



The Eleven Armed Durga of Athmallik

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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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