharia, the Sakta temple at



Belkhandi and stray images of Sakta deities proved their patronage to Saktism. Coming to Utkala they had not neglected in this sphere. The first monument of the Somavamsi period at Bhubaneswar is perhaps the small but elegant Muktesvara temple which was constructed by Yayati-I in C.A.D. 966 on the basis of the three Tantric temples at Baudh which was a territory of South Kosala.⁹ This temple is univocally praised by the art historians as "the gem of Orissan architecture", "the epitome of Orissan architecture" and "a dream in sandstone". The ceiling of the jagamohana contains most beautiful sculptures of a group of Sapta-Matrkas with Virabhadra on an eight-petalled full blown lotus at the centre, each petal being occupied by a deity. The main difference of the group from the earlier ones is that all the Matrikas except Chamunda hold babies in their arms and that Virabhadra holds sword in the right hand. This is a clear proof of the Tantric propensity of the builder of the temple. Moreover other Sakta cult images like Sarasvati, Varahi or Durga are depicted on the walls of the temples. Brahmesvara temple built by Kolavati Devi, the mother of the Somavamsi king Udyota Kesari also contains number of images of Sakta deities though it is originally a Saivite shrine. On the western faced of the main temple the figure of Chamunda carved by the side of Nairiti holds a trident and stands upon a corpse with a jackel biting its head. Another figure of the same deity carved on the northern wall of the same deity carved on the northern wall of the Jagamohana wears only a loin cloth and holds a nrimunda and a khapara. A jackel licks the blood dropping from the nrimunda while another animal presumably a buffalo looks up in between the thighs of the deity. There are also some minor representations of Sakta deities like Durga and Ardhanarisvara.

The superb temple of Rajarani famous for her beautiful architecture is believed to be a

product of the epoch of the Somavamsis. Its original name was Indresvara and is a Saiva shrine yet it contains many images of Sakta deities among which the image of Nisa-Parvati is most important. In a rectangular shallow niche nearer to the jagamohana on the south occurs a beautiful image of Parvati holding in her upper left hand a club and in her lower left hand a lotus with stalk which rising from the pedestal passes through the left arm of the deity.

The greatest Saiva temple at Bhubaneswar, the temple of Lingaraja is the finest production of the Somavamsi epoch. It is the most popular Saiva shrine of Orissa, Yet it contains some Sakta deities as its cult images. Among these the image of Mahisamardini depicted in the southern faced of Jagamohana is unique in its character. The main feature to be noticed in this representation is that the victim is not a buffalo-headed demon, but a buffalo, from the decapitated trunk of which rude figure is shown as issuing forth.

Moreover, the temple of Gopalini or Bhubaneswari situated to the north of Jagamohana of the Lingaraja and the temple of Savitri in the south-west corner of the vimana of Lingaraja may be assigned to the Somavamsi epoch.⁹

The imperial Gangas who ruled over Utkala after the Samavamsis were very famous for their art of temple construction. The tallest temple of Jagannath at Puri and the massive temple of Lord Surya at Konark amply prove their interest and skill in the building of temples. They had also not neglected in erecting Sakta shrines in the temple city of Bhubaneswar. Among them the Chitrakarini temple is one. Standing on the main road it is a panchayatana temple having four subsidiary shrines at the four corners surrounded by a compound wall. An image of Chamunda is worshipped as its presiding deity. Perhaps this temple was constructed by the Ganga



king Narasimhadeva-I who was known as Parama-Mahesvara, Shri Durgaputra, Shri Purusottamaputra in his Kapilas temple inscription of A.D. 1246.¹⁰ Another temple constructed by the same ruler having a Mahisamardini Durga as its presiding deity was called Dvaravasini Durga temple.¹¹ This may be assigned to the year 1246 A.D. Another small Sakta temple of the Ganga epoch enshrining the image of Mahisamardini Durga called Daksina-Chandi is situated near the southern gate of the compound of the Lingaraja temple. Here Durga has been mentioned as the presiding deity of the castle Kritivasa-Kataka in two Lingaraja temple inscriptions.¹²

Within the compound of Lingaraja temple, the temple of Parvati is a fine piece of architecture. This temple structurally and stylistically is definitely late than the Lingaraja.¹³ This temple may be placed in the second half of the 12th century A.D, because this temple might have been constructed by Chodaganga Deva at the time when the Laksmi temple was constructed at Puri or sometime later, as the Ganga rulers gave equal importance to Laksmi and Parvati.

The Ganga ruler Anangabhima-III described himself as Routa or the representative of Lord Purusottama.¹⁴ In order to glorify Lord Jagannatha he had constructed a small shrine situated to the south of Lingaraja in which Balarama, Subhadra and Krishna are enshrined. Narasimhadeva-I had constructed the temples of Laksmi-Narayana and Laksmi-Narasimha in the compound of Lingaraja. Thus the Ganga rulers who were the devout worshipers of the Vaisnavite deities like Narayana, Narasimha, Purusottama, Baladeva, etc. had worshipped their female counterparts like Laksmi and Subhadra. Thus Saktism flourished very deeply in the temple city of Bhubaneswar during the epoch of the imperial Gargas.

After the fall of the imperial Gargas, Kapilendra Deva, the founder of the Gajapati dynasty, constructed the Saiva shrine, Kapilesvara Temple at Bhubaneswar. That was the last temple constructed in the lengthy era of temple construction. The Gajapatis engaged themselves in wars and after their fall, chaotic situation prevailed in the politics of Utkala. Then successively it was ruled by Afghans, Mughals, Marathas and the British. Thus from the Gajapati period up to country's Independence no development was found relating to Saktism at Bhubaneswar.

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Sakta Sites and Monuments of Old Undivided Cuttack District

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The erstwhile undivided district of Cuttack has a good number of Sakta monuments. To facilitate general information a brief account of the leading ones is furnished below. This account includes a reference to the site description of the monuments and identification of the presiding deity.

Viraja and Sapta Matrukas of Jajpur

Jajpur or the Virajakshetra located on the bank of the sacred Vaitarani river is one of the oldest holy places of Orissa whose presiding deity, a two-handed Mahisamardini Durga has been assigned a date in the Gupta period by competent scholars. Jajpur was the capital of the Bhaumakaras and the Somavamsis and it also continued to be a place of great importance during the rule of the Gangas and the Suryavamsi Gajapatis.

The present Viraja temple is of a modern construction. It is located within a spacious compound surrounded by high masonry walls with battlements and main opening on the eastern side. The main shrine is built in rekha order, whereas the Jagamohana represents pidha design. Both the structures are thickly plastered in lime mortar. Within the premises are numerous miniature shrines containing detached fragments from ruined temples, votive Sivalingas, loose sculptures and hero stones.

The sanctum sanctorum preserves the presiding deity, Viraja. The image is said to have

been brought from the ruined temple at Kalasapur located in the close vicinity of Jajpur town as such it has no bearing on the present Viraja temple. Goddess Viraja, a form of Mahisamardini Durga is fashioned in the attitude of killing Mahisasura, the buffalo demon. She thrusts a long spear in the right hand and firmly held the tail of the buffalo-demon in the left hand. The demon is in complete animal form. Her mount, the lion is shown attacking the demon from the right. Two-handed Mahisasuramardini Durga images are generally regarded as the earliest form of this deity. No where in Orissa two-handed Mahisamardini Durga images are worshipped as presiding deities of temples.

Within the residential premises of the Sub-Divisional Officer of Jajpur are preserved three colossal images of Chamunda, Indrani and Varahi of the Saptamatruka group. These images in sitting posture measure around 9 feet in height and 6 feet in breadth and fashioned in hard chlorite stone.

At Dasasvamedha ghat on the right bank of the Vaitarani river one can notice another group of Saptamatrukas installed in a row within a modern masonry shrine. These images though small in dimension in comparison to the group of Saptamatrukas referred to above of the place yet larger in size to the groups found elsewhere in Orissa. The present images of Chamunda, Varahi,



Indrani, Vaishnavi, Sivaduti, Kaumari and Mahesvari are found under active worship. The order of their placement has been greatly disturbed. They are all seated in lotus pedestals with respective mounts carved in front and babies held in one of their left hands. Hands with attributes of some of these Matraka images have also been mutilated. The Sivaduti image is designed in shape of an emaciated old lady seated on the pedestal with both knees raised upwards.

Bhatarika of Baramba

Bhatarika, one of the famous Sakta pithas of Orissa is located on the right bank of the Mahanadi near village Sasanga of Baramba area. The presiding deity Bhatarika of this place is greatly revered by the religious minded devotees of the adjoining ex-garjats. In view of its picturesque set up large number of pilgrims throng to the place round the year. Their number multiply during Dashara days.

The main shrine preserving goddess Bhatarika is built in pidha order and thickly plastered with lime mortar. It has no significant architectural merit. The central niches of the side walls preserve parsvadevata images like Ganesh, Kartikeya and Mahisamardini Durga of much later finish. The presiding deity worshipped in the name of Bhatarika is seated cross legged on a lotus pedestal. She displays Varada mudra in the right hand and a full-blown lotus flower in the left hand. Her iconographic features correspond to the image of Tara of the Buddhist pantheon. Within the Jagamohana images of Surya, Kubera and Ganesh are preserved.

Churchika of Banki

Banki has become famous for its presiding deity Churchika enshrined in a much later temple on the top of the Ruchika hill. The place is associated with Parasurama of the Ramayana fame who spent a major part of his life in

propitiating Goddess Churchika. A small river, (now extinct) under the name of Renuka passes near this small hillock. The main temple, though architecturally of no attraction, its front wooden mandapa preserves remarkable specimens of Orissan art in wood carvings. The main shrine and the Jagamohana, both built in pidha design are thoroughly plastered with lime mortar.

The presiding deity has been firmly fixed to the back wall of the sanctum sanctorum. In course of time the image has been greatly weathered. To help identification a replica of the presiding deity is kept in the central niche of the outer southern wall of the main shrine. On the basis of this image the main deity which is worshipped as Churchika Thakurani can be identified with goddess Chamunda. She is carved seated on a prostrate human body. Her emaciated body is decorated with a garland of human skulls. In her four right hands she displays sword, spear, short dagger and gesture of offering boons. The three left hands on the other hand represent severed head, blood-cup and damaru. Through the small finger of the remaining one left hand she licks blood held in one of the hands of this side. Her decorative costumes and ornaments are all weathered. From iconographic and artistic point of view such images can be placed in the Bhaumakara period of Orissa history.

Sarala of Jhankada

The famous shrine of Sarala Thakurani of Jhankada is built on the ruins of an earlier temple. The original temple was destroyed by the Muslims iconoclasts during the rule of Aurangzeb. The local people indicate to the ruins of the original temple of this goddess at a place situated in the close neighbourhood. These ruins indicate to its construction in the Bhaumakara period. The present Sarala image is an image of Mahisamardini Durga to which Sarala Dasa, the author of Oriya Mahabharata greatly eulogized. In eight hands the



image represents characteristic attributes of the Bhaumakara period.

Pancha Varahi of Satabhaya

Satabhaya, situated close to the sea shore in Rajnagar area is famous for worship of Varahis (Pancha Varahi). Unfortunately one of the Varahi images has been lost and in its place a crudely fashioned deity under the name of Bata Kumari has been installed. The other four Varahi images are worshipped as Janjali, Kamalai, Bimalai and Panchuvarahi. All the images are fashioned in dark chlorite stone with uniform dimensions. They sit on plain pedestals with both legs stretched down the seat. Each one of them displays fish in the right hand and skull-cup in the left. They are marked by pot-belly and dishevelled hair arranged in twisted knots of successive tiers. None of them, however, is provided with a baby on the lap as found with the Varahi images of the Saptamatruka group in Orissa. The ex-ruler of Kanika has built a masonry-shed over these images for proper preservation and worship.

Saptamatrukas of Sathalpur

Sathalpur near Alanahat in present Jagatsinghpur district is noted for its Saptamatruka and Ekapada Bhairava shrines. Both the structures are now in ruins. The images installed in them are seen much below the surrounding ground level.

The Saptamatruka images of this place are fashioned separately but arranged in a row. They are flanked by Ganesh and Virabhadra. A lone image of Yama, too, found near these images. The Saptamatrukas include figures of Kaumari, Brahmani, Mahesvari, Varahi, Indrani, Vaishnavi and Chamunda. Except Chamunda, all the Matruka figures are seated in ardhaparyankasana. The figure of Chamunda is however, seen standing on a dead body. Again except Chamunda, the other Matrukas hold a baby each in her left lap. The Chamunda figure is eight-armed and except

the one displaying Varadamudra others are damaged and missing. A garland of human-skulls encircles her body. The other Matruka figures are represented with their mark of cognizance below respective pedestals.

The Ekapada Bhairava image in the other ruined temple is standing over a lotus pedestal below which is seen a prostrate human figure. His attendants on the sides are also envisaged in separate lotus pedestals. Of the four hands of the Ekapada Bhairava image, three are damaged and missing but the remaining one displays Varadamudra. A garland of human-skulls encircles his body. From artistic and iconographic point of view the Sakta images of this place can be assigned a date in the Somavamsi period.

Bhagavati of Suklesvar

The Bhagavati temple of Suklesvara is noticed amidst the ruins of the Manikesvara Siva and other temples of the locality. The present Bhagavati temple, much renovated in recent years is built in pidha order and thoroughly plastered. The presiding deity, a Mahisamardini Durga image is worshipped here as goddess Bhagavati. She appears to be the biggest Mahisamardini Durga image in Orissa. She is designed in the attitude of killing demon Mahisasura who emerges from the decapitated body of the buffalo lying over the lotus pedestal. The chopped off head of the buffalo too, is rolling over the pedestal. Lion the conventional mount of the goddess is engaged in attacking the demon from the left flank. Of the ten hands of the goddess, three of the left side and four of the right side are damaged and missing along with the attributes held in them. The remaining two hands of the left side represent snake and bow and one hand of the right side holds an arrow dragged from the quiver fixed to her shoulder. The image can safely be placed in the Ganga period. Two other eight-armed Mahisamardini Durga images datable to the



Bhaumakara period are also noticed within ruins of this place.

Bhagavati of Batesvar

The Bhagavati temple of Batesvara is situated on the left bank of the Chitrotpala river near Salepur. The Sankaresvara Siva temple once located near it has already fallen to the river bed. The Bhagavati temple of this place is built in pidha order and thoroughly plastered with lime mortar. Lower portion of the bada of this temple has partially been covered by earth. The niches of the outer walls are all devoid of figure sculptures. Within the sanctum sanctorum of this temple, a remarkable Mahisamardini Durga image in the name of Bhagabati is under worship. As per local tradition this image is earlier than the Bhagavati image of village Suklesvar of the same district. She has ten hands but some of them are damaged and refixed. She has been fashioned in the attitude of killing demon Mahisasura. Since the interior part of the sanctum-sanctorum is extremely dark even during day time it was not possible to closely examine the attributes held in each hand. However, as understood from the temple priest she represents all the conventional attributes of a ten-armed Mahisamardini Durga image of Orissa.

The Jagamohana of this temple is also designed in the same pidha order. It preserves three remarkable brass idols of Chandrasekhar, Parvati and Kali recovered from the river bed some years back. The Kali image of this group is worshipped as Panchamukhi Kali by the local people. She has five faces and ten arms. Four of her faces represent the four cardinal directions while the fifth one fashioned at the top represents the sky. Of her ten hands two are shown in abhaya and varada mudras. The remaining eight hands are provided with emblems like rosary, trident goad, spear, noose, manuscript, bow and skull-cup. She has a garland of human skulls, spread over the front part of the body. A dead human

figure is laying below her lotus pedestal. Her decorative ornaments, costumes and coiffure are extremely beautiful and varied in nature.

Dhakulei of Pratapanagari

The Dhakulei Thakurani shrine of village Pratapanagari is situated on the Cuttack-Bhubaneswar section of the National Highway No.-5. Besides the Sakta shrine, the place also yielded several figures of Jaina Tirthankaras and Sasanadevis and an interesting image of Lakshmi Narayana. The main shrine has already been collapsed. Its front Jagamohana too has no roof at present. A spacious masonry mandapa has been constructed in front of the shrine for use of devotees during festive occasions. The presiding deity under the name Dhakulei Thakurani is an image of Chamunda seated on a dead body in ardhaparyanka pose. A garland of human skulls encircles her body. All the eight hands including the attributes held in them are badly mutilated. The gajacharma avarana is faintly visible on the back slab. Her emaciated body, sunken-belly, gaping mouth and protruding eye-balls are awe inspiring. The figure closely resembles the Chamunda image of Dharmasala area now preserved in Orissa State Museum in workmanship. During the month of Chaitra a great festival is held here every year.

Saptamatrukas of Dharmasala Area

Dharmasala area yielded a large number of Brahmanical sculptures of which the Saptamatruka images once installed in village Chahata appear to be quite noteworthy. Of the entire group only four figures, i.e. Indrani, Vaishnavi, Varahi and Chamunda have since been shifted to the Orissa State Museum for preservation and display. Each of the figures measure roughly 2'. 6"X 1'6" in size. Their artistic elaboration of decorative ornaments including the jewelled crowns deserve special attention. All the figures except Chamunda are having babies



on their laps and lost in deep meditation. Their conventional mounts have been carved below their lotus pedestals. The Chamunda image is remarkably fashioned with display of complete human anatomy. Its skeletal body, sunken belly, protruding eyeballs, flaming hairdo and riding over dead body infested by jackals appear very awe inspiring. Another twelve-armed Mahisamardini Durga image datable to the 8th century A.D. has also been collected from this area for display in the Orissa State Museum.

Mahisamardini Durga of Durgapur

A good number of stone sculptures were recovered from the bed of Brahmani river near village Durgapur on the Cuttack-Balasore section of the National Highway and now preserved in a newly built masonry structure. The sculptures include figures from Buddhist and Brahmanical pantheons. The Sakta figures of the place represent Mahisamardini Durga and Chamunda images. Of the two Mahisamardini Durga images, the larger one is regarded as the presiding deity of the place from which the place possibly derived its name. Of her eight hands, two are damaged and missing. The rest six hands display sword, spear, disc, bow, snake and shield. Mahisasura emerging from the decapitated body of the buffalo is engaged in serious fight with the goddess. The other Durga image, though in small magnitude represents similar iconographic traits.

The Chamunda image of the place is designed seated on a prostrate human body. She displays demaru, skull-cup, khatvanga, rosary and severed head in five of her six hands. She licks the blood from the skull-cup by the small finger of her remaining sixth hand. Her skeletal body, sunken belly, bulging eye-balls, protruding teeth and garland of human-skulls are remarkably fashioned. Gajacharma is represented at her back.

Bhagavati of Parahata

Village Parahata is situated in the Balikuda Police-station area. The Bhagavati temple of this place has been built on the ruins of an earlier shrine. The presiding Bhagavati image represents the characteristic features of a ten-armed Mahisamardini Durga. Her five right hands hold Khadga, Sula, Chakra, Saras and Pasa and the five left hands on the other hand display Dhala, Ghanta, Parasu, Dhanu and Khetaka. She is designed in the attitude of fighting with demon Mahisasura who emerges from the decapitated body of the buffalo lying over the lotus pedestal. Lion, her conventional mount also appears attacking the demon from the right. Within the Jagamohana of the temple there appears another eight-armed Mahisamardini Durga image.

Chandi and Gadachandi of Cuttack town

Cuttack town has two prominent Sakta shrines, one under the name of Cuttack Chandi, is located in the Ramagarh area and the other under the name of Godachandi is situated within the historic Barabati font. Cuttack was the traditional capital of the Hindu rulers of medieval Orissa. The deities enshrined in both the temples are greatly revered by the local people. I had no occasion to examine the iconographic features of the deities since they are mostly covered by costumes all the time.

Other Important Sakta Deities

In addition to the above noted Sakta monuments a few more can be mentioned which include the Dakhinachandi of Kantol, the Durga temple of Vaidesvara, the Saptamatrukas of Simhanatha, the Gramadevati of Garama, Mahisamardini Durga of Kopala, Bhagavati of Tirthamatha, Harachandi of Kundesvara and Kuttamachandi of Pitapura.

Courtesy : Orissa Review, October 1986



Shaktism in Odisha

Dr. G. S. Tripathy

In Odisha there are Shakta shrines of which the shrines of Dakhina Kali at Jalasara Khandi, Taratarini at Purnagiri over Rushikulya, Ramachandi at Jhadeswar in the foot of the Krishna Giri Hills, Mangala at Kakatpur, Sambaleswari at Sambalpur, Charchika at Banki, Ramachandi at Konark, Sarala at Jhankada, Tarini near Anandapur, Siddha Bhairavi at Mantridi near Berhampur, Viraja at Jajpur, Chamunda on Vindu Sarovar at Bhubaneswar, Bhuasuni near Sisupalagarh, Chamunda at Khiching in Mayurbhanj, group of Saptamatruka at Parsurameswar, Sree Jayadurga at Bilaspur, a Brahmin Seasan in the southern part of Ganjam District near Samapa, the capital of the then Kalinga along with a Jantramurti in the same village, Manikeswari at Bhawanipatna, Dwarbasini over Bindusagar at Bhubaneswar, with Devipadahara tank nearby, having about a large number of small temples, Narayani near Barakula, Singhasani near Panchabhuti, Bhagabati at Banapur, Ugratara in Bhusandapur, Bimala in the precincts of Sri Jagannath temple, Cuttack Chandi at Cuttack along with Gadachandi, Mahurikalia near Berhampur Ganjam, Khambeswari in Aska, Byaghradevi in Kulad Bhattarika at Badamba, charchikai at Banki, Bhadrakali at Bhadrak, Viraja at Jajpur, Shayama Kali at Hinjili, Bhairavi at Chikiti, Kusangai at Kusang and Budhi Thakurani at Berhampur, sixty four yogini at Hirapur and Ranipur Jharial attract our attention.

Saktism established itself as a separate cult in the early part of Orissa History with the emergence of famous Brahmin and non-Brahmins worshippers of Devi Bhavani with *Gurumantra*. After some time it merged in Saivism so much so that its separate entity is hardly discernible.

As is evidenced from the *Mahabharata*, the *Harivansha* and *Vayu Purana* the Sakta Shrine of Viraja existed at Jajpur in the pre-Christian era. In the then Kalinga on the river Vaitarani, Viraja Tritha was situated as it is stated in the *Vana parva* of the Mahabharata. Sakta Pitha of Viraja at Jajpur is a very ancient shrine.

The Sakta Shrine of Viraja seems to have been dominated by Buddhism before the Ganga period in Odisha. Guhasiva of the Dathavanasa tradition was probably the ruler of Kalinga in the pre-Gupta period, who was a staunch follower of Buddhism and his predecessors were also Buddhists. When there was a revival of Brahminical Hinduism in Odisha, there was therefore the necessity of reforming the Sakta Shrine during the Gupta period. The great Brahminical shrine sprang up with the well known tradition that Gayasura was killed by Vishnu and that the head of the dead body fell at Gaya and the navel portion at Viraja. The shrine seems to have been reconverted into a pure Brahminical shrine with Viraja as its presiding deity.

Viraja Mahatmya which forms a part of *Skanda Purana* describes that there was a great Brahminical sacrifice at Jajpur performed by



Brahma and Viraja was born from the sacrificial pit as per the tradition already recorded. A two handed Mahishamardini is the image of Viraja which is now worshipped in the temple.

Buddhism during Bhauma period was a mixed form of religion in which Buddhism, Saktism, Saivism and Tantrism had become strangely amalgamated and therefore the Sakta shrine at Viraja might have been influenced by the mixed religion followed by the Bhaumas who were the rulers of Tasala with their capital at Viraja. At Jajpur there are several Sakta images, particularly of Chamunda which were worshipped by *Saktas*, *Saivas*, Buddhists and *Tantrikas*.

There are number of Sakta Temples in the great Saiva centre of Bhubaneswar which shows an amalgamation of Saivism and *Tantrika* Buddhism.

These temples were mostly built during Bhauma period. The most ancient Sakta shrine of Bhubaneswar is the temple of Vaital. Its sculptures prove clearly that the strange esoteric rites were being performed inside the temple by the so called *Tantrikas*. Four Sakta Shrines sprang up on the four sides of Vindu Sarovar during the Bhauma period. They are now known as Vaital, Mohini, Utteraswar temples. On the east of the tank, the names of the Sakta shrine which still exists, has been lost. Either the images of Chamunda or Mahisamardini is found inside the shrine of which Vaital is the most prominent. It is told that human sacrifices were being performed in this Vaital temple with the strange esoteric rites in the dead hour of night. The study of the architecture and sculpture of this shrine gives us an indication to this effect and nature.

From the word *Vetal*, the name *Vaital* has been derived. *Vetal* indicates a spirit. *Kapalikas* and the *Tantrikas* wanted to attain *Siddhis* with the help of this so called *Vetal*. *Svarnadri Mahodaya* gives a description that the venerable goddess Chamunda garlanded with human skulls exists on a spot on the west, in the

vicinity of the tank *Vindu-Sarorara*. She is known as *Kapalani* and is of dreadful and terrific form. In this context, the shrine of *Vetals*, is referred to. The adorable deity of worship of the *Kapalikas* was this terrific *Kapalini* with dreadful eyes. Generally these *Kapalikas* were Shiva worshippers but very often the deity of their worship was a Chamunda, *Malati Madhab* drama of Bhavabhuti provides us an information that a *Kapalika* wanted to sacrifice Malati to Chamunda who had been brought for that purpose only. There was a faith that Kali praises *Kapalika* who is ever collecting human skulls for Her garland. In *Dasakumara Charita*, the story of Kanakalekha also gives an example of this nature. These are the proofs that the *Kapalikas* use to sacrifice human beings to goddess Chandi to attain *Siddhis*.

From a study of Vaital Temple, the form of Saktism that we find is not an independent one. It was certainly allied itself with Saivism and Buddhist-tantrism. The Vaital temple not only bears the *Sakta* images but also *Saiva* and Buddhist-tantric deities as it has been seen. The mixed form of religion was an extreme sect of Saktism, Saivism and Tantrism that was followed by *Kapalikas*. Some revolting practices such as wearing of skulls, sacrificing human beings, eating food and drinking water in human skull-ups and keeping alight sacrificial fire with the brain and lungs of men were indulged by the *Kapalikas* in transe conditions.

Bhuasuni, in the vicinity of Sisupalagarh and the presiding deity at Khiching in Mayurabhanja have the same characteristics and are depicted in terrific forms with sunken bellies and emaciated sinewy bodies garlanded with skulls, seated on corpses with jakals by their sides. Another form of Saktism is the worship of *Saptamatrukas* which can be traced back to the 6th / 7th century A.D. or may be earlier also. In the Parsurameswar, Vaital and Muketeswar Temples at Bhubaneswar, the Groups of *Saptamatrukas* are to be found.



At Jajpur two groups of these deities are to be found being worshipped at different locations. On the bank of Markendeswar tank at Puri, the Sapta Matrukas are found. All these groups contain the images of Ganesh and Virabhadra besides containing the images of Varahi, Indrani, Vaishnavi, Kaumari, Sivani, Brahmi and Chamunda. The babies are not found in the arms of earlier *Matrukas* but in the arm of later *Matrukas* babies are invariably found. In Odisha and in the then Kalinga the worship of *Matrukas* formed an essential part of Saktism and it had been widespread throughout.

Out of the group, some times Chamunda and Varahi were selected and worshipped as single deities. In the Prachi Valley of Puri district, a Varahi temple still exists at Chaurasi. It is not unlikely that similar rites were followed here also.

In the Balasore district another Varahi shrine is to be found at Narendrapur near Gadi. In a thatched house the presiding deity was being worshipped previously, now being enshrined in a temple. In the Raja Bagicha of the Nilagiri town in the same district a single image of Varahi was lying and it seems originally to have belonged to a shrine. In Odisha, the Varahi worship was widespread. It was believed by the people that to ward off all the epidemics it was necessary to propitiate her as she was to be the cause of all epidemics.

Tatarini now on the top of Purnagiri hills at Raipur on Rusikulya were known as daughters of the great Tantrik Basu Praharaj in the 18th Century A.D. in Kharida in the district of Ganjam and after his death they were enshrined in the temple. Basu Praharaj was a famous *Devi Bhakta* in Ganjam.

Shri Jayadurga, now worshipped in Bilaspur in the district of Ganjam in the house of a Brahmin was brought from Bhawanipatna in the 19th Century A.D. by *Punya Sloka* late Bhubaneswar Tripathy over his head by walking from Kesinga through the dense forest of Parvati

Puram now in Andhrapradesh to Bilaspur in the district of Ganjam in Odisha. Devi Jantra is now in the same village in another household, worshipped by Bhakta Tantrik the late Baidhar Tripathy in early 18th Century A.D. It is said that she was in the talking terms with *Bhakta Siromani* Baidhar Tripathy who did miracles.

Bhagabati at Banapur and Ugratara at Bhusandapur are very famous through the worship of *Bhakatas* even now along with Tarini at Ghatgaon, Dhakhina Kali at Jalsarkhandi, and Maa Mangala at Kakatpur.

The connection of Goddess Mangala of Kakatpur with Sri Jagannath shrine during *Rathajatra* is well-known through out the world. No *Rathajatra* would be conducted unless *Bhaktas* of Jagannath get *Swapnadesh* from the Devi Mangala at Kakatpur.

During Ganga period in Odisha in between 12th-14th century A.D. worship of Sakti images were not been patronized by the Ganga kings. Chodaganga Dev banished all goddesses from Odisha as per the traditions recorded in *Madalapanji*. In *Madhyaparba* of *Mahabharata* another tradition recorded by Sarala Das points out to the fact that the king was responsible for the removal of Ramachandi from her original shrine at Konark to the sea shore at *Liakhia Muhana*. Excepting a few like Viraja and Parvati etc. Chodaganga Deva was antagonistic to *Sakta* images in his kingdom. All these traditions points out to the fact that the king was not in favour of *Sakta* worship at all. During this period all male deities were provided with consorts or their female counterparts. Parvati temple inside the Lingaraj temple at Bhubaneswar and Laksmi temple inside the Jagannath temple at Puri were built during the Ganga period. Saktism in Orissa took a different turn during the Ganga rule.

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Saptasati Chandi - A Fresh Look

Dr. Gouranga Charan Nayak

An anecdote is found in Saptasati Chandi by means of which the author introduces what I consider to be a revolutionary idea. The far-reaching consequence of this idea and its application may require a very long time for its realization. But in and by itself it is certainly worthy of attention, atleast for suggesting a revolutionary change in the conceptual field, particularly in the concept of Jnana or knowledge in a broad sense. To my mind the proper application of this revolutionary idea in individual and social life would go a long way in solving some of the burning problems that confront us today in our face. In any case it opens a new vista in our consciousness of and dealing with ourselves and our fellow beings.

The anecdote runs as follows. King Suratha, driven out from his own kingdom and the affluent merchant Samadhi, rejected by his

wife and children, happen to meet each other near the hermitage of Medha Rsi, the seer. Then their dialogue begins. Both of them admit that even after

being thrown away from their own kingdom and family members and servants, these thoughts constantly haunt their minds while they are reminded of their past. They start ventilating their anxiety and astonishment to each other and later reveal the same to Medha with the hope of getting a solution. They labour under the impression that they are wise and yet their wonder knows no bound in realizing that though wise they are also infatuated. Their attachment towards apathetic relatives and the past has given them untold suffering and yet they have

been infatuated over and over again. They start enquiring from Medharisi as to how this could be possible and why all these are happening. By way



Goddess Cuttack Chandi



of reply Medha invokes *Saktitattva* (the theory of Sakti, the great power) in order to bring them home that man falls prey to infatuation under the influence of Mahamaya or the Great Power of Delusion. I am here concerned not with the implications of the abstruse philosophy of 'Mahamaya', but with what I would call the common-istic view of *jnana* or knowledge in a broad sense propounded by Medha just before the concept of *Mahamaya* is introduced by him.

According to Medha, *jnana* or knowledge in a broad sense is found in each and every creature. Man is certainly knowledgeable, but knowledge is not the monopoly of human beings alone. In the eyes of Medha all living beings, even animals, birds and deer are knowledgeable. Medha cites instances from animal world where creatures, like human beings, are infatuated on account of excessive attachment. Even as a bird, though itself seized by hunger, collects foodgrains for its children and feeds them out of great attachment, so also human beings with all their wisdom get themselves attached to their progeny in the hope of getting a return for their deeds. Thus, according to Medha, living creatures in general, whether man, beast or bird are found to be in the whirlpool of infatuation inspite of the fact that they do have *jnana* or knowledge in a broad sense. The knowledgeable person also is under the spell of the Great Power of delusion (*Mahamaya*); this is how it is and there is nothing to be astounded about it, says *Saptasati Chandi*. It is to be noticed here that according to Medha, the seer, each living being possesses knowledge in varying degrees. He strongly refuses to accept man's monopoly over knowledge. To my mind this unique illumination of Medha has far-reaching consequences. Adherence to this view cannot allow an iron curtain to be drawn between the knowledgeable and ignorant without reservation. It may be admitted that a person possesses

knowledge about a lot of things and yet he alone is not to be considered as wise or knowledgeable. On the other hand, a person possessing lesser information than him might have such wisdom as is inaccessible to the so called knowledgeable person. Under such circumstance it can be inferred how revolutionary it would be to hold that each one in the human society is in possession of some knowledge or other instead of drawing a line of demarcation between the so called wise and unwise. What to speak of human beings, creatures like birds and beasts are also not devoid of knowledge. Viewed from this perspective we have to reassess the well-known distinctions such as ignorant-wise, great-small, respectable-despicable, etc.

Will all these distinctions evaporate them ? Certainly not. Such discriminations will continue to remain in our day to day life. Difference will persist between great and small, wise and ignorant, but this will be simply a functional difference without any rigidity or absolutistic bias. It is beyond doubt that in the empirical world for the satisfaction of their practical needs people will gather around persons having proficiency and specialized skills and in return they will shower their affection and reverence on such persons. Others will be undermined in that particular respect. Importance attached to some as against others will be undermined in that particular respect. Importance attached to some as against others will be simply functional, however, and the concept of 'importance' itself will be seen to have no unalterably fixed significance to be determined by some abstract speculation. Once due importance is given to this in our social milieu it is not impossible to have fundamental and revolutionary changes in our thought process as well as in the evaluation of persons and social institutions. As an outcome of such revolutionary thought we may be impelled to search for new



values in the so called insignificant things, and in my estimation this vary thought could provide the foundation for what I would call a common-istic or mass ideology.

Eminent poet Kalidasa has ventilated his feelings through the lips of Yaksha. *Meghaduta* as follows - *Riktah sarvo bhavati hi laghuh purnata gauravaya* - which means that whatever is empty or void is light, and fullness makes the object weighty. It is a naked truth that nobody is weighty. It is a naked truth that nobody attaches importance to an empty object; people get attracted when the object is full in every respect. This is applicable *mutatis mutandis* in case of learning, wealth, knowledge, power, etc. But in the conceptual framework of the seer Medha even the animals and birds are not empty. Consequently we may learn to respect the so called light or empty objects for some of their inherent qualities and try to unfold such qualities for the immense good of mankind. Nothing is absolutely useless or despicable; importance can be attached to every thing considering our needs. Instead of having a photographic static view, based on an essentialist bias, we learn to have a non-essentialist, dynamic view of values. Here we come face to face with a conceptual remapping with far reaching implications.

A specific educational curriculum based on this illumination can be introduced. There should be specific arrangement to manifest and canalize the potential knowledge of the most backward and useless student in the class-room who is perhaps considered to be the most inefficient in a particular social set up. It has become customary to under-estimate students who have proved themselves failures, say in literature or mathematics. It is not an exaggeration to say that this is cancerous for the society. Our educational system is not advanced to the extent

so as to provide adequate opportunities for unfolding the inherent potentiality of every child. In a predicament like this thousands of innocent children are continuously ill-treated, humiliated and neglected in the so called age of science, whereas there is no dearth of so called wise and qualified academicians or rich and dignified persons in our society. And what exactly is the real contribution of these elites? We do not have any satisfactory reply if someone asks, where lies the glory of such knowledge, quality or riches? Does that glory contest only in this- that when out of millions of such unfortunate children some turnout to be thieves, others burglars, some pickpockets and another a devil, perhaps, the so-called wise and highly qualified elite will put them behind the bar or else will go on preaching sermons like, 'speak the truth', 'Be truly religious', etc. during their so called profound lectures? Are these elites to be considered as the very important members of the society while all others are insignificant and empty? *Saptasati Chandi* has uprooted this divisive consciousness, which is most pernicious, by what I would call a secularization and democratization of knowledge (and also of the grand delusion' despite knowledge). In my view many of the problems that have captivated our society through ages can be mitigated to a large extent if, instead of nurturing a monopolistic view of *Jnana*, due emphasis is given on thought of equality and if our educational system and social institutions are guided by such ideologies.

It may not be entirely out of place to mention here that is striking at the root of the age-old monopolistic theory the communistic through creates self consciousness and self-confidence in the so called despicable and the common. Which is the bedrock of any successful democratic set up. Not only that, under the impact of communism the so called uncommon man trains himself up to realize value in the common place instead of



neglecting it. The upliftment of the ignorant subject becomes the unfailing creation of the effective administration of the wise ruler. Far from despising ignorance, when delusion is conceived as a great and all-pervasive power (Mahamaya Sakti), the so-called ignorance itself becomes the school of learning, so to say, for the wise. In this framework one is to be considered elite only in so far as he is capable of unfolding the potential knowledge of man and is able to empower the so-called unwise with the dignity of wisdom. The conceptual remapping involved in the unique thought can thus be seen to have far-reaching implication.

True, monopolistic tendencies are very deep-rooted in the human society. It is not an exaggeration to state that negligence of the common place and the ordinary and an infatuated longing for the uncommon and extraordinary is an age-old disease. Having its source in the prevalent monopolistic tendencies, this longing makes us neglect each other, neglect the interests of those who are under our very nose- the millions and millions of people. It may or may not be possible to eradicate this malady completely, but the all-round development of the society will remain a myth unless this disease is at least recognized, diagnosed and brought under control. The existing



values, such as wisdom of the handful and a few in a static, essentialist, sense, need to be reassessed in the light of the instructions of the *Saptasati Chandi*. It may be far-fetched to suppose that all aspects of the communistic thought in every detail follow directly from these instructions, but the cue can certainly be taken from Medha's revolutionary idea. It cannot be lost sight of that, nothing, no creature what-so-ever, has an intrinsic monopoly over others in view of the fact that both *Jnana* or knowledge in a broad

sense and the 'grand delusion' are so very normal to all living beings.

Like the demon Raktavirya giving birth to its prototype from each drop of its blood, monopolistic consciousness is multifaceted

and monstrous. Even if one of its manifestation is rooted out, it appears in thousand other forms and encircles us in our unawareness. What is required is a ceaseless struggle in every nook and corner of human thought, by a deep penetration into the different layers of monopolistic consciousness, with *Saptasati Chandi* as our guide.

Courtesy : Orissa Review, October 1986.



Worship Of Mother-Goddess

Er. Nirakar Mahalik

The worship of Mother-goddess can be traced back to Rg-Vedic period or Indus. Valley-Civilization, the work 'Sakti' denotes 'Power'. Every human has some inherent power called Sakti. The power is a manifestation of *Para Sakti*, the Supreme Goddess worshipped as Mother *Maa*. She created God Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswar. The Devi is the manifestation of all powerful female principle i.e. the *Prakriti* or *Sakti* having associated with the male principle, *Purusha*. She became Jagadamba or *Jagatmata*, the Mother of the Universe and Creator of Gods. She is eulogized as a power of all powers and conceived by the worshipper in the form of Mahakali or Durga, Mahalaxmi and Mahasarasvati. Although the worship of *Maa Jagat Janani* is observed in every nook and corners of India, it is most devoutly celebrated in eastern states of Orissa, Bengal and Assam where the annual festival of Maa Durga had gained prominence over all other worship. In autumn the worship of Mother Goddess is performed to get peace, tranquility in this mundane world. The worship of Mother-goddess is conducted in the annals of tantric ritualistic practices, specially through *mudras*, *mantras* and *mandalas* in the *Karmakanda* of Brahmanical patheon. *Mantras* protect and redeem one who utters it. It has a tremendous power to transform from one state to the upper. It purifies and lifts us to a higher state of consciousness. The ritualistic procedure of *Tantra* is performed in an elaborative form. Acharya Sankar (788-820) also accepted the

tantric tradition through his *Bhasya* in *Brahmasutra*. In Europe the female worship is conducted through the worship of Virgin Mary. There were instances of Mother Worship in Far-East Asian and African countries.

The Sakti cult emphasizes total involvement with life, where sexual impulse is accepted, transformed and harmonized for one to attend spiritual realization. The worship of Goddess is often associated with worship of God. From the outer view the sexual act may appear to be perverse, but from the inner point of view, the same act signifies creation. The Saktas offer *Panchopachar Puja* to Maa Jagat Janani. There were two sects of *Saktas*- one sect interprets the sacraments literally which testifies worshipping of nude female as the symbol of the Goddess. The other takes the rites metaphorically with five sacraments. The five sacraments in *Panchopachara Puja* include (1) *Mansa* (meat) (2) *Maithuna* (sex-union) (3) *Matsya* (fish) (4) *Madya* (liquor) (5) *Mudra* (hand gesture). The *Saktas* maintain utmost secrecy while performing this type of *Puja*. The *Puja* is not a egoistic satisfaction, but rather an act of transcendence. Through control of sense one attains spiritual ecstasy. Thus it is evident that one of the act of faith of the people was sexual union known as act of bliss, which must be performed in true religious spirit and not as wanton indulgence to ensure spiritual welfare. The *Vedas* support this view. The five forms specially *Maithuna* is vividly engraved in the temples of



Konark. Ancient rules were constructing temples of Goddess and painted the image of Mother-goddess on the walls near their palaces for worship. The walls of Vaital temple, Sisiresvar and Markandesvar temples of Orissa contains exquisite images of Mahisamardini Durga. A good numbers of sculptures of Orissa and Mukhalingam (Andhra) depicts the Ardhanarisvara form in which the right half comprises all the iconographic features of Siva and left half, those of Uma.

B.M Barua in his article on 'Pre-Aryan Elements in Indian Culture' claims that Mother-goddess cult in India is of pre-Aryan origin. It is well known that feminine deities occupy a very prominent place in modern Hinduism. Yet they played a very insignificant role in the religion of Rg-Vedic Aryans. The divine energy (Sakti) in Rg-Vedic age (*Devi-Sukta*.R.V.X-125). It may be observed here that names like Ambika, Uma, Durga, Kalika etc, which designated the central figures of the cult of Sakti do not occur in *Rg-Veda*. In the old Pre-Aryan religion of India, a leading feature was the worship of the nude-Mother-goddess as a nude-woman which survives to this day in the representation of such in the Hindu Mother-goddesses as Kali, Sitala, Chamunda, Chinnamasta etc. Sitala we are told in *Puranas*, should always be represented in a state of perfect nudity. Indeed, She still takes that form in Jessore, Nuakholi and Khulna where She is regarded by the Pods of their main deity.² Nude-goddess worship was prevalent in western Orissa since long. Many nude figures and sculptures of Sakti cult have been discovered from Khariar area of Orissa. Historian H.D.Sankalia has written an article in an international journal *Artibus Asiae Vol-XXIII* with nineteen illustrations drawn from Europe, Asia, India and South-east Asia that the ideal position for child birth was probably borrowed from Egypt through our flourishing trade with Rome in the 1st century B.C to 12th century A.D. In the ancient world, the most realistic of such figure belong to Egypt,

where they represent the Goddess Baubo. The figure is commonly represented as seated on the ground, the legs spread out so as to display the Pudenda (the Yoni) which are strongly marked and often exaggerated in size.

There are many sculptures and terracotta figures found from various excavations which are identified as nude goddess seated with wide spread legs, flanked by a female attendant on either side in cave no 21; Ramesvar cave, Ellora. Many such figures from Alampur (Andhra Pradesh), Kolhapur, Bhita (U.P), Vadgaon (Satara), Nevasa (Maharashtra) were found which showed the nude-goddess's popularity. The village folktales from Karnataka showed that she was worshipped by women who wanted children. The idea was prompted by the desire to envisage, to increase and glorify the spirit of fertility as personified in the Mother-goddess. As the role of Indian women in the real life is very vital, female deities also got special position in the Hindu Pantheon accordingly. An Indian woman is supposed to be absolutely devoted to her husband. She is respected as the embodiment of the deity. She reigns supreme in her own domain as the Mother of her children and nucleus to her family members. Motherhood is treated with great respect in India. The sacred quality of womanhood in Indian village life is given much importance, where most of the women - folk spend a considerable time in fasting, worshipping and preparing special food for numerous Pujas and festivals throughout the year.

Worship of female spirit in some form or other (i.e. the Mother-Goddess) were existed during the days of Indus Valley Civilization, the proof of which is ascertained from the discovery of some seals and sculptures from the excavations. However, the Sakti-cult in its developed form appeared for the first time in the Epics and *Puranas*. The Mahabharat for example outlines various constituent elements underlying the principal cult-picture of the developed Sakta-Cult



i.e. the *Durgastrotras* in *Virat* and *Bhisma Parva* in *Mahabharat*. Harivamsa (4th century A.D.) mentions that the Goddess Durga is very popular since early centuries of Christian era and She is identified with all the chief deities and had the characteristic epithets. In the Gupta Period Durga was worshipped as Ambika, Simhavahini, Uma etc. The composition of *Devi Mahatmya* or *Saptasati Chandi* is an important land mark in the history of the Devi-worship in ancient India. This work was probably composed in the 6th century A.D, and was later on incorporated in the *Markandeya Puran* (81-93) its oldest extant manuscript being dated 998 A.D. (Winternitz-*History of Indian Literature*). Here *Durga Puja* is described as great autumnal worship.

In 5th century A.D., worship of Stambheswari was prevalent in southern and western Orissa under the Tungas, the Sulkies and the Bhanjas. The earliest epigraphic evidence was found in a copper-plate grant of Tustikar Deva. There is a pillar of Stambhesvari at Sonepur and one temple of Goddess at Aska in Ganjam district. The Stambhesvari is an another form of Khambesvari, the popular deity among the tribals. Viraja of Jajpur mentioned in Vayu Puran and Hari Vansa, the Vaitarani and Viraja Tirtha of Mahabharat, the Navigaya of Vishnu Puran and the Sidhapitha of Kubija tantra had flourished as a centre of Saktism from the 5th century A.d to 12th century A.D. The image of Devi Viraja now under worship is a two armed Mahisamardini engaged in killing Buffalo-demon of Gupta period. From 7th century onwards tantric worship of Mother-goddess were developed under Sailadhaba and Bhaumakara rule. The most ancient Sakti shrine of Bhubaneswar is the temple of Vaital and its sculptures clearly proves that the strange esoteric rites were being performed in it.

By the time Vaital temple was built in Bhubaneswar witnessed a peculiar blending of Saktism, Saivism and Mahayana Buddhism. Two-armed, four-armed, six-armed, and eight-armed

images of Durga had cropped up at innumerable places along with images of Tara, primordial deity of Buddhist pantheon and other deities of Sakti-cult. Afterwards the image of Durga having ten-armed, twelve-armed, sixteen-armed, eighteen-armed and twenty-armed were developed in many other places of Orissa. The seven tongues of Agni as described in Mandaka Upanisada had crystallized into Sapt Matrukas with their attributes derived from Markandaya, Agni, Matsya and other Puranas. The seven goddesses are Varahi, Indrani, Vaisnavi, Kaumari, Sivani, Brahmani and Chamunda. The deities are of two or four armed. These *Matrukas* are found at Parsuramesvar, Vaital, Muktesvar temples of Bhubaneswar, at Jajpur, Belkhandi (Kalahandi) and Markandesvar tank at Puri. Towards the 10th century A.D., with the rise of tantric Buddhism and tantric Saivism the Yogini worship became popular in Orissa. There are two Sixty-four Yogini temples in Orissa, one at Hirapur on the south bank of the river Bhargavi near Bhubaneswar and the other at Ranipur-Jharial in Bolangir district. Durga Puja celebrated in autumn has its root in some aboriginal custom prevalent in ancient India. Evolution of Sakti Cult down through the centuries indicates that worship of Mother-goddess in various forms will continue for the ages to come.

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Goddesses Manikesvari and Lankesvari

Uma Shankar Kar

Tel and Indravati basin covering Kalahandi district is a land of Sakti worship since time immemorial. The earliest form of sakti worship was discovered in the shape of Stambeswari which has been mentioned in the Teresingha Copper plate of Raja Tustikara during fourth century A.D. Tribal Kondhs worship wooden posts which has been taken the shape of Stambeswari it is believed. Kalahandi district is mostly inhabited by tribals who are nature and mother deities worshippers. Besides, to get rid from drought like situation Sakambari, during war period to get strength Raktambari, Lankeswari, Dakeswari (Dukri) and Manikeswari deities are worshipped in Kalahandi. Here there is an attempt to present different aspects of Manikeswari and Lankeswari, two important deities of Kalahandi region.

Manikeswari

Deity Manikeswari is the tutelary goddess of Kalahandi. The name of the deity is significant as it is believed that the name of the deity Manikeswari has been derived from the word Manikya (Ruby). The Kalahandi region is famous for various types of gemstones including that of Ruby, Sapphire, Emerald, Topaz, Iogite and many other varieties of gemstones. Kalahandi was known as "Karund" and till 18th century the Naga kings of Kalahandi were known as

Karundadhipati. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, Page 478, Vol. 6 the name *Corundum* (base metal of Ruby) is derived from its place where it is collected. Incidentally the Sanskrit name of *Corundum* is Korund or Kurundum. It is believed from *Kurundum* the old name of Kalahandi i.e. *Karund* was derived and from it the word *Corundum* was derived.

The Chindakanaga kings of 12th and 13th century A.D. were worshippers of Goddess Manikya Devi alias Manikeswari which is known from Jatanpal, Dantewara and Bhairamgarh inscriptions. Later she became tutelary deity of Ganga and present Naga kings of Kalahandi. The medieval period between 10th to 13th century was a period of political disturbance in Trikalanga and South Kosala region due to continuing warfare between Somavamsi, Kalachuri, Chhindakanaga, Ganga dynasties and Kalahandi virtually turned in to marching route of army and witnessed many battles. Availability of large numbers of Sati and Hero stones from different parts of the district is indicating long warfare. There was virtual competition among different powers to adorn the title of *Trikalangadhipati*. During this period the Chindaka Nagas suffered due to their friendship with Gangas against Kalachuries. In order to terrorise and to give lesson to Gangas, Kalachuries crushed Chakrakota Nagar of Chhindak Nagas.



Kalachuri king Ratna Deva-II of Ratanpur also defeated Jateswar alias Kamarnava the son of Chodaganga Deva, the Ganga king of Utkala. This lost glory was at last recovered only by Anianka Bhima alias Anangabhima Deva, the great grand son of Chodaganga Deva, defeating Kalachuri ruler Pratapa malla. The tradition says that the Gangas adopted Manikya devi the tutelary deity of their friend Chindaknagas. During this chastic period of power struggle, this region turned in to a vassal state of Gangas with no importance and when the Ganga rulers were weakened, local powers like

Chauhans in Bolangir region and Nagas in Kalahandi raised their heads. The Darbar Records of Naga rulers say that after the death of the 6th king of Naga dynasty his widow queen along with her minor son Ramachandra Deo took shelter in her maternal house at Gadapur who

belong to Ganga family. Later the Kondh *Umras* and important citizens brought the queen and son from Gadapur. While returning back home Ramachandra Deo brought Manikyadevi from his maternal uncle's home. Manikyadevi was established at Jugsai Patna in the form of Manikeswari and the ruins of the old temple there is still visible. Later Ramachandra Deo installed Manikeswari at Bhandesir garh (present Bhawanipatna) and ruled from Jenabali Patna or present Junagarh.

However during the rule of the 27th king of Naga dynasty Fatenarayan Deo, there was out

break of epidemic in the capital and even the 2nd son of the king was also the victim of the epidemic and the eldest son Udit Pratap Deo was in serious condition. He was believed to be cured after the prayer of the king before deity Manikeswari and in the year 1850 the king shifted his capital to Bhandesir Patna or present Bhawani Patna.

The temple of Manikeswari was constructed by King Fatenarayan Deo in the year 1852 but a new temple of gigantic order in the present form was constructed in the year 1935 by king Brajamohan Deo. The present temple is located adjacent to the palace, which is 56 feet tall and in the form of *Rekha deula*.

The Manikeswari Temple at Bhawanipatna is 56 ft. tall and consists of *Mandapa* and Sanctum. The temple architecture is of *Rekhadeula* style. The Pillared *Mandapa* is linked with the main temple

and once it was decorated with mural paintings of Dasamahavidya and natural sceneries, which is at present not seen due to erosion. The *Mandapa* is having columns of six rows and six columns in each row. The temple of Budharaja has been installed as a *Parsvadevata* in the northern entry of the temple. There are three other small Rekha shrine temples of Vaishavi in the North of the temple, Narasimhi in the West and Varahi in the South. Combiningly the temple complex has a gigantic look. Manikeswari though having conception of Chhinnamasta from its iconography it is worshipped in the *Ekakhyra mantra* of Kali.



Chhatra Yatra & Manikeswari Temple



Apart from Bhawanipatna Manikeswari is worshipped also in Sankhemundi, Paralakhemundi, Sonepur, Kashipur and also in Thuamul Rampur and Jugsaipatna of Kalahandi district.

The main Temple of Manikeswari is situated in the campus of the Palace of Naga kings of Kalahandi at Bhawanipatna. Manikeswari deity is a happy blending between Tribal and Non-Tribal culture. There is close resemblance between the iconography of Stambeswari or pillar worship and the present Manikeswari deity. Significantly the Manikeswari deity of Bhawanipatna is headless. And the body is only a cylindrical structure and over it a clay head has been fixed and the body is covered by cloths and ornaments. Like *Navakalebara* of Jagannath each year on *Mulastami* day a clay head of the deity is placed engraved with gems after replacing the old head, which is immersed in the midnight in the Purusottam Sagar adjacent to the temple amidst secret ritual.

Besides this tradition several other traditions and rituals are also linked with deity Manikeswari. Similarly another interesting ritual is observed before deity Budharaja (Bhairaba) located in a small temple in the northern side of the Manikeswari temple. It is only once in a year on the occasion of *Mahastami* this temple is opened and offerings offered. After offering before Budharaja, the *Chhatar* of Manikeswari is left for *Jenakhal* and makes its return journey on *Navami* early morning known as *Chhatar Yatra*. Interestingly although *Navanna* or *Nuakhai* is observed before other deities and people observing *Nuakhai* either on *Rushi Panchami* (*Bhadrava Shukla Pakshya Panchami*) or *Bhadrava Shukla Pakshya Dasami*, the new rice is offered to Budharaja only on

Mahastami i.e. the day when the temple is opened for the day. So the royal family after waiting for the occasion take *Navanna* only on next day i.e. *Mahanavami* after *Chhatar Yatra* of deity of Manikeswari. This is an unique tradition. Besides. Manikeswari Deity being a happy blending between Tribal and Non-Tribal culture. There is close resemblance between the iconography of Stambeswari or pillar worship and the present Manikeswari deity. Kondhs treat Maniksairo as the sister of the deity Dharnipenu. A narrative song of Kondh tribe says :

"*Juhar Juhar Manikesari Maa Raije Maharani
Sayabani mahan Laybani mahan Dharni San Baheni*"

So there is a belief that the deity Manikeswari in the present form and Kondh traditional Manikesari is interrelated and through the universalisation process the present form of *Tantra* worship of deity evolved. In the similar process there is evolution of Kondh male deity Budhapenu taking evolution of Budharaja or Bhairaba.

The *Sharadiya Utsav* of Deity Manikeswari starts from *Mulastami* and the most important function is *Astami*, *Navami* and *Dashami*. After Sandhi Puja of Mahastami the *Chhatra* of deity is taken to *Jenakhal* in the outskirts of the town. On the early hours of *Mahanavami* the Chhatra makes its return journey to the temple accompanied by *Jenabadya*, *Ghumura*, *Nishan*, *Ghanta*. The chorus creates a thrilling sensation and a sense of awe and wonder to the lakhs of devotees congregate from different parts of the State including neighbouring States. As a mark of fulfillment of wishes devotees make offerings. It is an occasion for every body irrespective of caste, creed and religion to find the Deity amidst them.



Lankeswari

Lankeswari is the presiding deity of Junagarh, the old capital of Kalahandi. Lankeswari is stated by tradition to be the protectress of mythical city Lanka ruled by Ravan referred to as Lankini or Lankadevi. Similarly Lankeswari was also the presiding deity in the Sonpur region during the reign of Chhindakanagas. After defeating the Soma rulers, Chhindakanagas installed the Telgu Chodas as local ruling chief there. Even today Lankeswari is worshipped in the form of a flat rocky islet in the bed of Mahanadi and a whirlpool of Mahanadi is known as *Lankeswari Darha*.

Junagarh is one of the key historical sites on the bank of Hati river in the Tel River Valley and ruins of Soma, Kalachuri, Chhindakanaga, Ganga and Naga dynasties are lying scattered in and around Junagarh. Till the capital was shifted to Bhawanipatna during 1850 it was the capital and nerve centre of Kalahandi as well as Trikalanga area. Junagarh was known as Koilabatipatana, and Jenabalipatana about which there are mentions in *Sarala Mahabharata* also. Evidence of past glory of Junagarh can be found with several Sakta, Saiva & Baishnavite temples dedicated to Lankeswari, Kanakadurga, Budharaja, Someswar Mahadeva and Dadhibamana and other temples. Several Bhairava images of different period from 1st century to 12th century A.D. and Sculptures are lying scattered.

Lankeswari is the presiding deity and treated with venerations by general mass. It is

an unique *Sakta* and *Tantra* centre and was the tutelary deity of different powers like Chhindakanaga, Ganga and Naga dynasties. Many legends are associated with the deity. According to one popular legend the *Banka Paikas* a warrior community brought Lankeswari from the South by the order of the King. Virtually the *Banka* soldiers defeated the enemy and brought the deity to the capital city at

Jenabalipatna, now Junagarh by beating of *Ghumura*. The legend may be related to the period when captured Soma Vansi Chhindakanagas Kingdom or may be Gangas who defeated Kalachuries. Incidentally it was considered as honour for the victorious kings to bring the deities from subjugated territories to install in their capital. The period of 11th to 13th Century A.D. was marked by great political disturbances in South Kosala and Trikalanga due to continuous warfare between Soma Vansi, Kalachuri,



Goddess Lankeswari

Chhindakanaga and Ganga dynasties and Kalahandi became battle field in the competition among different powers to become *Trikalingadhipati*. Large number of Sati and Hero stones in Junagarh is indicator of long warfare. Deity Lankeswari is treated as war goddess who not only conferring victory and success in the battle field but also participating in the war as per tradition.

Considering the iconographic style scholars assigned the date of the deity in 12th Century A.D. Deity Lankeswari is four armed. She sits in *Bajraparyanka* posture on a lotus throne. She holds *Sankha* and *Chakra* in her



upper left and right hands respectively and her lower right hand having *Varada Mudra* and left hand in *Abhaya Mudra* with spread out tongue. The image is carved in black chlorite stone measuring 32" by 16". Such iconic feature synchronizing Kali with Vishnu is unique and only of its kind in the State of Orissa. The deity is worshipped with *Vanadurga Vija Mantra*. In front of the deity there is a four handed Kali image holding sword and severed head in upper and lower right hands and skull cup and nose in upper and lower left hands respectively dancing over a corpse. As per tradition from 11th to 18th century A.D. the vanquished kings were sacrificed and there was also other forms of human sacrifice.

However those traditions are of the past.

There are many folklores and legends in the name of goddess Lankeswari. Apart from a war goddess she is very much lively as well as furious. Local people claim that very often deity use to come out from the temple in the form of a young beautiful girl and participate in *Boria* dance along with young girls of the locality. *Boria* is a traditional dance form where girls sing self composed songs and dance without musical instrument. Another folk lore says that one day when the priest reached the temple he found a glass bangle vendor waiting. He told that a young girl from inside purchased glass bangles and told him to get the payments from her father. The priest understood the mischief and paid the price. Inside the temple the priest expressed his

annoyance and soon the glass bangles fell down from the idol. It is also said that as the deity was very much furious the original idol was buried near *Deymuhan* in the confluence of *Bhatrajore* and Hati River and a new idol was installed.

The most important festival of deity Lankeswari is *Khandabasa* on the night of

Mulastami. After secret rituals the two ceremonial swords of deity is placed by the Maharaja over two heaps of rice in the both sides of the Altar. People believed that if the sword stands straight the area will be free from natural calamities and in the event of tilting to any side it indicates bad

omen. *Khandabasa* festival is the beginning of the *Saradiya Mahotsav* in Kalahandi and after which preparation for the *Mahotsav* starts.

After shifting of the Capital during 1849-50 to Bhawanipatna due to outbreak of epidemic at Junagarh, the deity Manikeswari became the presiding deity of the royal family replacing Lankeswari, who was the ancient tutelary deity of the dynasty. However she continues to be a deity of the masses, revered, adorned as well as feared by all section of people. Incidentally people hesitate to falsely swear in the name of Lankeswari even today.



Ceremonial Swords of Lankeswari in procession

Mandar Bagich Para,
Bhawanipatna-766001,
Dist.- Kalahandi.



Bhadrakali : A Complete Study

Dr. Soma Chand

Rivers have always played a dominant role in shaping the culture and civilisation of a particular place. From the time immemorial civilisations of Egypt, Mesopotemia, Indus et al. Owe their contributions to eternal flow of the rivers which fulfill the basic necessities of human life.

The Salandi valley culture at Bhadrak serves a glaring example in this context. The flow of Salandi and its tributaries have played a major role in enriching its tradition, culture and custom. When we try to reconstruct the glorious cultural heritage of the district the very first thing that strikes our mind is the name of Goddess Mahakali from Meghasani (origin of the river Salandi) to Bhadrakali, the daughter of Salandi - Presiding Deity of the region - Mahamaya

From ancient time till today the place has its own sanctity as one of the renowned shaktipithas of Orissa. Frequent references to this

Shaktipitha are found in different religious texts as well as mythologies. The premier Deity Durga being born out of yagna fire has assumed the name of Bhadrakali and has blessed the region. The presence of Sri Jagannath (the last incarnation of Krishna) in the same platform marks the peaceful co-existence of the place.



Goddess Bhadrakali, Bhadrak

Bhadrakali.

Shaktipuja or worship of Shakti occupies a very significant position in the ancient Indian tradition. Though various opinions have been put forward by the historians, Indologists, archaeologists about the origin of the cult, it is a universally accepted fact that shakti worship constitutes a very important aspect of our religion.

As per 'Devi-Sukta' Devi Shakti represents herself through various ways through deaming and knowledge in the form of Saraswati, through wealth in the form of Laxmi, through general benevolence in the form of Durga or through violence in the form of Kali.



*'Akeiba Shakti Paramesvarasya
Bibidha badanti vyavahara kale
Bhoge tu Bhavani Purushesu Laxmi
Shakte tu Durga Pralaye tu Kali*

Form ancient scriptures as well as Tantrasastra it is clearly evident that from 3rd-4th century A.D. to 12th Century A.D. Shaktipithas grew into prominence in various parts of the Country. In the Tantric ritualistic descriptions Orissa has been regarded as one of the important pithas.

*Odrakhyam Pratham Pitha
Dwitiya Jala Sailakami
Trutiya Purnapithastu
Kamarupam Chathurthakam*

Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab rightly opines that out of the four important Shaktipithas - Odrakha, Srihatta, Pumakoti and Kamakshya - Odrakha or Odyamsa or Orissa is the first pitha. Among the famous Devipithas of Orissa mention may be made of Sarala of Jhankad, Cuttack Chandi of Cuttack, Bhagavati of Banpur, Kichakeswari of Khiching, Charchika of Banki, Mangala of Kakatapur, Vimalapitha of Puri, Viraja of Jajpur,



Mahisamardini Durga, Khiching, circa 10th-11th Century A.D.

Samaleswari of Sambalpur and Bhadrakali of Bhadrak. They are all one and the same. They are the Shaktis of Mahakala Siva.

The image of goddess Bhadrakali is made of black chlorite stone. It is around four feet tall. She is four-handed and sits on a lion. In the

upper right hand she holds sword and in the upper left hand there is Kharpara. A baby (whom the devotees accept as Balgopal Krishna) is found in the lower right hand along with a garland of beads in the lower left hand. The hands, feet, shoulders, neck, nose, ears and head of the Deity are ornamentally carved. On both sides of mother, there are the images of Jaya and Vijaya. The five gods of Hindu tradition such as Ganesh, Vishnu, Bhaskar(Sun), Siva and Durga are also enshrined here. The mythological description of the Deity goes as follows :

*Srikali Bhadrakali danavadalini kesari
Prusthasamstha,
Srikrushnaka Santarupa nikhila Vayahara
niradava trinetra
Bakhoyordhe khadga bamecha
Kharparadhara Anaya bhaktavatsala
Vaishnavi Vishnu maya bhabatu varada patu mam
Bhadrakali*

Mother Bhadrakali is a quite ancient mythological deity. The entire Indian tantra literature is full of prayers and hymns for mother. The Gadaparva of Mahabharata Padma Puraha, Markandeya, Purana, Chandi Purana of Sarala Das, Vishnu Purana, Srimad Bhagabata Tantraprasanga of Sri Krishna and the second part of Harivamsa make vivid references to goddess Bhadrakali as all pervasive and eternal incarnation of Parambrahma.

The eleventh chapter of Saptasati Chandi makes references accordingly.

*Jwala Karala Mrutyugra Mahisasura Sadanam
Trisula Patunobhite Bhadrakali namostute.*

According to Durga Astottara Satanama stotra :

*Agnijwala, Roudramukhi karalivi stapaswini,
Narayani Bhadrakali Vishnumaya Jalodari*

Thus she is the Emancipator of human soul. For the general welfare of the universe she has appeared in a metaphysical form.



Legendary Study :

The present Bhadrakali pitha is situated in the eastern side of Bhadrak town. From Sangat gurudwar of Puruna Bazar it is around five kilometres and from Bhadrak Kacheri Bazar it is about seven kilometres. The place is better known as Bhadrakali Sahi. On the Eastern side of the temple there is a tank and an opera mandap. River Salandi flows in the west. On the Northern and Southern sides there are residential complexes meant for the devotees. Besides, a Jagannath temple is there in the compound of Bhadrakali temple.

The popular belief goes that this is not the original seat of the goddess. Different legends also strengthen this view. If history is the life of civilisation, legend is its soul. Even though the legends are not research oriented findings like history, still then they play a very important role in shaping history.

According to one legend the original image of Bhadrakali was worshipped in a very beautiful temple at Bhuyan Mahala situated in the eastern side of Bhadrak town. The Muslim conquest of Orissa brought in its wake destruction of temples and places of Hindu worship. The original temple of the goddess also fell prey to Muslim invasion. The devotees of Bhuyan dynasty prayed mother who directed them in a dream to shift her place of worship. The devotees accordingly took the image in a boat in river Salandi and moved eastwards. Then she remained in a hidden form in the river.



Mahisamardini Durga, Bindu Sarobara Tank, Bhubaneswar, circa 8th-9th Century A.D.

Once the local kids had organised a picnic on the river bed. The kid-loving affectionate goddess overwhelmed with childlike simplicity took food with them in disguise for which the place became famous as 'Aharapada' (place of taking food).

After the Muslim menace was over a small temple was constructed. The Deity was shifted from the water to the temple. The particular portion of the river Salandi is known as 'Bhadrakali ganda' till date.

Legend goes that the Bhuyan devotees brought brahmins from Siddhesvara village of Jajpur to worship the Deity. The small temple gradually began to deteriorate with the ravages of time. So the present temple came into existence in between 1953 to 1959.

Another legend goes on to say that the original place of worship of the Deity was on the Meghasani hill in Mayurbhanj district. This being the starting point of river Salandi, one tantrik sage Tapas by name used to worship the Deity Bhadrakali. Oneday being overwhelmed with the hymns of the sage milk began to ooze from the left breast of the Deity. The flow of milk joined a spring and took the shape of a river. As it flowed through a forest of Sal trees, it took the name of Salandi.

The sage Tapas became extremely happy and drank the water of the river as the blessing of the Deity. Then his soul mingled with eternal soul. His disciple Bhadrath created a tomb of his master and started worshipping the Deity.



One day surprisingly he saw that the body of his master had come out of the tomb. Being perturbed he started praying. Suddenly he heard a heavenly voice that he should give *pinda* to his master in the river. Further he should place the Deity in the water with pure heart. He should follow the sound of jingles attached to the feet of the goddess. He would stop his journey where the jingle would become silent. Bhadrath did accordingly. At a particular place he couldn't listen the sound of jingles. Out of suspicion when he looked back, the heavenly voice instructed him to stop there. Bhadrath stayed there and began to worship the Deity.

The legend further tells us that once two Chauhan Maratha brothers came to Purushottam Puri for pilgrimage. They lost their way and entered a dense forest. All on a sudden they came across a radiant glow and followed it. At last they reached a cottage.

It was the residence of yogi Bhadrath where two brothers took rest. The next day younger brother fell ill. The elder one advised him to take rest at the sage's cottage and started his journey. The daughter of the sage treated the younger brother with utmost care and affection, while he began to recover the two had fallen in love.

The Chauhan boy marked a peculiar thing that everyday Bhadrath was going to an unknown place. He followed him one day and reached the spot at a distance. To his utter surprise he found it to be a place of worship and the Deity who was being worshipped was none else but Mahamaya Bhadrakali.

That particular night the youngman saw a dream. The goddess gave him a flower with instruction to walk and cover as much distance as he could so that he would become the master of that entire area.

The next day holding the sacred flower the youngman proceeded being followed by Mahamaya. The jingle on her feet began to ring as she walked behind. While the youngman was covering the dry bed of the river Salandi, he couldn't hear the sound. Thinking that the goddess had deserted him, he looked back and the eternal mother took the shape of a stone image.

As per the description of Ratnakosha, goddess Bhadrakali was the family deity of Bhuyan dynasty. This Maratha youngman was the founder of Bhuyan dynasty. The name of the place was Bhuyan Mahala which was the ancient capital of Bhadrak. The Bhuyans were the rulers of the adjoining areas of Salandi river. They were worshippers of mother Bhadrakali. Later on they shifted their seat of rule to Dola Sahi after being attacked by ferocious Afghan invaders. The place is now well-known as Bhuyan Uasa from where their successors migrated to different areas. They are now better familiar as Samantaray family of Talapada, Bhuyan family of Kubera and Kanungo family of Nadigaon.

The historical background of the study of the deity can be traced back to a fragmentary inscription discovered from the present precinct of the Bhadrakali temple. The inscription occupies second place after Hatigumpha Inscription of the Kharavela so far as its date is concerned. It is written in Pali language with Brahmi script.

(Siddham) Maharaja Sri Ganasah Samvat

(8) Mula japena Deva (3) Data

(Adha !) Bapa 80 Mahakulapati

- Aya Agni Samenam

Pani - Deva Dingi patichhidam

Adhirasa ka Bhada apabasara ghali adasam.

The archaeologists place the inscription at 3rd century A.D. from its language and style. It is known from the inscription that by 3rd century



A.D. one king named 'Sri Gana' was ruling over the area presently known as Bhadrak.

It is evident that by 3rd century A.D. there was Murunda rule in Tosali with its capital at Uttar Kalinga or Amita Tosala. Maharaja Sri Gana of Bhadrak was probably a feudatory ruler under the Murundas because no other details are available due to the fragmentary nature of the inscription.

Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab opines that Maharaja Sri Gana of Bhadrakali inscription was a contemporary of the founder of Gupta dynasty - Maharaja Srigupta of 4th century A.D. The northern part of Orissa along with Bhadrak and Balasore were under Gupta hegemony.

But Bhadrakali of Bhuyan Mahala was worshipped much earlier than the establishment of Gupta rule in the region.¹

Dr. K.C. Panigrahi has given a different version. He is of opinion that in 3rd and 4th Century B.C. the ruler of Bhadrak was Surasharma. In his 8th regnal year one lady named Rangoli made some gifts for a pious lady, Parnadevi.² But D.C. Sarkar has read the name as Maharaja 'Gana' instead of Maharaja Surasharma.³ Dr. N.K. Sahu also opines that Maharaja Gana of Bhadrakali inscription was a feudatory of the Murunda king of Pataliputra.

Now the question arises who is this 'Parnadevi'. From legendary source we get the reference of one cottage. Is the word derived from 'parna kutira' (cottage made of leaves) or is she the goddess Parna Sabari of Vedic Age or Parna Sabari of Jain religion or Parna Devi of Buddhism? The riddle is yet to be solved because no other corroborative sources give us any information in this regard.

The iconographic feature of the image doesn't ascribe to 3rd Century A.D. The

description of the image of Bhadrakali in Devi Bhagavata, Tantrasara and the hymn of meditation (Dhyamantra) of mother Bhadrakali bear no resemblance to the present image. Rather her feature ascribes it to Bhauma period (736 A.D.-960 A.D.). Most probably the original image of the deity was destroyed by the Muslim invaders and the present form appeared later on.

But one thing is clear from the legends that in the beginning mother Bhadrakali like Lord Jagannath was worshipped by the non-Aryans in the hilly region. In course of time the seat of worship was shifted to the plains and from the non-Aryan goddess she became the presiding deity of the Aryan Hindus.

Scholars are of opinion that the name 'Bhadrak' has been derived from goddess Bhadrakali. Bhagirathi Nanda Sharma cites the evidence that like Balasore from Basesvar, Sambalpur from Samalai, Bhubaneswar from Bhubaneswari, the name Bhadrak has also come from goddess Bhadrakali. Others even opine that the name Bhadrak may be the abridged form of full name 'Bhadrakali' like popular name Puri which comes from full name 'Purushottam Puri'.

The word 'Bhadra' means fortune, good, auspicious,⁴ 'ka' means to get radiant.⁵ So the meaning of Bhadrak is to get the radiant glow of goodness or welfare. Naturally the place is illuminated with the blessings of Bhadrakali.

*'Om 'Ka' Brahman 'Ka' Vishnu
'Ka' Devi Maheswari
'Ka' Bhadra 'Ka' 'Kali'
Saikasha Bhadrakeswari'*

Mother Bhadrakali plays a very dominant role in the cultural life of the region. Raja festival, Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Chaitra Purnima and Maha Visuva Sankranti are the five major festivals of goddess Bhadrakali.



Mahisamardini Durga, Konarka, (now in the British Museum, London) circa 13th Century A.D.

The first day of every Oriya month (Sankranti) each dark night (Amavasya) and the full-moon night (Purnima) are important days of Devi-worship. On the New Moon day of Mahalaya before Durga Puja the mother takes 'Subhangi Vesa' which is equivalent to 'Ganga Darshan'. From Pratipada (First Day after New Moon) to Vijaya Dasami (tenth day of New Moon) during the Durga Puja, the goddess appears in various apparels as mentioned in Chandi Purana.

During Kumar Purnima the deity takes the apparels of Raja Rajeswari (Laxmi) and in Dipavali New Moon day she is worshipped in the form of Shyama Special Pujas and Yanjnas are offered in Kali Puja.

Besides, horse-dance or Chaiti-ghoda festival in the month of Chaitra and Patua dance (Jhamu Yatra) of Visuva Sankranti deserve special attention. These festivals and ceremonies during different times of the year play a very dominant role in moulding the socio-cultural life of the region.

Mother goddess-worship is a very ancient tradition of Orissan culture. Not a single

village in Orissa is found where there is no place of worship of gramadevi or the village Deity. The villagers take refuge under the feet of the mother to lead a happy and prosperous life. She may be Sarala, Pataneswari Mahamayee, Jagulai, Batamangala, Basulei, Sureswari, Manikeswari, Viraja or Bhadrakali - the various incarnations of mother goddess in different forms.

All children are equal before the mother. Her children are objects of Her love, affection and mercy. She is beyond caste, creed or colour. She is 'Adyashakti Chandi'. She is the Destroyer of Evils. Her seat is the melting point of all religious. She is universal mother. Let mother Bhadrakali bestow all her blessings for the general welfare and benevolence of the mankind.

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The Lion : Mount of Goddess Durga

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Shaktism, the cult of Mother Goddess and Shakti, the female divinity in Indian religion symbolises form, energy or manifestation of the human spirit in all its rich and exuberant variety. Shakti, in scientific terms energy or power, is the one without which no leaf can stir in the world, no work can be done without it.¹ The Goddess has been worshipped in India from prehistoric times, for strong evidence of a cult of the mother has been unearthed at the pre-vedic civilization of the Indus valley. According to John Marshall² Shakti Cult in India was originated out of the Mother Goddess and was closely associated with the cult of Siva. Saivism and Shaktism were the official religions of the Indus people who practised various facets of Tantra. Siva and Shakti, the dual deities were the principal deities of the non-Aryans of the Indus Civilization.³ The Mother Goddess assimilation into the Hindu Pantheon, however, took place long after Siva and Visnu had been accepted in two distinct phases; i.e. first the Indo-Aryan male gods were given wives, and then, under the influence of Tantric and Shakti movements, which had been gaining momentum outside orthodox Hinduism for many centuries, these shadowy female figures emerged as supreme powers in their own right and emerged into the great Goddess.⁴

Due to the wide prevalence of the worship of Shakti or the female energy in India from a

very early period among almost all the different ethnological elements comprising the vast mass of Indian population, Goddess Durga gradually became the supreme object of adoration among the followers of Shaktism.⁵ Studies on various aspects of her character in our mythology, religion, etc., grew in bulk and her visual representation is well depicted in our art and sculpture. It is interesting to note that the very origin of her such incarnation (as Durga) is mainly due to her celestial mount (vehicle or *vahana*) lion. This lion is usually assorted with her in our literature, art sculpture, etc. But it is unfortunate that in our earlier works the lion could not get his rightful place as he deserved.

In the Hindu Pantheon all the deities are associated in mythology and art with an animal as its specific *vahana*, conceived both on the figurative and the metaphysical plane. An animal acting as *vahana* owns some magical characteristics, in that each single example of its species, either living or carved in sculptural form, bears the implicit presence of the deity associated with it. In the realm of Indian sculpture art the *vahana* of a deity is generally depicted below the latter's pedestal.⁶ According to H. Zimmer, the *vahana* meant as an animate divine symbol supporting the anthropomorphic figure of a god or goddess, is an iconic representation of the



power and character of the concerned divinity, or an incarnation of the same at an inferior stage and under a different aspect. The depiction of the *vahana* below the pedestal of the deity dissipates any possible ambiguousness as to the latter's identity. Such treatment of the carved images of divinities may have originated in Mesopotamia in the course of the second millennium B.C.; from thence, through the medium of trade, it may have reached in Indian sub-continent in the subsequent epochs.⁷

In consideration of the mount lion associated with her in the myths or in sculptural art, goddess Durga can be alternatively conceived as Mahisamardini or as Simhavahini. The lion came to prominence in the Hindu pantheon with the origin of the goddess Durga, which was narrated beautifully in the *Markandeya Purana*.⁸ According to this text, after being completely defeated by Mahisasura, the gods, headed by Brahma, approached Visnu and prayed for the destruction of the demon. Thereupon all the gods including Brahma, Visnu and Siva emitted flames of anger which solidified into the effulgent form of a goddess (Durga) with three eyes and ten arms, each of which bore a weapon given by the mighty gods. During this time the Himavat offered a white lion to goddess Durga as her *vahana*.

The golden skinned hairy lion is an archetypal symbol for the golden rayed sun, the lord of the day, whose appearance kills the god of the night. Night, terminating the day in the evening, is equally well represented by the bull, whose horns connect it with the crescent of the moon. It seems possible that the lion and the bull also simultaneously personified other antithetic cosmic forces, such as heat and cold, fire and water, light and darkness, life and death.⁹

The lion has always been important in mythology, not only in India, but also in some other

countries. In Mesopotamia, Ishtar the goddess of war, has always been associated with the lion. The car of the Phrygian goddess Cybele, whose cult spread all over the Roman empire is dragged by lions. Goddess Cybele is popularly known as Mother of the mountain in ancient Rome, like the same in the Indian context, Durga and Parvati similarly associated with lion and in the different manifestations, they are also known as the goddess of the Mountain.¹⁰ The Egyptian goddess Sekmet has a leonine head, while the most archaic statues of the Greek goddess Aphrodite depict the deity as accompanied by a lion. Sculptural examples of a goddess associated with lion and paired with a god associated with bull have been recovered from Anotolia.¹¹

Durga, the beautiful goddess of dawn, life and victory, riding a lion, defeats the buffalo-demon Mahisasura. In all her exploits the lion is her mount, ferocious in look and action. The lion also symbolised in all ancient civilizations as the solar, igneous and luminous principle of life and knowledge.¹² The lion is well represented in our religious digests and others, adoration to him along with the goddess is enjoyed with reference to this point the *Vaikrtika Rahasya* appended to the Saptasasti states that after worshipping the Goddess, the devotee has to attend to the demon, whose body lies in the left side of the Goddess with severed head and then to the lion, the carrier of the Goddess in her right side.¹³

Vamabhage grato devyas chinnsirsam mahasuram //29

Pujayen mahisam yena Praptam Sayujyam isaya /

daksine paratah simham samagram dharmam isvaram//30

As the symbol of the divine energies embodied by the great Goddess, who is stated to have been born out of the *tejas* of all the gods in order to slaughter the buffalo-demon, the lion express the heroism and prowess necessary to defeat the *asurik* forces contrasting with the Hindu



dharama. Furthermore, the lion can be even taken to represent the heroism and strength required from the *sadhaka* to enter the dangerous path of Shakta-Tantric religious practices, full of pitfalls for the uninitiated.¹⁴ In Indian context the lion is considered to be an animal full of Shakti(power) with a devaic and *sattvik* being of rhythmic movement. As far as Shakta iconography is concerned, the lion almost invariably accompanies the images of Parvati, Mahisamardini and Simhavahini Durga and is also represented in the most part of the composite Saiva-Shakta images, such as Ardhanarisvara and Umamahesvara, as the symbolic animal lion associated with the feminine side of the sculpture. Of course, from an orthodox Brahmanical point of view, it was only the lion, that acted in all ages as the celestial vehicle of the Mahadevi.¹⁵ It represents lordly power in general and lordly power of wild beasts in particular. The image of this animal, expressing a sense of rhythm, is thought to be made up *Prakriti maya-shakti*. Therefore, the lion partakas in the divine essence of the great Goddess, the transforming energy of the universe.¹⁶

In the Brahmanical pantheon the lion not only has relation with the Goddess, but also with Siva and Visnu. A lion sculpture placed on its *Vahana-Stambha* faces the main portal of most of the Shakta Shrines. A Shakta *pitha* is always guarded by a image of lion facing its main entrance, just like a Nandi image in a Saivite Shrine and a Garuda image in a Vaisnavite Shrine. The decorative sculptural element of Orissan temples called *gajasimha*, formed by an lion trampling on a crouching elephant marked the victory of divine light over *asurik* darkness.¹⁷ The Saiva tradition, as attested in the *Varaha Purana*, knows a leonine form of Siva which the god assumed in his Virabhadra incarnation to kill the elephant demon Nila.¹⁸ The lion's association with Visnu appears more consistent due to his incarnation as Narasimha.

Lion, the royal beast, the mount of Goddess Durga, represents the best in animal creation. It can also represent the greed for food and hence the greed for other objects of enjoyment, which invariably leads to lust. Goddess Durga in Simhavahini form is a lesson for the control of animal instincts in human beings.

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Shakta Pitha Bhattarika

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Shakta Pitha Bhattarika of Badamba in the district of Cuttack is one of the notable holy place of Orissa. This sacred pitha is associated with Devi Bhattarika. The river Mahanadi the longest river of Orissa flows in the side of the temple of the Bhattarika. The river is deep here. In the foot of the Ratnagiri hill temple of Bhattarika is located. River Mahanadi, Ratnagiri hill, temple of Bhattarika, and famous places like Narayana, Nilamadhava, Vindhya vasini, Simhanath attract thousands of Pilgrims, devotees and tourists. According to a popular legend this pitha is established by Parsuram and also he carved the image of goddess in the tip of his arrow. In this pitha



Bhattarika Temple, Badamba

Parsurama penanced to gain mercy of the deity to kill Bhattas or Kshetriyas. The Goddess became pleased with him and offered him the desired boom. So the Pitha is associated to the epic age. According to the Ramayan, Ram,

Lakshmana and Sita on their way to Panchvati paid prayer to the Goddess Bhattarika. The Mankadagadia hill on the other side of Mahanadi where the foot mark of Ram, Lakshmana and Sita are worshipped is also quite significant. Another legend says that Krishna and Satyabhama visited Bhattarika and it was revealed to Arjun during his Agyantavasa. The Demon Gosimha kidnapped

Satyabhama in disguise during that period. Arjun fought bravely and killed Gosimha demon. After that Krishna, Satyabhama and Arjun prayed Goddess Bhattarika; the presiding deity of the Badamba royal family. The term Bhattarika has different meaning. According to History and legend

of Badambagada, Gajapati of Orissa ordered Hattakishor and Mallakishor the two brothers to establish two villages named Sankha and Mahuri. After that they became king in that place. Tribal chief of that area opposed these two brothers



when they tried to construct Fort. A terrible battle was fought and finally tribal chief and his wife died in the battle. Before death the wife of the tribal chief advised king Hattakishore to worship the deity Bhattarika. Another name of the deity Bhattarika is Bruhadamba. The king named his state Bhuhadamba bearing the name of the Goddess. But latter it is know as Badamba Devi Bhattarika seated in *Lalitasana* holding a lotus in one hand and the other hand in Varadamudra. She is *suryopasanatatpara*. It is seen that the sun God is worshiped here. In the Jagamohan of the Bhattarika temple an image of sun god is kept. Another meaning of the Devi Bhattarika is “respectable lady.” Devi Bhattarika associated with eight small images, five in *padmasana* and three in *Lalitasana*. The associated images are Prabha, Maya, Jaya, Sukshma, Visuddha, Suprabha and Abhaya. According to Buddhist “Yogachara” system the Devi is seated in the centre of Chakra associated with eight deties. The priest worships the goddess as Rajarajeswari, Mahamaya, Tripura Sundari, Siddha Bhattarika. Some research scholars opine that the place was

linked with Buddhism. At the time of Bhaumakara rule the particular place was associated with tantric Buddhism. The Somavamsis who were dead enemies of Buddhism might have converted the pitha into the Hindu fold. The tiny Buddhist image is now placed in the central niche. The present Tara image appears to be a later insertion. The worshippers of the goddess Bhattarika are non-Brahmin, this brings about a folk character of the deity. In the daily ritual of the deity the cooked fish is offered. Devi Bhattarika is considered as the deity of navigation and the Fisherman community. The popular myths, legends, archaeological evidence prove that Bhattarika Pitha has been Shakta Pitha.

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Goddess Ramachandi Temple near Konark, District - Puri



Lajja Gauri : The Nude Goddess or Shameless Woman - Orissan Examples

J.P. Singh Deo

Striking images of a certain goddess having variously referred to as 'the shy woman', 'the shameless woman', 'the nude squatting goddess', 'the mother goddess' or because her historical name remains unknown, by numerous names, among them Sakambari, Prithvi, Aditi, Lajja Gauri, Renuka, Kottavi, Nagva Kabamdha etc. Usually one finds them lying in birth position, the spread-out legs drawn up laterally and bent at the knees, the soles of the feet turned upward, the arms bent upwards and the hands, each holding a lotus bud.. touch upon the petals of the large and open lotus blossom that crowns the image, as its neck and head.

India presents the unusual phenomenon of a traditional society that has produced religious art continuously from at least the third millennium B.C. to the present, within supposed canonical prescriptions, but actually with a great range of variation of forms. There are a great variety of mythological hybrids that are fixed features of the vocabulary of Indian art. Among them are found primordial and powerful symbols whose origins within the culture cannot be traced, yet whose omniscience within the art and culture indicate their usefulness within it. Lajja Gauri, in artistic and conceptual ancestry, descends from a group of ancient popular symbols, among others, the lotus and the purna kumbha, or brimming pot. Conceptually Lajja Gauri has antecedents, which

may be, and in fact have been, traced back to the Indus or the Chalcolithic culture of India.

On the human level, the image of Lajja Gauri acts as a temporal reference point, that is, the female giving birth, an auspicious occurrence: she is the embodiment of the idea of fertility. On the divine level, Lajja Gauri is the embodiment of the idea of fertility, of generation, of life- force. On the cosmic level, the image suggests universal laws and processes of generation of life.

Lajja Gauri is almost always made to lie on her back, supine. The toes of the recumbent figure tensely splayed as if she is in the act of giving birth, yet there is no indication of pregnancy. Some say that the goddess is simply indecent, shameless, and the pose indicated sexual receptiveness although certainly, the pose is sexually suggestive. Nevertheless, it should be noted that, although some do give birth miraculously, Indian goddesses are never pregnant in imagery or myth. The pose of Lajja Gauri is ambiguous, but probably intentionally so since the pose of sexual receptivity and the pose of giving birth are the same. The human form and the intercourse/ birth pose are used as a metaphor for creation. In turn human parturition is used in this image as a metaphor for divine creation. We have seen women who do not get children for along time worship Lajja Gauri. Butter and red lead are applied on the vagina and breasts and they pray for children.



Figures of the goddess Lajja Gauri range in size from two inches to over life-size and are made either through time and region from the minimal and nearly aniconic to the fully human. Truly these figures appear at the beginning of Christian era. In most of the Lajja Gauris, the vagina is prominently depicted as if the figure is about to give birth. In many cases these female figures are shown without the head. We do not know the exact reason behind this widespread motif. One of the suggestions is that, because of her nudity, the goddess felt ashamed, and hence the face was not shown. Whatever it may be this picture became very popular, because probably it satisfied the human aspiration for children. Hence it is not only represented and worshipped today in many parts of India but it is found depicted in churches and monuments as far as South East Asia.

We have got two Lajja Gauri plaques measuring 10 to 12 cm, carved on limestone from the Nuapada district of Orissa. On stylistic ground, it may be assigned to the 8th century A.D. It is carved on squatting position without stretched legs, the common posture of female during childbirth. Pendant breast, navel and vulva etc. are conspicuous features of its blooming youth and also a pointer to the fertility cult. The most outstanding features of the deities are that they are headless. Instead of the head, lotus leaves with stem are delineated on the neck, as if it is efflowering from it. Some lotus leaves along with elongated stems are also discerned on the right side of the shoulder, as if they emerge from the neck and bend to the right. Thus, the upper part of the figurine adorned with vegetation, unfolds a vegetative and fecundity aspects of its nature.

Interestingly similar representation is also found among the Bhiyans, a hunting gathering and shifting cultivator community of Orissa. Indeed, we do not know whether the tribals are the imitators, or have continued the tradition of their

distant forefathers, the chalcolithic people who are believed to have been the early inhabitants of India. Another example comes from the Bastar region of Madhya Pradesh. Here outstretched leg posture of a female is found carved in Gotul or youth dormitory of Muria tribe. The outstretched leg posture of semi squatting position of the motif, thus conveys the sense of kama (sexuality). At the same time, sexuality correlates with fertility ritual or vice versa. Belief in the relation of sex and vegetative-fertility is fathomed by many tribal communities of Eastern India.

We have a Harappan seal, in which a woman is shown with her legs stretched wide apart and a plant issuing from her vagina. This indeed is a symbol of fertility. For centuries this continued to hold the Indian mind, as examples from historical period testify.

The village goddess of fertility, embodies, very often the composite features of sex and fertility. As such, numerous female deities of fertility-nature either in anthropomorphic shape or in aniconic features are commonly found in peasant India. The fact reveals thus the highest regard accorded to the woman folk, who coalesced in her person sexuality and fertility, like copulation, conception and birth. The idea traversed to the Art Tradition of India where erotic art found fused with fertility. The artist who carved Lajja Gauri images were aware of the more simply erotic images, but they distinguished her image through incorporation of rich symbolism.

Meanwhile, the image of Lajja Gauri still remains enigmatic. It is obvious that there still remain quite a few questions regarding the identification, status, affiliation and disappearance of the intriguing Lajja Gauri to be answered.

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The Eleven Armed Durga of Athmallik

Dr. Himansu Sekhar Padhi

Located almost at the central point of Orissa, Athmallik, a sub-divisional headquarters of Angul district has earned celebrity as a prominent Shakta center since the ancient days.

In the eighth century A.D. it constituted an integral part of Kodalaka mandala and was ruled by the sulkis who were staunch worshippers of Mother Goddess and the devotees of Goddess Stambheswari, the non-aryanised form of Maheswari. Previously known as Kaintragarh, it was the capital of the glorious Kadamba dynasty. Once, the tutelary deity of this dynasty and presently the presiding deity of Athmallik region, Goddess Maheswari is now enshrined at Rugudisahi, located at around one K.M.

from the new bus stand. Legend says, the early abode of the Goddess was Jajpur. King Suvarna Kesari (identified with king Yayati II of the Somavamsi dynasty) took her to Deuljhari, a Saiva and Shakta center near Athmallik and enshrined there. It is noteworthy that the tutelary deity of

the Somavamsis was Panchambari Bhadrabika, a form of Goddess Durga. In 14th century A.D. Goddess Maheswari was again shifted to

Handapa, the capital of Athmallik kingdom by the then king of Kadamba family being ordered in a dream. After some year she was again shifted to Athmallik with the transfer of the capital to the town. Her temple was constructed in 1922 with the damage of the previous one. Facing towards east, the deity is worshipped in the form of eleven armed Durga which is a rare iconic representation and is found reference to in Devi Bhagavata. According to it, while fighting with the buffalo demon Mahisasura, Goddess Durga had to give up her clothes and became

naked in order to attract him. After the assassination of the demon when the Goddess became temperate, the Gods of the heaven made her conscious about it. So she felt shame and all of a sudden a new hand came out from her nucleus and covered the vagina. This particular



Goddess Durga, Athmallik



representation is found in the icon of the Goddess. Although there are ample example of Goddess Durga having two, four, eight, ten and even twenty arms, yet eleven armed Durga is found no where in the country. In the sanctum of her abode Lord Dolagovinda is also worshipped along with her. The shrine draws innumerable crowd round the year every day. Hundreds of pilgrims visit her shrine not only for a darshan of the Mother Goddess but also to seek relief from the physical ailment they suffer from. She is said to be the fulfiller of all desires. Her main festival is held in the month of Aswina, beginning from krishna paksha astami, it continues for sixteen days. On the last day she is taken to the Dasahara melana ground in a warm procession. Animals and birds like goats, sheeps and hens etc. are sacrificed before her at that time.

How to Go :

Athmallik is located at 235 km from Bhubaneswar, 200 km from Cuttack and 160 km

from Sambalpur and is well connected by road. The nearest railhead is at Boinda, 36 km from here, connected with the major cities of India. Nearest Airport is at Bhubaneswar.

Accommodation :

A circuit house (reservation authority is Sub-Collector, Athmallik), an Inspection Bungalow of public works department (reservation authority is Executive Engineer, R & B, Dhenkanal), a Guest house of Manjore Irrigation Project (reservation authority Executive Engineer) and a dharmasala managed by NAC provide accommodation facilities to the tourists. How ever the comfort loving travellers are advised to stay at Angul and cover the shrine in a day by hiring a vehicle.

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Goddess Lankeswari Temple, Junagarh, Dist. Kalahandi



Sunadei - The Epicentre of Bhunjia Life

Atik Ahamed Khan

Sunabeda plateau which is the homeland of the Bhunjia tribe lies roughly between 21° 25° North and 21° 30° north latitude and 82° 35° East longitude. It was a part of Khariar Zamindari, which formed the eastern, and the southeastern region of Raipur district of Chhatisgarh division in Central Province till 1st April 1936, when it was transferred to Orissa on its creation. It is now in Komna block of Nuapada district in Orissa.

Nearly 62 tribal groups are living in Orissa, out of which 10 tribal groups may be identified in Nuapada. The Bhunjias, a primitive tribe of Orissa, are found in Nuapada. Nuapada is considered as the homeland of the Bhunjias. 75 percent of the total population of this tribe lives here. They are living in the uphill range of Sunabeda plateau in Nuapada. According to the 1981 Census the population of Bhunjia was 7000 and now it must be around 10000. Accordingly 75 percent of populations i.e. about 7500 Bhunjias are living in Nuapada.

According to the tribe, the term "Bhunjia" means growing out of land or origin from the earth. They speak Halbi language, a mixture of Oriya, Marathi and Chhatisgarhi. However K.C. Dubey analyzing the myth and oral tradition of Chhatisgarh, considers the Bhunjia as a branch of Halbas of Baster, who fled from Baster due to their quarrel with Dhakars.

The Bhunjia, have racial and cultural affinity with the Gonds of Orissa. There are so many myths among the Bhunjia and the Gond, which speak of strong relationship among the Gonds and the Bhunjias. On setting in the Sunabeda plateau, the Bhunjias did not have marital relations with any tribal group, but in course of time, when the Gonds came in to their area, marital relation was established with them. From this the population was divided in to two inter-marrying groups, namely Markam and Netarn. Due to this close proximity with the Gonds, Bhunjias have adopted many of the Gods and Goddesses of the Gonds as their own. The two groups worship God and Goddesses common to the locality such as Budharaja and Sunadei.

Bhunjias are divided in to two main sections i.e. Chinda Bhunjia and Chaukhutia Bhunjia. The Chaukhutia Bhunjia are confined exclusively to the hills of the Sunabeda plateau in ecologically secluded areas for which they maintain distance from the outsiders. But the Chinda Bhunjia generally lives in the plains and have close contact with the tribal and non-tribal communities.

The religious life of Bhunjia is very simple. They believe in many Gods and Goddesses who are worshipped in different months on different



ritual occasions. But they have some differences in their rituals and religious worship when compared to the Aryan or Vedic religion. The differences could be outlined in the following way.

1. The Bhunjia Gods and Goddesses have no anthropomorphic icon.
2. There is no treatise for architectural design of icons.
3. Their Deity enter in to the person of the Dihari and reveal herself to the devotees.
4. They have no written religious text.
5. There is no strict architectural design for constructing Shrines.
6. Animals and Birds are sacrificed to their Gods and Goddesses.
7. Aniconic images such as Tree, Wood stump, Stone and Iron weapons are used.
8. The untouchables also play out assigned responsibility and duty during worship and rituals.

Broadly speaking the native deities of the tribal could be divided in to three categories namely, (1) Caste based deities, (2) village deities and (3) Presiding deity of the locality. Sunadei, the principal deity of the Bhunjia belongs to all these three categories. She is caste-based deity of the Bhunjia tribe, village deity of Sunabeda village as well as presiding deity of the Sunabeda plateau.

There are few myths relating to the origin of Goddess Sunadei. It is believed that being insulted by her brother Budharaja (Budha Deo), Sunadei went to Sunabeda wearing a white saree. She meditated there for a long time. As a result, she became the presiding deity of the plateau. Immitating Sunadei, all the Bhunjia women of Sunabeda plateau wear white saree till date. Another myth, which says that Bhima once

ploughed the Sunabeda plateau for cultivation. Besides Sunabeda he also ploughed Changurbeda, Mangurbeda, Kelbeda, Uhusrabeda, Bhilabeda, Gatibeda, Korrabeda and Saharasbeda. During that time at a place with the touch of his plough blood came out from the earth. Then he dug out the earth and took out Sunadei. He built a temple there for the Goddess, and beside the temple he planted a banyan tree. Since then Sunadei has been worshipped.

Sunadei has 12 sisters and She is the eldest among them. Her father is Niranjan and mother Adimata. Budharaja is her only brother. Sunadei is the supreme deity having shrine at the center of Sunabeda village, where all the functionaries of the deity reside. The Bhunjia tribe has been divided in to two main groups. Each group is sub divided in to a number of barags and each barag has got a specific designation. Each of the designation is associated with the worship of the particular deity. For example, Sunadei has ordained the Pujhari as the priest and no other section of the community has any right to encroach upon this prerogative. The second category of the ritual functionary is called Chhatriya, whose duty is to hold umbrella open at the time of worship. The third category is Katariya, who sacrifices animals and birds. Dihari is another barag to whom the deity enters and appear to the devotees. Beside these four categories there is a musical band party consisting of Dholia, Muhuria and Lisnia. The band party comes from the Dom caste. Beside Bhunjia, other caste and tribes, who have access to the deity- worship, play their functional part during worship. For instance the Teli provide oil, Mali garlands. Paharia necessary goods made of bamboo for the deity. All the tribes have their own responsibilities towards Sunadei. But this type of co-operation and participation from among the lower caste in the worship of the deity is not seen in the Hindu religion. The so-



called lower castes, who are treated as untouchables by the so-called upper caste are not allowed to co-operate in the Aryan rituals and worshipping.

Annual festival or Yatra of Sunadei is held in the month of October and November every year. Sunadei's festival continues for 15 days long. On each day of the festival a lamp is kept burning at the shrine of Sunadei. Bhunjia tribe worships Sunadei mainly because of (1) having sufficient rain and bumper crops and (2) for blessing the barren women with children. On this occasion Bhunjias of all the villages assemble at Sunabeda village and on the last day of the festival, large gathering is seen at the shrine. During the time of festival, the Bhunjia offer Buck, Duck and Pigeon to Sunadei. Besides this they also offer Wine, Coconut and Incense stick to Sunadei. Inside the temple of Sunadei there is no statue. The icon of Sunadei is one sword and a wood stump, when her ceremonious procession is taken out, the sword is also carried by the pujhari. Sunadei was also patronized by the zamindar of Khariar estate for which he himself established swords in many tribal temples, beside the Pathkhanda temple inside the Palace. The Kings donated the agricultural lands in the name of different tribal God and Goddesses.

Each shrine of Bhunjia was assigned with 24 surrounding villages (Each village is called a Tikri) and the deity presided over the religious life of the people of all 24 tikris. These 24 tikris constituted an administrative and religious unit. Sunadei of Sunabeda has also 24 tikri. They are Sunabeda, Koked, Gambherpein, Jamgaon, Gatibeda, Suimundi, Salpada, Korrabeda, Gorapada, Junapein, Sanbahali, Kotenpani, Kechhapakhan, Jharlaaam, Dhikunpani, Chinmundi, Soseng, Gotma, Rupian, Deosil, Adar, Jalmadei, Bhaosil, and Tataveta. During 15 days-

long festival Goddess Sunadei reveals herself through the Dihari and goes round all the 24 villages or tikri under her suzerainty. Most probably tikris of Sunadei have now increased to about 84 villages. This makes their faith more earthly and vibrant. The shrine of Sunadei registers the most undiluted indigenous religious practices.

The faith on the deity has fashioned their outlook on life. For example their supreme mother Goddess has prohibited them from using three things. Firstly, use of country made husking lever (Dhenki). Secondly, use of any kind of cot (Charpai). And thirdly, use of tiles (Khapars). The Bhunjia obey the injunction laid down by the Goddess. They sleep on the floor and do not use any tiles, instead thatch their house with a kind of wild grass. Every festival of Bhunjia tribe- be it Religious, Agriculture or Social- is held in the temple of Sunadei. Hence the entire village life revolves around Sunadei. She is the epicenter of Bhunjia life. In the month of March-April a ritual is observed which is called sanctification of seeds (Bihan chhina). On this occasion the Chhatriya of the Deity supplies 5 Kgs of paddy seeds for the purpose. These seeds are sanctified before Sunadei and distributed among the Bhunjias of the villages. Besides, there is other festivals related agriculture such as Mahul Jatra, Chait Jatra, Bihan Chhina Jatra, Asadh Khena Jatra, which are celebrated in her shrine.

Besides Sunadei, each village has its own village deity. But Sunadei, the tutelary deity of the Bhunjia, which has religious suzerainty over the plateau of Sunabeda, where one of the most primitives, the Bhunjia, worship her with all religious fervour.

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Khichakeswari at Khiching : Tourism Prospects

Pareswar Sahoo

In this paper an attempt has been made to focus on historiography of Saktism and the Sakti Centres at Khiching in Mayurbhanj district which is constituted as the ecotourism spot. Northern Orissa has occupied an important position in the history of Orissa since the time immemorial. Its cultural treasure, the infrastructure of eco-tourism and the trade and commerce once upon a time had glorified its place, history and identity. The district like Mayurbhanj which constitutes the tribal majority, is specially famous for its ancient Saktipitha like Maa Khichakeswari at Khiching, the ancient fort of Khijinga Kotta. The copper plates of the Bhanjas indicate that the royal family flourished here in the 8th -12th century A.D. and Adibhanja of the Bhanja dynasty established the capital here. Khiching has brought to light the antiquarian remains of Buddhists, Jainas and Brahminical religion.¹



Goddess Khichakeswari Temple, Khiching

Saktism in Indian context has been traced back to pre-Vedic times on the basis of nature worship, started by the aboriginals from the tree

worship. At present Khichakeswari, known as thakurani represents an image of eight-armed Chamunda, which has been set-up on the altar of the Siva temple. It became true when the excavation was conducted by an eminent archaeologist R. P. Chand in 1922-23 under the

patronage of Mayurbhanja Maharaja, who exposed the foundation of the present Khichakeswari temple on the old Shiva temple, which was evidently collapsed and buried under the earth according to the geographer Prof. S. N. Tripathy. The ruins of the temple exposed a large number of sculptures along with the image of the presiding Goddess Khichakeswari and minutely carved architecture pieces.

The image of Khichakeswari is as old as the big temple of Shiva of the 9th century A.D. Saktism flourished along with the cult

of Shiva as important images of the gods and goddesses recovered from the excavated site include the most majestic figure of Shiva, originally



installed in the old temple. The figures of Saptamatrikas, Nagas and Naginis, Ardhanariswara, Mahisha Mardini, which are particularly characterised faces in smiling poses having the touch of real creative power and relative freedom for the conventionality.³ Here it can be noted that the past glory of the illustrious Bhanjas and their contribution to the patronisation of religion, culture, art and architecture can be equaled to those of Somavamsis and the imperial Gangas. In present day Khichakeswari the presiding Pitha Devi of Khiching, that of Viraja in Jajpur, Sarala in Jhankad, Mangala in Kakatpur, Charchika in Banki, Samalei in Sambalpur, Bhattarika in Baramba, Maa Pragala in Narasinghpur, Katakachandi in Cuttack, Chhinamasta Durga in Jharakhanda, Taratarini in Ganjam, Vimala in Puri, Maa Ugratara in Bhusandapur, Mahakali in Kharuda are drawing the attention of a large number of devotees from outland and inland. The deity is worshipped according to Sakta tantric rites which bears the testimony of the integral part of the Sakti worship in Orissa.⁴

For attracting tourists and the merrymaking of the local community in Orissa each and every Saktipithas arrange the grand old festivals like the Durgapuja or the Dussehara festival with much pomp and grandeur. Now-a-days the day-to-day worship is managed by the devotees and from the production of the land granted by the Rajas and the Management is intrusted to a local trust Board Khiching, having all the historical treasure considered as one of the international tourists Destination. At the global level the earnings from tourism have made it one of the worlds largest industry and the fastest growing sectors of global trade accounting 10.7 percent of Global Gross Domestic product (GDP), 12.8 percent of global exports, 8.2 percent of global employment and 9.4 percent of global per capita investment. The

following table shows the contribution of travel and tourism to GDP and employment along with the percentage share and its position at national level.⁵

TABLE -1

Contribution of Travel and Tourism to GDP and Employment

	India Agv. In Percent	Orissa in Percent	Rank in India
Contribution of Tourism and Travel economy to GDP	5.3	1.20	4
Contribution of Tourism & Travel Industry to GDP	2.5	0.75	2
Contribution of Tourism & Travel Economy to Employment	5.6	1.86	10
Contribution of Tourism & Travel Industry to Employment	2.9	0.95	15

Sources: Govt. of Orissa, Dept. of Tourism & Culture, Bhubaneswar.

In the Tenth Five Year plan, various factors are responsible for the inadequate growth of religious tourism sector, i.e., barriers related to approach, barriers that discourage private investment, absence of legislative support needs to be removed.⁶ An effective new tourism policy is highly required for the speedy growth of tourism. For this purpose, the Government of Orissa has already declared Khiching as a tourism heritage centre with the objective of the reviving its ancient socio-religious importance. For this purpose the following key areas may be taken care on priority basis.

(a) For publicity through internet in order to make effective use of the resources for overseas



publicity, the application of information technology has to be promoted in this sector as it is very economic and fastest mode of tourism promotion.

(b) The communication gap between the public and the tourists due to lack of knowledge in spoken English.

(c) Priority- tourism sector in twentyfirst century, having a major role in the employment generation and socio-economic development in the state as well as in the country. Realising the significance of tourism the Government needs to focus its attention on exploring its existing tourism potential on the priority agenda of state government.

(d) Lack of governing measures and inadequate policies for promoting religious tourism, hampers the flow of the tourists. Therefore tourism management must properly be looked after.

(e) Lack of national level facilities distract the tourists. Hence access to market should be made available.

(f) Absence of the tourist's office is felt here. Therefore, one such office may be opened without delay.

(g) The proper treatment by the priests to tourists should be taken care of.

(h) Sustainable development- In the implementation of present tourism policy, special measures have to be taken to develop tourism in accordance with environmental impact carrying capacity, instrument of special and land use planning strategy for preparing the local community to safeguards its cultural identity and awareness programmes for local participation.

(i) Facilitation Services - The facilitation services in Orissa are quite miserable. The poor airport facilities are the major constraint in the development of tourism. The airport infrastructure services need to be improved and modernised.⁸

Further enlarging the horizon of Saktism as well as the Sakti centres, religious tourism has

played an important role for community requirement and thus felt quite essential. Apart from social, political and cultural impacts, it has vast economic possibilities in all its forms. If the religious tourism project which has been taken by the Orissa Tourism Development Corporation include Khiching, then certainly Khiching in Mayurbhanj will come up in the National Travel Circuit in a big way. Religious Tourism in this sense encompasses all the activities that cater to national and international tourists through facilities that are owned, managed and serviced by the members of the rural community and run essentially as community based initiative. Along with government effort private sector participation; administrative improvement; travel and tourism research; adoption of integrated and co-ordinated tourism development programmes and mass participation, Tourism in Orissa can be developed along the lines of the other states.

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Place of Subhadra in Devi Cult

Durgamadhab Dash

Lord Jagannath has calmly ensconced Himself on the throne of pearls in His sanctorum in the Grand Temple at Puri. Seated on His right are Subhadra and Balaram. Balaram is worshipped as His elder brother and Subhadra as His younger sister. The images have their respective esoteric significance in Jagannath religion. In the import of a higher spiritual reasoning, the images represent the intricate spiritual branches of the cosmic creation. According to the Vishnavites, Balaram is the mystical guiding force of Jagannath while Subhadra is adored as the embodiment of His enchanting delusion. The Lord is thus fortified with the divine forces on the consecrated alter. He has revealed Himself to the world as the Lord of the Universe, the primal vivacious energy behind the celestial creation. This is the whole truth about the cult of Lord Jagannath, the composite spiritual cascade of all religions, all cults and all faiths of the world. The images of the Jagannath pantheon are shrouded in myriad divine mysteries. Surely to this end, the image of Subhadra is more intimately directed with a divine significance than the other peripheral duties of the Grand Temple.

It needs to be mentioned in this connection that during the period from 7th century AD to 12th century AD, the Hindu scriptures did not have any direct reference to Balabhadra and Subhadra as the co-deities in the Jagannath

pantheon. Jagannath Dham was however described in the scriptures as Purusottam Khetra. The mode of worship over here was entirely dedicated to Lord Jagannath as Purusottam Bhagawan. In 1110 AD, Chodaganga Dev conquered Orissa. After this achievement, his main mission was to revive the dilapidated Grand Temple at Puri. He considered this as a noble work of his career. At last, he constructed a massive temple in the place of the dilapidated shrine. The new temple exhibited the emperor's close affinity with the worship of Lord Jagannath. The king by then had been converted to Vaishnavism by Ramanandacharya. He worshipped Jagannath Mahaprabhu in the divine likeness of Lord Krishna.

During the time of Chodaganga Dev, only Lord Jagannath was being worshipped on the Ratnavedi in the Grand Temple, Puri. There was no mention of other deities sanctified by side of Jagannath Mahaprabhu at that time. This fact had found mention in the royal inscriptions meant to eulogize the achievements of Chodaganga Dev during his reign.

However, we get a reference from the Skanda Purana (Utkal Khanda), written in 14th century AD about the sacred consecration of Balabhadra and Subhadra as the co-deities of the manifold Lord. Subhadra was stated to be no



different from Mahalaxmi in this scripture. However, the popular view in this connection held Subhadra as the sister of Balabhadra and Jagannath. Proponents of the Trimurty Worship are of opinion that, whatever be the viewpoints of others on this score, one thing was clear from the ideology of the Jagannath pantheon that the three images as consecrated on the Ratnavedi were sacramentally adapted, in all probability, to the divine systems of different religions and sects of the world. In this sense, Jagannath cult was adored as a composite spiritual doctrine.

There is another view in this connection. Subhadra, as a divine force of delusion, had secured her place alright in the Hindu pantheon even prior to 14th century AD. She was worshipped prior to this period as the activating esoteric energy of the Supreme Lord, the Eternal Cause of creation, preservation and destruction of the vast universe. In the Grand Temple, she had found her place in the middle of Balabhadra and Jagannath and worshipped in different forms and manners conforming to the divine symbols of different cults and faiths under its composite spiritual system. It is stated in the stone inscriptions of 1225AD that the three deities were being worshipped in the Grand Temple in the divine names of Hali, Chakri and Subhadra. This was during the reign of Ananga Bhima Dev-III. During the rule of Bhanu Dev-I (1264-1378 AD), Basudev Temple (constructed during the 13th century) also contained on its walls the images of Subhadra and her two brothers and admitted the concept of Tridev worship in Orissa.

The images represented then different religions and sects according to the mode of worship carried through different incantations. Hence what was important in the Grand Temple was the mode of worship that took place in the spiritual order of the divine shrine. While the images remained the same, they represented

different religious symbols according to the rendering of Mantras in the procedure of divine adoration even sometime during 13th century AD.

In Adivasi culture too, there were references to Tridev worship. But the deities were known as Jakeri Penu, Tana Penu and Murbi Penu. In the words of Pandit Suryanarayan Dash, the three deities, as the main divine forces, represented the spiritual culture of the Adivasis. Tana Penu was a female deity. She was venerated by the Adivasis as the supreme divine force of prosperity and plentitude on earth. She was also believed as the paramount Yogamaya Sakti, the peerless force of divine delusion in the matter of creation, preservation and devastation of the universe. The deities were worshipped under a roof which too had a religious significance in the procedure of divine adoration. Murabi Penu was worshipped as the brother of Tana Penu. He was placed on the right of Tana Penu. There is a legend in the Adivasi culture that once Tana Penu was cross with human beings in general for their horrific behavior in their usual way of life. Overwhelmed by her outrageous fury, Tana Penu assumed the form of a divine devastator and went on destroying the cosmic creation. The human beings got panicky at her behavior and prayed to her brother, Murbi Penu to disengage her from her divine pastime. Murbi Penu persuaded Tana Penu to abstain from her horrific pastime. Pleased with the submission of her brother, Tana Penu stopped her ferocious hustles but with an assurance by human beings that they would be devoutly disposed to the other creatures of the universe and show kindness to one and all on earth. The human beings agreed to her conditions. At last, Tana Penu was pleased to abstain from her devastating operation. In the words of Pandit Suryanarayan Dash, in a steadily but gradual metamorphic transformation in their mode of worship, Jakeri Penu, Tana Penu and Mubri Penu



might have been worshipped over the time as Balabhadra, Subhadra and Jagannath and the roof of the divine alter might have been adopted at a later period as Sudarsan, the symbol of Chakra by the side of the three deities. Subhadra was thus worshipped as Bhairabi since the time immemorial.

According to Dr. Kanhu Charan Mishra, Adivasis were also worshipping another goddess named, Stambheswari, as their Ista Devi with utmost devotion. Stambeswari, according to Dr. Mishra, was the original form of Subhadra. Be that as it may, Stambeswari was all along being worshipped as a Tantric deity. Even today, she is worshipped in the Tantric order in the western and southern parts of Orissa. In the order of this analogy, Subhadra must have been adopted in the Hindu pantheon as a goddess endowed with the immense power of Maya in her Vidya and Avidya forms. Dr. Mishra further says that in the southern parts of Orissa, Narayan Bhagwan was worshipped in different places in the name of Swayambhu. At a later period, Swayambhu acquired the distinctiveness as Jagannath. Similarly in the middle part of Orissa, Maninageswara was worshipped as a form of Lord Siva. Maninageswara was later worshipped as Balabhadra with all the divine attributes of Lord Siva. This is how a composite form of religion had developed in Orissa by 14th century AD. This was known as Jagannath religion. In the words of Dr. Kanhu Charan Mishra, these faiths actually constituted the cult of Lord Jagannath. Despite myriad divergent factors, the cult of the Lord had developed as a synthetic spiritual faith irrespective of divergent religious beliefs of the people.

According to Dr. Harekrushna Mahatab, the Jagannath pantheon is the spiritual transformation of the Buddhist symbol, namely, Triratna. While Jagannathji is acclaimed as the symbol of Buddha Ratna, Balabhadra and

Subhadra are adored as the spiritual forms of Sangha Ratna and Dharma Ratna respectively. In the belief of Hindu monks, the names, Buddha and Jagannath are no different from each other. In Hindu scriptures, Jagannath is named as Buddha and Buddha is also named as Jagannath

Not only this. In the worshipping process of the Hindu pantheon, Jagannath, worshipped on the Ratnavedi, has all the likeness of Buddha. It is believed in this connection that Buddha as an "Avatar" was born in the human form for the uplift of the spiritually bashful and for restoring righteousness in the society. It needs to be mentioned here that Dharma as adored in Buddhism has a female connotation. In course of time, when Triratna was transformed into three distinct divine symbols and depicted with spiritual significance on a "stupa-like structure", the latter were adopted over the period of time in the forms of Balabhadra, Jagannath and Subhadra. In the words of Dr. Harekrushna Mahatab, the Dharma Ratna of Buddhism having a female connotation was later adopted in the form of Subhadra on the Ratnavedi of the Grand Temple. In the Tantric expositions of Buddhism, like Sambara Mandala, Sadachakra Mandala and Kalachakrabarti Mandala there have been references to goddess Subhadra along with her form, color and inbeing attributes in elaborate details.

In the words of historian like Prabhat Mukharjee and spiritual analyst like Prahallad Pradhan, the 14th century AD was said to be a period of visionary confluence of different religions like Buddhism, Vashnavism, Saivism and different Tantra cults of those times. A climax was reached during this period in the order of perfect unity of all those religions and faiths reflecting a new spiritual doctrine known as Jagannath religion. In the Grand Temple, Puri, Jagannath having the likeness of Buddha, Balabhadra having the divine attributes of Siva and Subhadra being Sakti



Swarupa, the three images were mystically consecrated together bringing about a renescent metamorphosis in the spiritual belief and the reasoning of the people.

In 15th century AD, there were many more innovative transformations in the order of worship of the Jagannath pantheon. Subhadra was spiritually endorsed as the replica of Brahma while Balabhadra and Jagannath were worshipped as Siva and Vishnu respectively. This was a new spiritual concept. This highlighted the ideology of Trimurti worship. Sarala Das, in his famous Oriya Mahabharat also made a reference to this order of divine adoration.

The devotee-poet of the Lord, Sri Yosabanta Das has presented in this connection in his “Premabhakti Brahma Gita” that when Brahma was making out a divine plan to create the universe, Mother Earth, the potential force of Yogamaya Shakti, wished to have divine union with him for the above purpose and accordingly approached Brahma with a fervent appeal on this score. Brahma was dismayed at the appeal of Mother Earth. He curtly turned down her offer. After all Goddess Earth, being the replica of Yogamaya Shakti, had the status of divine mother in relation to Brahma. How could he accept such an unusual proposal? The very thinking of a phenomenon like the above was a pernicious sin. However Goddess Earth was cross with Brahma for his avowed denial. She cursed Brahma saying “Oh, the creator of the universe! By disagreeing to a sacred divine cause, you have displayed utmost disrespect to the women-class in general. So, as a consequence of your unwanted action, you would descend in the universe in the form of a woman. Brahma was stupendously flabbergasted. He never expected such a catastrophe to befall him for a rightful action on his part. Lord Vishnu however appeared before him at this stage and said “Hey, Brahma! Your appearance on earth is tethered to a divine

purpose. In Kali Yuga, when I would appear in the form of Jagannath, you would be worshipped by my side as Subhadra. People won't know that you are Brahma in the form of Subhadra. This is the secret about the divine appearance of Subhadra on the Ratnavedi of the Grand Temple.

There is another version about Subhadra having the likeness of Radha according to Gaudiya Vaishnavites. Subhadra is none other than Radha, the “Alhadini Sakti” of Lord Jagannath. In that way, Jagannath Mahaprabhu is the replica of Lord Krishna. The Vaishnavites of Utkal Pradesh however have a different viewpoint in this regard. They accept Subhadra as the sister of Balabhadra and Jagannath. Matta Balaram Das, the leading devotee-poet of the “Utkaliya Vaishnav cult” derives the viewpoints of the Gaudiya Vaishnavites. In his “Bhaba Samudra”, Balaram Das has accused the Lord for having allowed the concretion of Subhadra, His sister in the place of Mahalaxmi, His divine consort.

In the Tantric order of worship, it is believed that Vimala and Subhadra are no different from each other. Their mode of worship is by and large, one and same. Both are worshipped with the same Bijamantra, i.e. “Om Hring”. In some scriptures, Subhadra, like Bimala, is depicted as Mahadevi and Jagannath as Bhairab.

This, in brief, is all about Subhadra we worship in the Grand Temple, Puri. The whole thing speaks of the immanent transcendent nature of the omnipresent Lord both as the Ruler and Darubrahma of the cosmos through the manifestations of Prakriti, his self made delusion. Consecration of Subhadra on the Ratnavedi conveys this ideology in the process of divine adoration.

Ananta Vihar (Phase-II),
Pokhariput, Bhubaneswar.



Tara Mahavidya - Its Synchronous Alliance with Sankarshan Balabhadra

Padmanabha Mahapatra

The ten incarnations of the *Adi Sakti* or the divine primeval force are known as Dasa Mahavidya. Tara Mahavidya is placed second in the order. The *Daksa-yajna* legend conceived in the Mahabharat is of major importance in regard to the origin of Dasa-Mahavidya. According to the versions of Matshya and Padma Puran, Sati, one of the daughters of *Daksa*, happened to be the spouse of Lord Sadasiva. Once Siva was intentionally not invited to one *Daksa-yajna* arranged by his father-in-law, considering Him as uncivilized and lower in rank to great gods, for which he felt much insulted, being agitated He set Himself out on a spree to decimate the entire creation. On the other hand, in spite of vehement denial of Siva, Sati made up Her mind to attend the *yajna* arranged by Her father. Consequent on final refusal of infuriate Siva, *Adi Sakti*, being annoyed appeared in ten different forms, blocked the paths of Siva leading to all His ten directions. After seeing such powerful *Saktis* around Him, fearful Siva asked them who are you all? Where is my Sati? The unique reply (*daiba-bani*) received from *Bhairabi* was - I am your Sati, the furious images found around you are my ten different incarnations, do not be afraid of them. '*Dasadikhyu mahabhima yu eta dasa-murtyah, sarba mameyib ma Sambho bhayamkaru mahamate.*' At this juncture Siva had no other way except to permit Sati to go and see the *yajna*. These ten forms of *Adi Sakti* are popularly known as Dasa- Mahavidya.

*Kali Tara Maha-vidya Sodashi Bhubaneswari
Bhairavi Chinnamasta ch vidya Dhumabati tatha/
Bagala siddhavidya ch Matangi Kamalatmika
Eta Dasa-Mahavidyah Siddhavidya Prakirtitah//*

(Chamunda Tantra)

Kali was standing in front of Siva, Tara on His forehead, Chinnamasta in His right. Bhubaneswari in His left and Bagala in His back side. Dhumabati, Kamala, Matangi and Shodashi obstructed Siva from his *agneya, nairuta, bayu* and *aishanva* directions respectively. The *Sakti*, who talked with Siva directly, was *Bhairabi*. The worship of Kali, Tara and Bhubaneswari is prominent in Orissa, but not other Mahavidyas. On the high platform Ratnavedi inside the inner sanctum of Puri Srimandir, the major images seated are Balabhadra, Purusottam Jagannath and mother Subhadra. According to the Tantra Sastras, Srikhetra is a major Shakti Pitha. Sri Balabhadra, Sri Jagannath and Maa Subhadra are seated on Sri Tara Yantra, Kalika Yantra and Bhubaneswari Yantras respectively.

*'Ugratara Shulapanih Subhadra Bhubaneswari
Niladrau tu Jagannathh sakhyat Dakhinakalika.'//*

Even though Tara Mahavidya is placed second in the order of the ten forms of the *Adi Sakti*, its detailed elaboration is made initially in this article because it has the link with Sri Balabhadra within Srimandir and we pray Balabhadra first before Jagannath and Subhadra, as He happens to be the elder brother. '*Tarayati*



Anaya Sa' - 'Tara'. Tara is the Sakti who ferrys Her devotees across the worldly ocean. She protects Her devotees from *Daihika* (relating to body), *Daivika* (relating to destiny) and *Bhautika* (relating to worldly affairs), the triomiseries. She is the most benevolent mother who constantly liberates the distressed souls, wandering in many different Yonis or life forms passing through the cycle of birth and death. She is '*Brahma Sukti Taran Kurtri*', so designated as Tara, She saves the humanity from radical (ugra) dangers, so named as Ugratara. According to Yogini Tantra She is *Girindra Tanaya Girija* - '*Ugraa byagraa Ugratara Girija Girimandanaa, Girindratanayaa Tara Girirajo Paristhitaa.*'

In Tantric literatures we find three manifestations of Tara, such as - Eka Jata, Ugra Tara and Nila Saraswati. She is called Eka Jata because She provides *Kaivalya* or unity with the Absolute. She provides relief from unforeseen severe misereries, '*Ugradd bhayadd trait debann naramscha*', so She is named as Ugra Tara. She is known as Nila Saraswati as She imparts knowledge (*jnana*) to Her devotees. Tara is the presiding Goddess of speech and the Sakti of '*Hiranya Garvu Saura Brahma*' or Sun-incarnet, so She is the successful owner of '*Surya Pralaya*'. She is the Tara in the highest part of the sky who appears to be small in size but protects the humanity out of the Bhaba-sagara. The *Tara-Sadhak* becomes well accomplished in all the branches of literature. Vyasha Muni could work on and complete the eighteen Mahapurans, only due to the grace of Goddess Tara.

The great sage Bashistha tops the list of Her devotees. As per the 'Swatantra Tantra, before proceeding to '*Banabasa*', Sri Ramchandra met with Kulaguru Bashistha to obtain his blessings, in turn Kulaguru baptized and trained him into the Tara cult - '*Moro paschima teere tu chola nakhyo hrudamahann, tatra*

yajne swayam Tara devi Neela-Saraswati'. Tara was the most favourite deity of the Buddhist Tantrics; according to them Tara saves the human beings from five *Kleshs*, such as - *Abidya, Asmita, Raga, Dwesh* and *Abhinivesh*. The aspirants of the Tara cult get success in realizing all the four Purusharths, such as - *Dharma* (obligation), *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (desires) and *Mokshya* (salvation) without hazardous special effects. Tara is always away from the *Maya* or the *Prapancha* and is also within it, because it is Her own creation. She provides materialistic bliss (*bhoga*) initially and salvation (*mokhya*) at the later stage. Tara is surrounded with eight Yoginis, they are - *Mahakali, Rudrani, Ugra, Bhima, Ghora, Bhramari, Maharatri* and *Bhairabi*. The iconographic picture of Goddess Tara as prescribed in the 'Nila Tantra' reads as below -

*'Pratyalidha padaam ghoraam mundamala bibhushitam,
Kharbamlambodaram bhimam byaghracharmam brutam
kato /
Nabayauban-sampanam padmamudra bibhushitam,
Chaturbhuijam lalajiwam mahabhimam barapradam/
Khadga karti samayukta sabyetarbhujay dwayam,
Kapalotpalasamyuktam sabyopani yuganitam /
Pingomchokrajatam dhayeno labekhyobhah bhusitam,
Jwalachita madhyabastham ghoradrastam karalinim/
Swabeshmara badanam strotalankar bibhusitam,
Biswabyapak tyoyantah swetapadma parasthitam'*

She is standing in the *Pratyalidha* pose, She is of short stature with a protruded belly and Her complexion is dark-blue. She has a terrible appearance with tigers skin at Her waist and garland of human-heads at Her neck. She is the prime of Her youth and is adorned with Pancha Mudras. She has in her four hands *Khadga* (sword), *Indivara* (lotus), *Kartrika* (shear) and *Khappara* (human skull). Her tongue is held out and She wears single braid of matted hair on Her head. Three-eyed Tara stands on the corpse lying on the burning funeral pyre and ranges Her feet, which appears to be terrible. She is ever ready to remove the darkness of ignorance and passiveness of Her devotees.



The Ganga Gajpatis of Orissa established one temple of Ugra Tara at Mulajhargarh near Bhusandapur Railway Station in the district of Khurda. Ugra Tara was the presiding and the protecting Goddess of the fort of Mulajhargarh, which was just in the border of Chilika Lake. Even though in course of time this fort of Orissa has been lost to oblivion still then Goddess Ugra Tara, the deity of the fort, worshipped by Brahmin priests under Tara Mantra and offered with cooked vegetarian and non-vegetarian items, preserve Her glory and popularity and still continues as the presiding Goddess of coastal Orissa. Tara is synonymous with *Omkar*, the five components of *Omkar* are - A, U, M, *Nada* and *Bindoo*. The Mantra propitiating Tara has also five *Bijas* (seed words). Her companion is *Aksobhya*, Sri Sadasiva. The visionary of the Mantra is *Aksobhya Rsi*, the Mantra is metered in *Brihati Chanda*, its presiding deity is Sri Tara Devata, its *Bija* is *Hum* and *Phat*, the remaining alphabates are the *Kilaka*, the *Viniyogah* is linked to the achievements of four *Purusarthis* i.e *Artha*, *Dharma*, *Kama* and *Mokhya*. According to another Tantric procedure, '*Hrim*' is the *Bija*, '*Hrum*' is the *Sakti* and '*Strim*' is the *Kilak*. The Puja Paddhati of Sri Balabhadra, followed in Srimandir, Puri at present has much more similarities with the Tantric Puja system under Tara Mahavidya.

It is interesting to know that the Niladri Mahodaya', a treatise on the rituals of Jagannath, equates Balabhadra Sankarshan with Tara, Subhadra with Bhubaneswari and Jagannath as Dakhina Kalika - all three tantric Goddesses under Dasa Mahavidya - *Tara sakhyat Shulapani Subhadra Bhubaneswari / Niladrau Jagannathstu swayamm Dakhinakalika*.// The process of ritual purification upto *Matraka-Nyasa* is common in respect of the Puja system of Balabhadra, Subhadra and Jagannath, but the *Devata-Nyasa*s and the system followed

thereafter vary according to the deity due for worship. The worshipper of Balabhadra thereafter takes up the *Srikanthadi-Nyasa* with the placement of Siva with Sakti. Its *Pranab* is *Omkar*, the visionary of the *Mantra* is *Dakhinamurti Rsi*, the *Mantra* is metered in *Gayatri Chanda*, *Arddhanariswar* is the Devata, the *Bija* is *Hrim* and the *Sakti* is *Sam*. The Dhyana-verses codified to meditate upon the presiding deity of the Srikanthadi-nyasa (Siva and Parvati in their combined form) describe the hermaphrodite form of Siva and underline the basic oneness of the male and female form of the divinity. One such Dhyana-verse of Sri Balabhadra, which has a reference with the Durga-Saptasati, is quoted below.

*Bandhuka-kanchananibham ruchirakshyamalam,
Pashankusau ch, baradam nijabahudandaih /
Bibhran-mindu-shakala-aabharanam trinetrām,
Ardhambikesh-manisham bapu-rashrayamah //*

This is a peculiar instance of the synchronism of *Sakta-Vaishnav Tatwa* under the Jagannath cult. The easiest way to achieve the Siddhi on the part of the *Tara-sadhak*, has been interpreted in the '*Tara Kapura Raja Stotra*', (verse-20) which reads as below :

*'Tamograshthe chandre yadi japati lokah stabamanum/
Nabamyam ba matardhranidharkanye bitanute //
Tatha surye pruthuibalaya tilakah kabyatatinii /
Payodhih siddhiinam bhabati bhabasnam sarbabiditam //*

If the *Sadhak* chants this Mantra on the date of lunar or solar eclipses, he becomes capable of mastering all the *Siddhis* or the supernatural powers. Whoever completely surrenders before Her with humble motive, She takes care of by sheltering him under Her supreme grace and mitigates all his sorrows and sufferings.

Pratihari Lane,
Matimandap Sahi, Puri.



Two Shakti Pithas of Kandhamal District

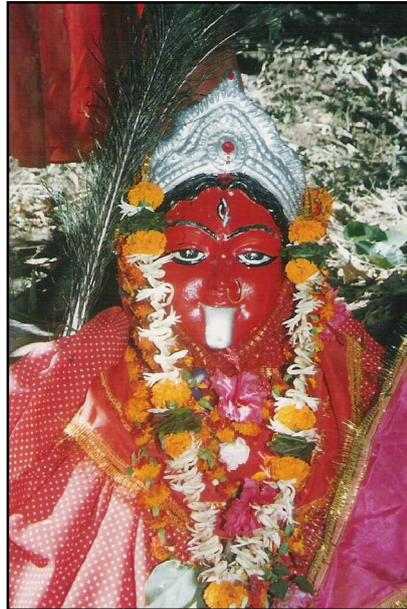
Raghunatha Rath

Shakti cult or Mother Goddess worship had been traced in the Indus valley civilization. Hence we believe that from the ancient period Mother Goddess is being worshipped in India. *Suktas* were dedicated in the *Vedas* to as much as forty female deities. It is widely accepted by scholars that the root of Shakti worship is laying in *Devi Sukta* of *Rig Veda*. So there is no doubt about ancientness of mother Goddess worship in India.

In *Adibasi* community most of deities belongs to female line. They worship Earth Goddess, River Goddess, and Mountain Goddess etc. All the sources of nature are worshiped as Goddesses in tribal societies. Likewise at the end of each village in Odisha we can witness a place dedicated to Mother Goddess, known by different names. They are believed to be the guardian deities of the village and eradicate all evils. But some of them are regarded as deities of regional or state level, being patronized by the chief of the state. Deities gained the status of state

level are known as *Rastra Devi*. They are being Hinduized in name and process of worship also and Bramhin priests are engaged by the state.

The deities Pattakhanda and Baral Devi of Kandhamal district have a tribal root, in course of time they have developed to the status of regional fame being patronized by local chiefs and worshipped by both tribals and non-tribals which helped the chiefs to subdue the tribal subjects and to gain control over them. In the following paras we will come to know about both the deities in detail.



Goddess Pattakhanda

Goddess Pattakhanda

The word *Pattakhanda* literally means "chief sword or main sword". Pattakhanda worship indicates worship of weapons. Weapons are regarded as Goddess Durga, which is prevalent in the Hindu society of

Odisha since remote past.

The deity of Pattakhanda installed at Balliguda, Mahasingi and elsewhere is represented by a piece of crude stone, having no shape of any living being. A sword is being placed



near the deity known as Pattakhanda. It may be presumed that the sword had been presented by any local chief many years ago. Placing of a sword indicate that the deity was regarded as war deity in remote past and gradually people regarded her as guardian deity of the village as well as the region. Nonbrahmin, mostly Kshatriya caste priests are employed for worship of the deities of Pattakhanda. Except Balliguda in other places a curved pole is posted named as *chhatkhamba* where the sacrificed animal is being tied. It remind us the worship of Khambeswari by the tribal Kandhas in the bygone days.

People of Balliguda region regards Mahasingi as the first seat of Goddess Pattakhanda, where she was worshipped by Kshatriyas belonging to Nala dynasty. They were called Raja of the area. When their family expanded they were sent to rule in different *muthas* and they also established a *pitha* of Pattakhanda at each *mutha* headquarters. In this way Pattakhanda worship extended from a village cult to a regional status.

According to belief the original seat of Pattakhanda is Jarasinga in Bolangir district. From Jarasinga the deity was brought by the first *Raja* of Mahasingi to his capital. In the past Balliguda was not having a prominent status. So British authorities built a bridge on the river near Mahasingi and a Restshed to camp there. The bridge still exists. When Forest Range Office, Taluk Office and Police Office were set up in the last quarter of 19th century at Balliguda by British Government, then outsiders migrated to Balliguda and settled permanently. Those plain-lander people started worshipping the tribal Goddess Pattakhanda. Since then the Goddess was regarded by both tribals and nontribals. The Goddess is being offered *Prasad* two times a day and *Arati* (Light offering) is being done daily at evening, which was introduced by caste Hindus.

But other tribal systems are still prevailing there. Even the non-brahmin priests are not changed till now. A beautiful temple have been built for the deity, golden and silver ornaments are used to decorate Her. *Nuakhai*, *Kandul Bhaja Parab* and *Dasahara* festival are being observed in Pattakhanda *Pitha* at Balliguda. *Dasahara* is observed with much pump and gaity. A mud figure of Mahisa Mardini Durga is being made in the campus of Pattakhanda temple and worshiped by bramhin priests in Hindu manner of worship for four days i.e. from the 7th to 10th day of bright fortnight in the month of *Aswin* every year.

Kandul Bhaja Puja is observed in a day in the month of *Phalguna* as decided by the temple committee. *Arhar* is locally known as *kandul*. Till observation of *kandulbhaja parab* people of this region strictly do not eat *kandul*.

Bonda tribals of Mudulipada area also observe Pattakhanda worship on the first Monday in the month of *Magha*. A sword known as Pattakhanda kept in a hole of a banyan tree is brought down and worshipped by the *disari*, the priest and sacrificed a goat. The blood of the sacrificed animal is mixed with the seeds to be planted next year and distributed among all. We could not find any link between the Pattakhanda of Mudulipada and Balliguda. But a legendary link could be observed with Pattakhanda of Jarasinga of Bolangir district and Mahasingi. The legend runs as follows.

About 25 generations back there lived *adivasi* chiefs named Nagbura and Kanabura, who were worshipping Goddess Pattakhanda. They both committed innumerable offences, which enraged the Goddess. Due to the anger of the Goddess for twelve years, the animals and the human being could not became pregnant, the crops failed, trees did not yield fruit and the streams also dried up.



People felt that such calamities occurred due to the anger of Goddess Pattakhanda. Hence all of them prayed the Goddess and begged apology. The Goddess appeared in dream and told them that the chief priests have done unclean things. Hence I am not satisfied with their worship. So you have to search for another priest. Then the people prayed Her to know the name of the Priest.

In reply the Goddess told them in dream that they should tie two pieces of black yarn and yellow yarn to two arrows and shoot them high into the air. Where these two arrows would fall there would be a man and he was to be brought and make their King. Then Nagbura and Kanabura shot the arrows and ran after the arrows. The arrows went and struck the ground near a spring in Jorasingi, at which place a man named Madan Singi was bathing. Then the *Kandhas* bodily carried him to Mahasingi and kept him with royal honour. Then the *Kandhas* assigned him with some hard work in order to test him and miraculously Madan Singh came out successful. Then the *Kandhas* installed him as their king and the chief priest of Goddess Pattakhanda. There-after all their miseries vanished and they lived peacefully.

Goddess Baraladevi

Goddess Baraladevi is the presiding deity of village Balaskumpa, which is situated at a distance of 15 kms from Phulbani, the headquarters town of Kandhamal district. A temple has been built for the deity now. Before construction of the temple there was a thatched hut meant for the deity. The Deity is in the form of three to four small stones buried in the ground and decorated with vermilion. In front of the temple a pole is posted, where the sacrificed animal was tied before sacrifice. Since 1999 animal sacrifice has been stopped.

Baraladevi is worshipped in each village of Kandhamal subdivision. All the matters of the Goddess are being administered by a committee represented by *sirdars* of the *muthas* around the seat of the deity.

Baraladevi is also worshipped at G.Udayagiri, K.Nuagam and Mahasingi of Balliguda Sub-Division and Bandhagada, Menia, Gochhapada etc. of Kandhamal Sub-Division. Goddess Badarauli devi, who is worshipped at Baramul in Nayagarh district, is perhaps a changed version of Baraladevi who have connection with Sri Jagannath temple. Before cutting of timber for making of chariot of Lord Jagannath the Goddess Badarauli is being worshipped with the offerings of seven sarees, *Mahaprasad*, sandal wood and flower garlands sent from the Sri Jagannath temple. Hence the importance of Goddess Baraladevi, which is a cult of tribal society needs more research.

At the main seat of Baraladevi at Balaskumpa, Durgapuja is observed from the second day to tenth day in the bright fortnight of the month of *Aswin*, which is locally known as *Navami Jatra*. On the beginning day of the festival the Sword, Gun, *Tangi* and Knife which were presented by the then Raja of Baudh are placed near the shrine and offered puja by the *Dehury*, the priest and a goat is being sacrificed. On *Navami* the main *Puja* is celebrated. On this day people of the area are used to gather at Balaskumpa and offer their worship to the Goddess. Instead of the main buffalo other buffaloes of the persons mentally desired are tied in front of the temple on poles fixed there. The pole where the main buffalo is being tied is known as *chhatkhamba*. When an old *chhatkhamba* is destroyed a new one is inserted. To insert a new post some rites are observed which has resemblance with *Navakalevar* of Lord Jagannath.



After sacrifice of the main buffalo arranged by the temple committee, other buffalos are sacrificed. However, since 1999 sacrifice of animals have been stopped before the deity.

There was a tradition prevalent is which, before Navami festival some cowheard people were traveling around the *muthas* with buffalo meant for sacrifice and collecting money, rice etc. singing a folk song regarding installation of the Goddess Baraldevi. Now this tradition also has been stopped along with the sacrifice.

The Folk song describes the legend of installation of the deity as follows.-

Originally the seat of Baraldevi was at Mahasingi. The *Raja* of Mahasingi was worshipping the deity. *Raja* of Boudh was a worshipper of Mother Goddess. He wanted to bring the Goddess Baraldevi to his Kingdom. Hence he faught against the *Raja* of Mahasingi which was a part of Sanakhemundi State. Boudh *Raja* faught for twelve years. But he could not succeed. Hence for a long time he prayed Goddess Baraldevi. At last Goddess pleased upon the *Raja* and asked for boon. The *Raja* prayed to the deity to take her to his kingdom. The Goddess said if the *Raja* will please Her by human blood she will go with him.

The *Raja* fulfilled the desire of the Goddess and returned with her. On the way where they halted there became a *pitha* of the deity. Accordingly at Bandhagada and Menia Baraldevi *Pithas* are found even now. Then the *Raja* and his party reached at Balaskumpa. The *Raja* witnessed that a dog being chased by a rabitt. He felt that the soil of the place is auspicious to install the deity. Hence he installed the deity at Balaskumpa and engaged non-Bramhin priests. After some days the *Raja* left Balaskumpa for his Kingdom. On the way he installed the deity at

Purunakatak in the name of Bhairabi. Then the *Raja* entered his Kingdom and installed the deity in the name of Durga.

Above two legends reveals that non-tribals tried to capture the tribal deities in order to subdue the tribal subjects. This is a clever plan to integrate both tribals and non-tribals. Though many tribal rituals are existing till now some Hindu elements like *homa* or fire sacrifice, *sodosapachar puja* as per Hindu Sastra, daily worship, offering of rice, coconut and banana for *Prasad* are introduced. In this way tribal deities were Hinduized and taken to the fold of Brahmanism.

Panaspadi,
Po: Balliguda - 762103,
Dist: Kandhamal.



Goddess Kusangai Temple, Kusang,
Dist. Bolangir



Goddess Tarini at Ghatagaon

M.K. Patro

There is a long tradition of Sakti worship in Orissa. The temples of goddesses built at several places - Biraja at Jajpur, Chandi at Cuttack, Charchika at Banki, Mangala at Kaktpur, Bimala at Puri, Samaleswari at Sambalpur, Patneswari at Patnagarh speak volumes of the followings of the Sakti Cult in Orissa. Similarly, the seats of Ambika, Sarala, Narayani, Bhattarika, Bhairavi, Taratarini, Ramachandi and Tarini are quite familiar in Orissa.

Ghatagaon has been famous as the seat of Goddess Tarini since the fifteenth century. By that time, Sakti cult had become popular in the southern parts of the country. It is believed that Goddess Tarini was originally the presiding deity of Kanchi. The King of Kanchi was an ardent devotee of the Goddess, by whose blessings happiness and prosperity was prevailing in the kingdom. During those days Gajapati Purusottam Dev ruled over Orissa. He proposed to marry

Padmavati, the beautiful Princess of Kanchi. The King of Kanchi, who knew that Purusottam Dev used to sweep the chariots of the three Lords at Car Festival every year, thought it below his dignity

to give his dear daughter in marriage to Purusottam Dev. The proposal was instantly rejected. Humiliated, Purusottam Dev attacked Kanchi, but was defeated. This, however, could not deter him to prepare himself for another battle. He prayed to Lord Jagannath and sought His blessings. The Lord appeared before him in a dream and told him to watch the roof tops of the houses which he would come across the next morning. He told the King to appoint the lord of that



Goddess Tarini, Ghatagaon

house, on whose rooftop the Lord's *dhandamala* would be noticed, as the General of the expedition. The next morning, Purusottam Dev noticed it on the rooftop of Gobinda Bhanja, the eldest son of King Trilochan Bhanja of Keonjhar, who was staying in Puri those days. Purusottam Dev appointed Gobinda Bhanja as the General



and made his second Kanchi expedition. It is widely believed that Lord Balabhadra and Lord Jagannath took part in the expedition to help King Purusottam Dev win the battle.

Gobinda Bhanja appeased Goddess Tarini of Kanchi with his unflinching devotion. After the battle was won, he advised the King to bring the images of Lord Madanmohan, Lord Raghunath and Goddess Tarini to Orissa. King Purusottam gladly agreed to the proposal. But it was found impossible to carry the huge idol of Goddess Tarini.

In the long run, Gobinda Bhanja's earnest prayers bore fruit. The Goddess told him that she would follow Gobinda Bhanja willingly, but if he looked back, she would not move any further. In this way Goddess Tarini came to be installed in Puri.

In 1480 A.D. King Trilochan Bhanja of Keonjhar passed away. The Gajapati King of Puri installed Gobinda Bhanja as the new king of the state. Gobinda Bhanja sought the permission of the Gajapati King to take Goddess Tarini with him to Keonjhar. Initially Purusottam Dev was unwilling; but the Goddess appeared in a dream and expressed her desire to go to Keonjhar. Accordingly, the King gave his permission, but it was a Herculean task to remove the deity. Govinda Bhanja prayed to the Goddess, who told him that she would follow him as long as he did not look back. Bhanja heard the sound of her *nupur* and proceeded to Keonjhar. On the way, suddenly he failed to hear the sound and looked back to ascertain if the Goddess was still following him. Since Gobinda Bhanja looked back, the Goddess did not wish to proceed further. She told him to go to Keonjhar and rule his kingdom from the capital. She would come to his rescue as and when he remembered Her. In this way, Goddess Tarini, the presiding deity of the State of Keonjhar, came

to be installed at the place which was later known as Ghatagaon.

Goddess Tarini was originally worshipped in Kanchi. The priests of the Goddess belonged to the Kondh tribe. A few Kondh dehuri families were brought to Puri to perform rituals when the Goddess was installed in Puri. A few of them were again brought to Ghatagaon when the Goddess came to be installed there. People belonging to several castes lived there, but there was no Brahmin family. For want of Brahmin priests people faced a lot of difficulties while performing the rituals at childbirth, death and at other times. The king looked upto the Goddess to find a solution. The Goddess appeared in his dream and told him to keep a pot full of sanctified ghee on one of the branches of a tree. Anyone taking a little ghee from that pot would be purified. The place where the ghee would be sprayed, would also be sanctified. Since then the place was named at Ghatgaon, which literally means the village of the pot.

Everyday the *Dehuri* performs the rituals such as giving the deity a bath, smearing the body with vermilion or *sindur*. Coconuts and bananas, flowers, etc. are offered to the Goddess. Devotees also offer rice, areca nut, saris, bangles and other things to the deity. People from distant places send coconuts in buses plying through Ghatagaon. *Makar Sankranti*, *Bisuva Sankranti* and *Raja Sankranti* are the important festivals observed here. Among other festivals, Durga Puja, Dushahara, Laxmi Puja and Kali Puja are also celebrated at this place. People believe that Goddess Tarini offers solace to the devotees when they are in distress; she is the saviour of her devotees at the time of crisis.

256/B, Sastrinagar, Unit-4,
Bhubaneswar.



Veshas of Goddess Samaleswari

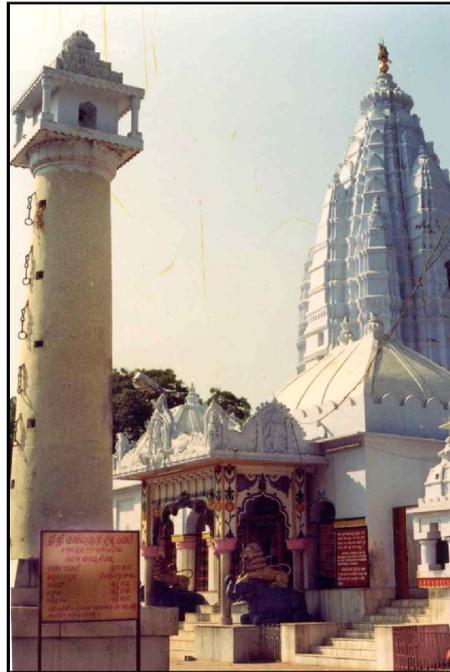
Ratan Kumar Pani

Dussehra celebration at Samaleswari temple, here is an entirely different affair. Unlike other places and like Lord Jagannath of Puri, Goddess Samaleswari adorns different 'Beshas' (incarnation) throughout Dussehra celebrations.

Legend has it that Devi Samaleswari, the presiding deity of Sambalpur is regarded as an Ansh (a part) of Durga or Parvati, along with six other 'Shakti Ansh' of Orissa and Chattishgarh. According to temple authorities, the festivities start with Sohala Puja followed by Mahalaya. On the day of Mahalaya, the Goddess adorns 'Dhabalumukhi' Beshha, also referred to as 'Ganga Darshan' after which the Navaratri Puja begins and goes on for nine days with Devi Samaleswari dressed in several incarnation of Durga. On the first, the Devi adorns the 'Shailaputri Beshha', next day she transforms into 'Brahmacharini'.

On the following days, the Devi assumes the incarnations of 'Chandraghanta',

'Kusumanda', 'Skandhamata', 'Katyayani', 'Kalaratri', 'Mahagouri' and finally she is adorned as 'Raja Rajeswari'.



Several religious functions are performed during the Navaratri. On the day when Devi is adorned as 'Katyayani', a three-day 'Jagar Deepa' (earthen lamp) is lit, which is immersed on Vijaya Dasami.

During the 'Kalaratri Beshha', all the arms and ammunition are cleaned and the temple 'Akhara' traverses the city in a procession demonstrating skills. After the 'Raja Rajeswari Beshha', the temple's 'Dhwaja' (costomary flag) is replaced marking resumption of normal practice and worship.

Courtesy : Devi, Spl. Issue of New Indian Express, October 2007.