



Bali-Harachandi Temple at Baliharachandi

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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.

References:

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