



## Two Shakti Pithas of Kandhamal District

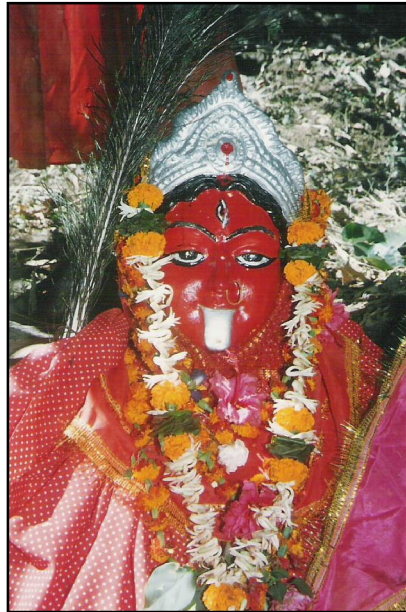
*Raghunatha Rath*

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.

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Goddess Kusangai Temple, Kusang,  
Dist. Bolangir