

Archaeological Vestiges of Monasteries in the Prachi Valley, Odisha

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The Prachi, a small river of over 60 km in length with a catchment area of around 600 sq. km¹, a part of the Mahanadi delta in Odisha along the eastern coast of India is an important topographical as well as cultural landscape². Presently the parts of the modern day districts of Puri, Khurda, Cuttack and Jagatsingpur comprise the Prachi valley region³. Like the mythological origin of other rivers such as the Narmada, the Ganga, and the Godavari the sacred origin of the river Prachi is not an exception in the history of the Indian civilization. Its origin and importance have been depicted in the *Uttarakhanda* of *Padma Purana* in the name of *Prachi Mahatmya*⁴. The valley once cradled a civilization which is so rich and varied in character that its glory can hardly be explained. It is considered as the holiest river of Odisha and rightly called the Eastern Saraswati⁵. In its valley, there is everything that makes the history of Odisha most outstanding and glorious. Without the study of ancient sites, monuments and antiquities of Prachi valley, the realm of Odisha history seems incomplete⁶.

A survey in the Prachi valley reveals an incredible and splendid existence of diverse monuments of different sects like- Saivism, Vaisnavism, Sakta, Buddhist and Jain but also the establishment of the numerous monasteries locally

known as *mathas*. Even the *Prachi Mahatmya* mentioned three namely Antervedi, Viswamitra and Apsara *mathas* in the Prachi valley⁷. In course of time the number of *mathas* in the valley grew up and played an important role in the socio-religious cultural life of the people. The presiding deity of almost all the *mathas* associated with the Vaisnavite deities like Vishnu, Krishna and Jagannatha also known as Patitapavana. The antiquity of the *mathas* as claimed by the present *Mahantas* (in charge of the monastery) to remote ancient time, however, it goes back to the Suryavamsi Gajapati period i.e. 15th-16th century A.D., when the soil of Orissa was flooded with the stream of Vaisnavism. Prior to the existence of these *mathas* there were various Ashramas like Mudgalamuni Ashrama, Viswamitra Ashrama, Bharadwaja Ashrama, Kapilamuni Ashrama and Karnamuni Ashrama, etc. and on the basis of the present antiquarian remains of the above sites which would date back from 10th century AD to 13th century A.D.⁸ The Odisha State Archaeology Department unearthed a Buddhist monastery at Kuruma dated to 9th-10th century AD.⁹ An intensive survey was conducted by the present author in the Prachi valley which brought 50 *mathas* existing along the banks of the Prachi as well as the dead channels of the Prachi system. Followings are the names of these *mathas* from

Phulnakhara to Konark in which few of them are dealt in detail while approach and location has been given to the rest monasteries.

1. Fategarh Matha at Fategarh Bazarsahi:

Fategarh *matha* in the village Fategarh Bazarsahi is located in the Cuttack district.

2. Sidhagumpha Matha at Jagamohanakuda:

Sidhagumpha *matha* in the village Jagamohanakuda near Sundargram is in Cuttack district and located on the left bank of Prachi.

3. Sadhugumpha Matha at Olatapur:

Sadhugumpha *matha* in the village Olatapur on S.H.-60 is situated in the same name police station of Cuttack district and located on the left bank of the river Prachi. It is at a distance of 35 km from the capital city Bhubaneswar.

4. Guptamanika Matha- Varahapur:

Guptamanika *matha*¹⁰ in the village Varahapur under Kantapara block of Cuttack district is located on the left bank of the river Prachi. It can be approached at a distance of 4 km from Kantapara connected by a metalled road and about 36 km from Bhubaneswar. Near the *matha* there is a great tank known as Gupta Manika and tradition associated with that it was also known as Gupta Ganga and the Pandavas stayed for some days during their secret banishment. Inside the *matha* a medieval *pidha* temple houses an image of Lord Krishna made of chlorite stone along with Ananta-Gopala, Gajalaxmi and the wooden image of Jagannatha.

5. Madhavananda Jew Matha at Adaspur:

Madhavananda Jew *matha* is situated in the village Adaspur on SH.-60 and comes under Niali *tehsil* of Cuttack district and located on the

left bank of the river Prachi. It is at a distance of 38 km from the capital city Bhubaneswar. Inside the *matha* a *pidha* temple contains an image of Vishnu, being worshipped as Madhava¹¹.

6, 7, & 8. Deuli Matha, Tirumali Matha & Sidhavata- Jayadeva Sadhanapitha at Kendu Vilva:

All these *mathas* lies within long. - 85° 59' 40" E; lat. - 20° 13' 05" N; elev. -35 ft m s l, are situated in the village Kendu Vilva or Kenduli in the Balipatana block of Bhubaneswar *tehsil* in Khurda district. The village is located in the mid-way of the right bank of the river Prachi and on the left bank of the river Kushabhadra. It can be approached from the right side of Prataprudrapur-Banamalipur road and about 3 km east of Prataprudrapur and about 32 km from the capital city of Bhubaneswar.

9. Kapila Ashrama at Kapilesvarapur:

Kapila Muni Ashrama is a solitary site on the left bank of the river Prachi¹² in the village Kapilesvarapur under Niali block of Cuttack district. It is about 7 km from Adaspur and can be approached at a distance of 2 km on the left side of Kaliaghai Chowk on Niali-Phulnakhara (S.H.-60) road. According to tradition this place was the hermitage of Kapila Muni in bygone days and hence the name Kapilamuni Ashram. Inside the Ashram a *pidha* temple made of sandstone faces to east houses a *Patalaphuta Shivalinga* within a circular *Yonipitha* made of black chlorite stone. Besides loose sculptures of Kankala Bhairava, Astika Jaratkaru, Nandi, Camunda, Narasimha etc are kept in the temple premises.

10. Antarvedi Matha at Trivenighat in Kantapada Sasana:

The Antarvedi *matha* (Plate-1) at Trivenighat¹³ where the confluence of the river

Prachi, Manikarnika, a distributaries of the Kushabhadra river and the invisible course of the legendary river Saraswati meets in the village Kantapada Sasana is situated under Niali *tehsil* of Cuttack district. It can be approached on the right side of the Niali (Nuagaon Chowk) – Bhubaneswar (Uttara Chowk) road via Annakuda. It is about 7 km from Nuagaon Chowk on SH. - 60 and hardly 100 m east of the Belesvara and Trivenisvara temple of Bhapur in Khurda district.

The *matha* belongs to Gauranga sect. Legends associated with the *matha* regarding its establishment to the time of the end of *Dvapara* and beginning of the *Kali* era. Inside the *matha*, a modern *saptaratha pidha* shrine faces to east, fronted by a R.C.C. *jagamohana*, a *mandapa* and the Aruna *stambha* in front is built. Besides, the temple of Baba Lokanatha, a detached *snanavedi*, *dhuni mandapa* and the laterite built bathing steps known as Trivenighat are there. The presiding deities are enshrined in the sanctum over a pedestal of 1.20 m in height is a black chlorite image of Lord Krishna along with the three triads- Jagannatha (Patitapavana), Balabhadra and Subhadra made of Neem wood; and brass idols of Radha and Krishna are being worshipped.

Rituals like *janmastami*, *devasnana*, *radhastami*, *trivenibuda* etc are celebrated here. The *trivenibuda* is held on the new moon day in the month of Magha and thousands of people congregate here to take sacred bath and on this occasion a fair is organized here for more than a week. Besides, social rites such as marriage, engagement, thread ceremony, *asthibisarjana*, *pinda dana* are also performed here. The *matha* has its own landed property and garden and maintained by the *Mahanta*. Till now the *matha* is in a flourishing condition in the Prachi valley.

11. Sahadakunja Matha at Amanakudagarh:

Sahadakunja *matha* in the village Amanakudagarh is located on the left bank of the river Prachi and it comes under Balipatna block of Khurda district. It is about 18 km from Balipatna and 6 km from Niali. It can be approached on the right side of Niali (Nuagaon)-Bhubaneswar (Uttara Chowk) road.

12. Pandavakuda Matha at Pandavakuda near Annakuda:

The Pandavakuda *matha* (**Plate-2**) lies within long. -86° 02' 15" E., lat. -20° 08' 57" N., elev.- 29 ft is situated over a sand-dune in the village Pandavakuda under Annakuda Panchayat of Balipatna block of Khurda district and located on the left bank of the river Prachi. It is about 20 km from Balipatna, 2 km south-west of the village Annakuda and 4 km from Niali. It can be approached about 1 km on a *kachha* road in the left side of Niali (Nuagaon)- Bhubaneswar (Uttara Chowk) road.

Tradition relates that during the period of exile the Pandavas spent few days in this locality and hence the name Pandavakuda. Further it is said that in order to obtain water Bhima, the second Pandava threw his *gada* and where it fell, a tank was formed which came to be known as Pandava-Pushkarani¹⁴. The *matha* belongs to *Gauranga* sect. The *matha* is presently under the custody of *Mahanta* Damodara Das and he claimed 1300 years of its existence. The *matha* has its own landed property and the Naga *matha* of Puri is a branch of this *matha*. Ancient bricks (40 x 27 x 8 cm in dimension) has been used on the present floor near the entrance of the *matha* which suggests the antiquity of the site.

Inside the *matha* a modern rectangular *pidha* shrine, faces to east preceded by a R.C.C.

jagamohana and a verandah is built over a low platform of 30 cm in height. The walls of the *vimana* and the *jagamohana* are divided in to five segments and the *bandhana* band of the *jagamohana* is decorated with a row of elephants interspersed with a full-blown lotus. *Pidhamundi* design niches carved in the centre of the wall of the *vimana*. The *pidha vimana* consists of five tiers and surmounted by the *mastaka* on the top.

The presiding deities housed in the sanctum over a moulded pedestal are the images of Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra and the brass idols of Radha and Damodara. Cultural significance of the *matha* is that all the festivals related to Jagannatha temple of Puri such as *janmastami*, *radhastami*, *snanapurnima*, etc are celebrated here.

The compound wall of the *matha* is made of bricks with the entrance on the eastern side while the temple is made of laterite and bricks. Within the *matha* precinct few detached defaced sculptures and lion fragments are noticed. Due to proper care and maintenance the *matha* is in a good state of preservation.

13. Radhakanta Matha at Nuagaon:

Located on the left bank of the river Prachi, the Radhakanta *matha* (**Plate-3**) within long. - 86°03'10" E.; lat. - 20°08'13" N.; elev. – 55 ft is situated in the centre of the village of Nuagaon under the same Panchayat in Niali *tehsil* of Cuttack district. It is about 1 km north-west of the famous Sobhanesvara temple of Niali. It can be approached less than half km towards the village from the primary school of Nuagaon on S.H.-60. It is one of the greatest *mathas* of the Prachi valley which has survived up till now. The main presiding deity of this *matha* is the image of

Lord Krishna as *Vanshidhari* along with the bronze image of Radha and accordingly the *matha* is known as Radhakanta *matha*¹⁵. Besides, the main deity an image of Lord Jagannatha made of neem wood; Salagrama; bronze idols of Gopala, Radha-Govinda, Banka-Bihari, Madana-Mohana, Radhakanta; a sandstone image of Ganesha and Hanuman; and a black chlorite stone image of Laxmi-Nrisimha is being worshipped.

The *matha* belongs to the *Gaudiya sampradaya* and one Vaishnava Charana Das Goswami was the founder of this *matha*. Presently *Mahanta* Madan Mohana Das is looking care of this *matha*. Legend associated with this *matha* is that Chaitanya resided here during his visit to Puri. Rituals such as *radhastami*, *janmastami*, *snanapurnima*, *nrsingha-janma*, etc are performed here.

The *matha* with an impressive entry gateway on the south is surrounded by high walls on each sides with R.C.C. residences on the northern, a thatched house on the eastern, R.C.C. hall with rooms on the southern, a *pidha* temple in the centre and the rest leaving 'L' shaped courtyard on the north-eastern sides. The five tiers *pidha* temple, rectangular on plan, faces to south, houses the aforesaid deities in the sanctum and the frontal verandah stands over a platform of 50 cm in height. Inside a hall on the western side there are 14 no of *samadhis* (burials) which represent the 14 generation of *Mahantas* of this *matha*.

The impressive gigantic gateway (**Plate-4**) made of sandstone is beautifully decorated with four *sakhas-sarpa* (serpent coil), *patra*, *sarpa* and *nara sakhas* from exterior to interior with a lion and a *pidhamundi* design housed with a standing man on each sides at the base, while

Vanshidhari Krishna on the centre of the lintel. Two life-sized standing *dvarapalas* with stick in their hand flanked the gateway on each side. The dresses, boots and the caps worn by the *dvarapalas* are similar to the Britishers type which clearly suggests that the gateway might have been built in the 19th century. In front of the gate a *chandrasila* made of seven pieces of sandstone is noticed. A pair of detached lion is kept inside the *matha*. The *matha* is not protected by any agency. It has its own landed property and maintained by its own funding.

14. Arkatirtha Matha at Bangali Sahi, Niali:

The Arkatirtha *matha*¹⁶ within long. - 86° 03' 14" E.; lat. - 20° 08' 17" N.; elev. - 52 ft is situated on the left bank of the river Prachi in Bangali Sahi of Nuagaon and about one and half kilometer from Niali on SH. - 60. In this *matha* an image of *Vansidhari* Krishna is being worshipped. Regarding the name of Arka-Tirtha, it is believed that the Sun God had attained *siddhi* (blessing) after performing penance at the place and as such it is known as Arka-Tirtha. Another tradition associated in this locality is that once Brahma, after the false report of reaching the top of the flaming Lingam made Shiva furious and the latter cut the fifth head of Brahma. The forehead of Brahma struck to his palm and so he visited many holy and religious places as a part of repentance but the forehead of Brahma could not be dropped, and at last he reached a hermitage on the bank of the river Prachi in the Arka Tirtha. The ladies of the hermitage were attracted by Siva's personality and charming. When the sages of the hermitage came to know this, they cursed Shiva and made him an elephant. Parvati became worried after knowing all this and she came to this place in the guise of a milk women. Every day the ladies of the hermitage procured milk etc from her. Once the sages became engrossed by

her youth and beauty and asked her identity. She narrated the whole matters at which the sages immediately cured Shiva from the curse and requested both Shiva and Parvati to make this place a holy one. There after the God made this place sacred and ordered that who would practice penance they would become free of all his sins.¹⁷

15. Amuniakana Matha (Ahnuria Matha) at Niali: -

The *matha* (long. - 86° 03' 14" E.; lat. - 20° 08' 16" N.; elev. - 53 ft) is located about one km. from Niali where the river Prachi has turned north. According to local traditions, it was the Ashramas of various *Rishis* who were practicing penance in this *matha* on the bank of the river Prachi¹⁸

16. Siddha Matha-Niali:

There are no traces of this *matha* now. But this *matha* was once located near Niali at the confluence of the Prachi and Chandramati, another branch of the Prachi.¹⁹

17. Kusababa Matha at Bagalagarh:

The *matha* is located on the left bank of the river Prachi in the village Bagalagarh under Niali *tehsil* of Cuttack district.

18. Musibaba Matha at Sahanajpur:

Musibaba *matha* in the village Sahanajpur near Jallarpur is located on the left bank of the river Prachi and under Niali *tehsil* of Cuttack district.

19. Dash Matha at Tolagopinathapur:

Located on the left bank of the river Prachi, the Dash *matha* in the village Tolagopinathapur on S.H.-60 is coming under the Niali *tehsil* of Cuttack district.

20. Chandrasekhara Matha at Madhava:

Chandrasekhara *matha* is located in the village Madhava of Niali *tehsil* of Cuttack district and located on the left bank of the river Prachi.

21. Taila Matha at Taila:

The Taila *matha* (long. - 86°05'55" E.; lat. - 20°04'59" N.; elev. – 25 ft) is situated in the village Taila near the Primary school which comes under the Madhava Panchayat of Niali *tehsil* of Cuttack district and located on the right bank of the river Prachi. It is about 2.5 km from the famous Madhava temple of Madhava and 4 km from Panimal Chowk on S.H.-60. It can be approached 1.5 km on the left side of Nageswar Chowk on Charichhaka-Madhava road.

The *matha* made of tile house within a garden, facing to east is in a dilapidated condition that houses an image of Gopala over a small wooden pedestal locally known as *khatuli*. Presently Babaji Bhagawan Das is supervising this *matha*. Rituals like *janmastami*, *bhagabata patha* etc are performed here.

22. Siddha Matha at Pradhan Sahi:

The Siddha *matha* (long. - 86°05'53" E.; lat. - 20°04'58" N.; elev. – 23 ft) is situated in the Pradhan Sahi village of Madhava Panchayat of Niali block of Cuttack district and located on the right bank of the river Prachi. It is at a distance of 3.5 km from the Madhava temple of Madhava, 1 km from Taila *matha* and 5 km from Panimal Chowk on S.H.-60. It can be approached 2.5 km on the left side of Nageswar Chowk on Charichhaka-Madhava road.

The *matha* amidst a fruit bearing garden, facing to east is made of R.C.C. building with a *pidha* shrine in the western end and fronted by a

detached *yajnasala mandapa*. Inside the sanctum (**Plate-5**) Lord Jagannath, brass idols of Lord Krishna as *Vanshidhari* along with Radha and an image of the Mahanta Baba Siddheswar Das is being worshipped. Religious and cultural rites such as *ashtaprahari*, *bhagabata saptaha*, *ramnabami*, *janmastami* etc are performed here. The *matha* is presently under the *mahantaship* of Baba Krishna Chandra Das and due to proper care and maintenance the *matha* is in good state of preservation.

23. Nagarusi Matha at Nagesvara:

The Nagarusi *matha* adjoining the Anganwadi centre in the village Nagesvara (long. - 86°05'58" E.; lat. - 20°04'54" N.; elev. – 28 ft) is situated under Madhava Panchayat of Niali *tehsil* in Cuttack district and located on the left bank of the river Prachi. It is about 1 km from Madhava temple and on the left side of Madhava-Charichhaka road.

Baba Sudhakara Das is presently managing over the *matha*. Inside the *matha* complex a garden, an ancient brick well, two-room residential house of tile roof, a *yajnavedi* and the open-air *Nagarusi-gadi* where a pair of wooden footwear (*Kathau*) is being worshipped. *Maghasaptami*, *ashtaprahari*, etc are celebrated here.

24. Sadababaji Matha at Sialikanta:

Located on the left bank of a dried channel of river Prachi, the *matha* is situated in the village Sialikanta of Madhava Panchayat of Niali *tehsil* in Cuttack district. It is about 3 km from the village Madhava and on the left side of the Madhava-Charichhaka road. The *matha* is made of thatched house and the *Apujachakra* made of wood, facing to west under a thatched

house is worshipped. The *matha* belongs to Mahima cult and believed in the sun worship and the *sunya* (void).

25. Hadiakanda Matha at Masuridiha of Nuapitapada:

The Hadiakanda *matha* (long. - 86° 06'47" E.; lat. - 20°04'17" N.; elev. – 43 ft) in the hamlet Masuridiha of Nuapitapada village is situated under Krushnaprasad Panchayat of Niali block in Cuttack district and located on the right bank of the river Prachi. It can be approached about 4 km south-east of Panimal Chowk on Niali-Madhava road (S.H-60) and 2.5 km south-east of Madhava temple.

The *matha* belongs to *Gaudiya* sect and presently Tanulata Devi is managing the *matha* after her husband's death. The presiding deity *Vanshidhari* Krishna with Radha and Gopalji, all made in brass are kept over a pedestal under the east facing tile roof shrine amidst the fruit and flower bearing garden. Rituals like *janmastami*, *radhastami*, *devasnana*, *magha saptami* etc are observed here.

26. Uttarayani Matha at Pitapada:

The Uttarayani *matha* (long. - 86°06'49" E.; lat. - 20°04'19" N.; elev. – 46 ft) in the village Pitapada under Krushnaprasad Panchayat of Niali block in Cuttack district is located on the left bank of the river Prachi near the Karna *tirtha*. It is about 60 km from the capital city Bhubaneswar, 4 km from Charichhaka and it can be approached about 4 km south-east of Panimal Chowk on Niali-Madhava road (S.H-60).

The *matha* is built over an earlier ruin as evident from the scattered brick fragments. The *matha* derived its name according to the deity Uttarayani *thakurani* who faces to the north.

Besides, a modern east facing, *pancharatha pidha* shrine with *panchangabada* and five-tier *pidha* roof houses the images of Lord Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra; *Vanshidhari* Krishna; Krishna and Radha in the sanctum while the Garuda pillar is in the centre of the frontal R.C.C. *mandapa*.

A tradition relates that it was the *Sadhana pitha* of Balaram Das, one of the *Panchasakha* who got blessed from the Uttarayani *thakurani* here. Another tradition²⁰ is that river Prachi in this place was known as Anga *tirtha* as well as Pitru *tirtha*, where ritual rites pertaining to the '*pindodaka-kriya*' are performed. People after taking dip in this sacred *tirtha*, not only worship the image of Krishna in the Uttarayani *matha* but also the Angesvara Siva. The *matha* belongs to the Gauranga sect and presently Mahanta Govinda Das is presiding over this *matha*. Religious and cultural significance of this *matha* is that *Triveni Amabasya*, *Ashtaprahri* during Holi, *chandipatha* in every Thursday, *janmastami*, *radhastami* etc are celebrated here. The *matha* is not protected by any agency but managed by its own funding. Due to proper care and maintenance the *matha* is in a good state of preservation.

27. Balitubi Matha at Nachhigaon:

Balitubi *matha* in the village Nachhigaon of Cuttack district is located on the left bank of the river Prachi.

28. Ratnavata at Sanhuli:

Ratnavata in the village Sanhuli is situated in the Tulasipur Panchayat of Nimapada *tehsil* of Puri district. It is about 1 km from Tulasipur on Charichhaka-Kakatapur road.

Under a big banyan tree a R.C.C. shrine fronted by a thatched house facing to east, houses

the images of four-armed Trivikrama; a *Shivalinga* within a *yonipitha*; an image of Avalokitesvara Padmapani treated as goddess Laxmi, *deulacharini* treated as *Gramadevati*, all are made of sandstone is being worshipped. Besides, detached loose sculptures of four-armed Chamunda, Hanumana, Ganesha, Garuda, Nandi and an architectural fragment in which a *pidhamundi* flanked by *nayika* figures are kept in the premises.

Rituals like *bhagabatapatha* in *Buddhapurnima*, Hari-Hara *bheta* in *dolapurnima* in which the *chalanti pratima* of Amaresvara, Vandesvara, Chhanijangha and Madhava visit here. Presently Rajendra Satapathy is the priest of this shrine and according to him the tradition relates that Ratnavata was established by a *Sadhu* in long past and the disease of night blindness is cured after paying visit to this place.

29. Ananta Bata at Bhainchigoradi:

Ananta Bata in the village Bhainchigoradi near Amaresvara is in Puri district and located on the right bank of the river Prachi

30. Belavana Gadi Matha at Kesaraipur:

Belavana Gadi *matha* in the village Kesaraipur near Vandesvara is located on the right bank of the river Prachi and under Tulasipur Panchayat of Nimapada *tehsil* of Puri district. It is located at a distance of 5 km from Charichhaka on SH.-60.

31. Gurudeva Matha at Vandesvara:

The Gurudeva *matha*²¹ is situated on the right bank of the river Prachi near the Shiva temple Baba Vandesvara in the village of Vandesvara under Tulasipur Panchayat of Nimapada *tehsil* of Puri district. It is located at a distance of 5 km

from Charichhaka on SH.-60. Inside a modern R.C.C. *mandapa* the image of Jagannatha kept over a pedestal is being worshipped as Gurudeva. Rituals like *devasnana*, car festival, *netrautsava*, etc are celebrated here. Presently Kailasha Pani is the chief priest of the *matha*.

32. Gotirtha Matanga Muni Ashrama at Kantikula:

Gotirtha Matanga Muni Ashrama in the village Kantikula is situated in the Binishpur Panchayat of Niali *tehsil* of Cuttack district. It is located on the left bank of the Prachi and about 2 km on the left side of Binishpur High School Chowk on Amaresvara-Chaurasi road and very close to the Kutamchandi shrine. Inside a R.C.C. shrine the image of Rishi Matanga is being worshipped. Tradition²² related that Rishi Matanga once fell in love with Urvasi and spent his time in merry-making in this hermitage. One day he went out for collecting *puja* materials and in the mean time two hunters came there and quarreled with each other for the possession of this hermitage and ultimately they killed each other. After his return the sage Matanga, having seen this destruction of his hermitage, became furious and cursed Urvasi to become a stone and subsequently Urvasi was converted to a stone. Still there is a long stone lying at Go-Tirtha which is locally known as the '*Urvasi Sila*.'

33. Draupadi Matha at Kantikula:

The Draupadi *matha*, very close to the Kutamchandi shrine in the village Kantikula is situated under the Binishpur Panchayat of Niali *tehsil* of Cuttack district. It is located on the left bank of the river Prachi and can be approached about 2 km on the left side of Binishpur High School Chowk on Amaresvara-Chaurasi road. Inside a R.C.C. shrine facing to east, the images

of Lord Krishna as *Vanshidhari* with Radha and Raghunath Jew, made of brass are being worshipped.

34. Ekanta Ashrama at Charichhaka:

Ekanta Ashrama in Charichhaka is located on the right bank of the river Prachi and in the Nimapada Tehsil of Puri district.

35. Khiragachha Matha at Amaraprasadagada:

Khiragachha *matha* is situated in the village Amaraprasadagada under Tulasipur Panchayat of Nimapada *tehsil* in Puri district.

36. Gopala Matha at Kudapatana near Binishpur:

The Gopala *matha* is situated in the village Kudapatna near Binishpur on the left side of the Charichhaka-Kakatapur road and located on the left bank of the river Prachi. Inside a renovated *pidha* shrine an image of Vishnu is worshipped as Gopala.²³

37. Agikhia Matha at Sohagpur:

Located on the left bank of the river Prachi, the Agikhia *matha* (**Plate-6**) in the village Sohagpur comes under the Kakatapur police station of Puri district. It is about 3 km from Nuahata on Charichhaka-Kakatapur road. Inside the *matha* a modern eastern facing *pidha* temple fronted by a *jagamohana* of impoverished *kalingan* order is built. The presiding deity in the sanctum is Lord Jagannatha made of neem wood and the brass images of Lord Krishna with Radha. Rituals related to Jagannatha such as *snanapurnima*, car festival, *netrautsava* along with *janmastami*, *radhastami* etc are celebrated here. Presently Baba Purna Chandra Das is the chief priest of the *matha*.

38. Prachiguru Dharmakshetra Matha at Narasinghpur:

Prachiguru Dharmakshetra *matha* in the village Narasinghpur under Dhumala Panchayat of Kakatapur *tehsil* of Puri district is located on the right bank of the river Prachi. It is about 1 km from Nuahata on Charichhaka- Kakatapur road.

39. Madana Mohana Matha at Nuapatana:

Madana Mohana *matha* is located on the right bank of the river Prachi in the village Nuapatana under Kakatapur police station of Puri district. It is at a distance of 2 km from Nuahata on Charichhaka- Kakatapur road.

40. Madhubana Gadi Matha at Madhuban:

Madhubana Gadi *matha* in Madhubana village is under Kakatapur *tehsil* of Puri district and located on the right bank of the river Prachi. It is situated on the right side of Charichhaka-Kakatapur road.

41. Viswamitra Matha at Kakatapur:

The Viswamitra *matha* is situated in Kakatapur of Puri district and located on the left bank of the river Prachi. In a recently built modern temple the images of Varaha Vishnu, Trivikrama Vishnu along with Lord Jagannatha are collectively worshipped as Patitapavana²⁴.

42. Rohana Matha at Bolara:

The Rohana *matha* is situated in the village Bolara under Kakatapur *tehsil* of Puri district and located on the left bank of the river Prachi.²⁵

43. Deuli Matha at Bajapur:

The Deuli *matha* is located on the right bank of the river Prachi²⁶ in the village Bajapur under

Kakatpur *tehsil* of Puri district and about 3 km from Chakia *matha* of Kundhei.

44. Chakia Matha at Kundhei near Kakatapur:

The Chakia *matha* is located on the right bank of the river Prachi²⁷ in the village Kundhei under Kakatpur *tehsil* of Puri district. An image of Lord Jagannatha is worshipped as Patitapavana.

45. Vanta Matha at Vantu near Kakatapur:

The Vanta *matha*²⁸ is located on the right bank of the river Prachi in the village Vantu under Kakatapur *tehsil* of Puri district.

46. Dadhichi Ashrama at Mudugala:

Dadhichi Ashrama in the village Mudugala is under Kakatapur *tehsil* of Puri district and located on the left bank of the river Prachi. It is at a distance of 7 km from Astaranga.

47. Kalaboda Gadi at Otanga:

Kalaboda Gadi is situated in the village Otanga near Palichhak in Puri district.

48. Balarama Dasa Gadi at Erabang:

Balarama Dasa Gadi (**Plate-7**) in the village Erabang (long. - 86°02'29" E.; lat. - 19°58'01" N.; elev. - 25 ft) is located on the right bank of the Kadua, a distributary of the river Prachi and situated under Konark *tehsil* of Puri district. It can be approached about 1 km on the left side of Begunia Chowk on Bhubaneswar-Konark road and at a distance of 3 km from Gop.

Inside the *matha* a *pidha* temple of impoverished *kalingan* order, facing to east, consists of a square *vimana*, a rectangular *jagamohana*, a R.C.C *mandapa* and a detached

snanamandapa on the north-eastern side. The temple measures 22.30 m x 5.60 m x 6.80 m in length, width and approximate height respectively. The *pidha vimana* and *jagamohana* of the temple has seven and four tier *pidha* respectively and finally the *mastaka* on the top.

The dimensions of the individual components of the temple such as *vimana* externally measures 5.45 m (l) x 5.60 m (w), internally 2.95 sq. m; the plain doorjambs 1.67 m (h) x 0.16 m (w); lintel- 1.02 m (l) x 0.20 m (h); *navagraha* panel- 2.05 m (l) x 0.33 m (h); on elevation the *bada* is 2.00 m in height. The *ganthiala* is 35 cm in length.

The *jagamohana* externally measures 4.10 m (l) x 5.60 m (w), internally 2.75 m (l) x 4.25 m (w); two entrances, one on the northern and the other in the eastern side in which the latter is 1.56 m (h) x 0.77 m (w) and the *bada* is 1.80 m in height. The RCC *mandapa* is 12.40 m (l) x 5.60 m (w) x 2.20 m (h) and the detached *snanamandapa* is 5.00 m (l) x 3.50 m (w) x 1.50 m (h).

The compound wall measures 38.90 m x 35.70 m x 2.00 m x 0.60 m in length, breadth, height and thickness respectively while the lion gateway *mandapa* on the eastern side flanked by two rooms one on each side measures 4.55 (l) x 3.20 m (w).

The temple is devoid of any decoration except the *dopichhasimhas* and *deulacharinis* over the *beki* of the *vimana* and the frontal wall of the lion's gateway is decorated with mythical animals, peacocks and *nayikas* figures. While in the interior stucco images of *dvarapalas* Jaya and Vijaya on the sides of the *vimana* entrance, flower motif in the *lalatabimba*, Brahma and Kali on the walls of the *jagamohana* is depicted and the sixteen-sided Garuda pillar of 1.00 m in height is

noticed in the centre of the *jagamohana* where the image of Garuda is in *anjalinudra* facing to the sanctum.

Inside the sanctum the presiding deities are the images of Lord Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra made of neem wood with a *pravabali* of black chlorite stone of 75 cm in height in the back. The other deities are Sudarsana, Narasimha, Madana Mohana, Dolagovinda, Laxmi and Sarasvati made of brass which is placed over a moulded stone pedestal measuring 2.40 m (l) x 1.45 m (w) x 1.00 m (h). Tradition ascribed that the temple was built by Balaram Das, one of the *panchasakha* poet who used to go to Puri everyday to worship Lord Jagannatha. Once the Lord in a dream directed him to take his *Chalanti Pratima* and installed it in the present temple for worship. Rituals such as *jhulanajatra*, *chandanajatra*, *janmastami*, *kartikapurnima*, *netrautsava*, *rakhipurnima*, etc are observed here. Earlier the Nebala Das *matha* of Puri maintained this temple but presently the village temple committee under the presidentship of Parsu Das is managing this temple and the *matha*. Due to proper care and maintenance the temple is in a good state of preservation.

49. Ananta Abadhuta Matha at Konark:

Ananta Abadhuta *matha* (long. - 86° 05' 37" E.; lat. - 19° 53' 15" N.; elev. - 16 ft) is located on the right side of the grand Sun temple of Konarka in Puri district. Traditions relate that the *matha* was established by the time of Kasypa Risi. However, the *matha* has been dated to the 18th century AD.²⁹ The presiding deity inside the *matha* is two-armed standing Surya image holding lotus in his both hands along with two *Chalanti Pratima*. Besides, the image of Brahma, Vishnu and of Aruna are also kept there. Presently

the *matha* is under the *Mahanta* Abadhuta Aditya Charana Das. Inside the *matha* premise there are many burials or *samadhi* of the previous *mahantas* and a *dhunighara* in which a continuous burning flame within a square hearth made of laterite is kept since the establishment of the *matha*.

50. Buddhist Monastery at Kuruma:

The excavated Buddhist monastery lies in the village Kuruma³⁰ within long. -86° 07' 24" E., lat. -19° 53' 62" N., elev. -25 ft under Konark *tehsil* of Puri district, located on the left bank of the river Kadua, a branch of the river Prachi. It can be approached at a distance of 2 km on the left side of Bali Dokan Chowk on the Konark-Kakatpur road and is about 6 km from Konark. Earlier the site including the village was called as Kuruma. When the villagers found the image of Heruka who stands on a buffalo and also carrying a noose in one hand mistakenly identified it as the death god Yama. Thereafter, the village came to be known as Yamadharm/Jamadharm.

The site was first noticed and reported by Brajabandhu Das, a local school teacher in 1960, when he along with the students of Kuruma UP School came to the present site for a picnic on Saraswati Puja occasion. During digging to make a hearth a stone slab measuring 22.5 x 15 x 7.5 cm in dimension containing 3 line of inscription in *Devanagari* script was found from the mound. Much earlier to this incident the villagers have collected two Buddhist images in front of the mound and particularly on the adjoining Dhatum Pokhari (tank). Both incidents made the teacher Brajabandhu Das more curious to collect more findings from the mound during the rainy season. Then he reported the matter to the Odisha State Archaeology Department. After regular request and the visit of Dr. Debala Mitra,

the then SA of Eastern Circle, Archaeological Survey of India, the Odisha State Archaeology conducted excavation at the site from 1971 to 1975 AD.

The excavation exposed a brick-built monastery and on the basis of the antiquities and sculptures unearthed from the excavation the site can be dated to the 10th century A.D. i.e. the Somavamsi period. Now the monastery has been conserved and protected by Odisha State Archaeology. The images carved out in sandstone retrieved from the site are now kept in a sculpture shed on the north-west corner of the monastery and has been worshipped by the local people. Every year on May 21 and 22, *Buddha Purnima Mahotsava* has been celebrated in the site.

The exposed monastic complex (**Plate-8**) oriented east to west is square on plan, measuring 29 m on each side; consists of twelve cells, three in each cardinal direction and a large courtyard of 6.80 x 6.80 m in the centre. A passage of 2.68 m in width is provided in between the cells and the courtyard. The courtyard has a sandstone basement and brick walls raised on its edge to support the load of the extended roof of the cells and the passage. That's why the concept of pillared verandah is absent here. However, the cells inside the monastery were rectangular on plan. The numbering of the cells from 1 to 12 has been done from the north-west corner clockwise and internally measures 4.00 x 3.31 m; 4.05 x 3.30 m; 3.77 x 3.29 m; 3.86 x 3.30 m; 4.12 x 3.37 m; 3.27 x 3.23 m; 4.20 x 3.25 m; 4.17 x 3.30 m; 3.92 x 3.32 m; 3.80 x 3.33 m; 3.63 x 3.30 m and 3.87 x 3.30 m respectively. The inner wall of the cells contains some niches. Burnt-bricks (36 x 24 x 8 cm) are mostly used in English bond technique for constructional purpose except the central courtyard which is made of khondolite stone. The thickness of the exterior wall measures 2.50 m and the existing height is 2.10 m.

The images kept in the sculpture-shed are - Buddha in *bhumisparsamudra* (2.30 x 1.04 x 0.55 m); Heruka- (1.42 x 0.60 x 0.27 m); Avalokitesvara (0.58 x 0.39 x 0.18 m) and an image of Trivikrama.

From the aforesaid discussion it is evident that nearly 50 *mathas* existed in the Prachi valley and its hinterland. Most of the *mathas* belong to the *Gaudiya* sect of Vaisnavism, where various forms of Vishnu as *Vanshidhari* Krishna with Radha, Trivikrama, Narasimha, Jagannatha etc are being worshipped. The Saura as in Niali and Konark as well as the Mahima cult in Sialikanta and also the Buddhist monastery at Kuruma existed in the valley. Almost all the *mathas* has its own landed property and the garden and managed by its own funding. In some instances the village committees are managing the affairs of the *mathas* like-Balaramgadi at Erabang and Ratnavata of Sanahuli. At present not a single *matha* is protected by any agency either Endowment Commission or State Archaeology except the Tirumali *matha* of Kendu Vilva and the excavated Buddhist monastery at Kuruma which is under the protection of the latter. Besides, the study reveals two types of house pattern of the *mathas*. In the first category, most of the *mathas* retain the old age thatched house while in the second category, most of the *mathas* converted the old fashion in to the RCC buildings and the factor lies in the funding. From architectural point of view the Radhakanta *matha* of Nuagaon is most impressive and stood in top among the other *mathas* of the valley. On socio-religious performance the Antervedi *matha* gets the esteem position in the valley while few *mathas* like Dropadi *matha* in Kantikula village lose its importance and the presiding deity limit to a house-hold deity.

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