



Impact of Tantrism in the Worship of Some Prominent Odishan Goddesses

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The devotees of Odisha have a close connection with the mother Goddesses. They do so whenever they start to do any work. They pray to the mother Goddesses and surrender themselves entirely at the lotus feet of the deities. A lot of mother Goddesses are worshipped in different parts of Odisha in the principles of the *pancamakara* systems of the Tantra Sastra.

In worship of specific deities selected Mudras and Mandalas are used. Different kinds of flowers, green grass (Durva) Akshata (unboiled rice), holy cow dung and soil, holy water, Kusa grass, specific foods, vegetables and dishes etc. are indispensable for the worship of specific goddesses. In order to have a clear notion one may have a close look at the worship of the some prominent goddesses of Odisha.

Worship of Mangala

The goddess Mangala of Kakatapur is accepted as the Paramavaisnavi. Both cooked and dry foods are offered as

bhoga. Among the festivals, Vasantipuja and Jhamuyatra are very important. Vasantipuja is celebrated for three days from Saptami to Navami in the bright fortnight of Caitra. A six-time offering of bhoga is also in practice as is in other temples of Odisha. It is accepted that the worship of goddess Mangala is influenced by the Tantric method of worship.

Worship of Samalesvari

The mother Samalesvari of Sambalpur was a tribal goddess. Parsvadevata of Samaleswari is called Pitavali which is a goddess of Khond. People of Sabara caste are worshipping Samalesvari in the Sambalpur district. Though the buffaloes were sacrificed before the deity now it is not practice.



She is worshipped with both cooked and dry offerings in four times daily. Akshayatruitiya, Savitri vrata, Janmastami, Navanna, Durgapuja, Dipavali, Sripanchami, Dolapurnima, Vasanti Puja are the very



important festivals of Samalesvari. During the Durgapuja, the goddess Samalesvari is being dressed to display Her different aspects. The leopard dress is quite interesting. There is a story behind this leopard dress. It says that one day the actual worshipper had to go to some distant place and hence he engaged his little daughter to offer flowers etc. to the goddess. Accordingly his daughter tried to do so but the goddess was not happy with the mode of worship and being dissatisfied took the form of a leopard and devoured the girl. The priest came and saw that his daughter was devoured by the goddess. He threw the plate at Her face and it was stuck there as a result of which, the face of the deity was turned to one side.¹ The forms of Samalesvari are being worshipped by “Pentia” Khonds of Koraput in different places on the occasion of Nuakhai or Navanna.

Worship of Bhattarika

The mother goddess Bhattarika is worshipped with *tantric* rites. So fried fishes are regularly offered. The fisherman who has to supply fish everyday is enjoying landed property. There are two groups of Sevayats (priests). Mali Sevayats are engaged mostly in the daily rituals of goddess. But in certain special occasions the other group i.e. the Brahmins are engaged like other Pithas. Both dry and cooked foods (bhoga) are offered to the goddess. Among the main festivals Akshayatrutiya, Durgapuja and Mahavisuvasamkranti are important. The sixteen day Puja was organised in the Pitha, but now only Mahastami is observed. During the occasion the Kalesi (a man through whose body Devi uses to appear) enters into a cave known as Solagambhira of the nearby hill and disappears for sometimes.

Worship of Carcika

The image is worshipped with Vanadurga-Mantra. The daily rituals start from the early morning to 10 P.M. at night and various foods (bhoga) are offered six times daily.



The daily worship is done by the Sevayatas, known as Mali Mahapatras. But for special worship like Durgapuja the Vedic Brahmins of the Rajguru family are invited. The Rajagurus are the chief priests of goddess Carcika and enjoy landed properties for the duty.² Besides Durgapuja the Jhamuyatra is a very famous festival which is observed in the day of Mahavisuvasamkranti. The participants of Jhamu decorate themselves as woman and walk on the red-hot fire. This is surely a sign of prevalence of tantric system. Other festivals – viz. Dola-Purnima, Citalagi Amavasya. Chandanayatra, Vasanti-Durgapuja in the month of Caitra. Janmastami, Prathamastami, Vakula Amavasya, Kumar Purnima are celebrated in the temple of Carcika.

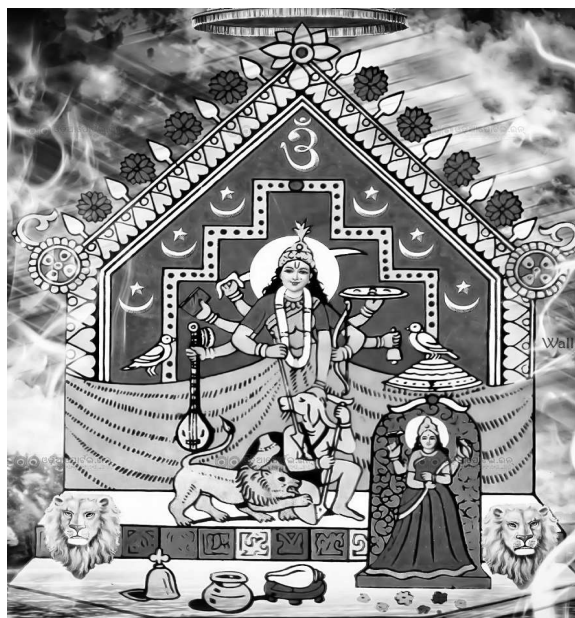


Worship of the goddess Bhagavati

Goddess Bhagavati of Banapur is worshipped with Vanadurga Mantra and the Vijamantra is Hrim. In every Tuesday the Kathi of Bhagavati comes to Her temple from the Daksesvara temple to take non-veg offering. Yupa is seen inside the small temple of palakasuni which was used for animal sacrifice. The sixteen-day-worship of Durga is celebrated each year as is done in other Pithas. The system of Balijena, is something interesting in this temple. A man having the title Balijena comes every year in the night of Mahanavami during the Durgapuja ceremony and goes to sleep – unconscious inside the closed temple of Bhagabati. Again in the morning he wakes up and goes to his own house where his wife becomes a widow as if her husband is sacrificed before the goddess. The Balijena enjoys about twenty acres of landed property belonging to the goddess. This bears testimony to the human sacrifice before the goddess which might have been prevalent long-years back. This peculiar *tantric* worship is hardly seen anywhere in Odisha. Different types of offerings (bhoga) including dry-food and cooked food, non-vegetarian items are given to the goddess everyday six times in morning, forenoon, noon, afternoon, evening and at the close of the door of the temple (Pahuda). Candanyatra, Sitalsasthi, Durgapuja, Dipavali, Dolayatra etc. are the noteworthy festivals observed in the temple of Goddess Bhagavati.

Worship of Sarala

The goddess Sarala of Jhankada is also worshipped in the Vanadurga *mantra*. She has been conceived as Mahasaraswati, Durga, Mahakali and Mahalaxmi in Shri Pancami, Dussehra, Sivacaturdasi and Kumar Purnami



respectively. Long years back buffalo – sacrifice was in practice.

But now this system of animal sacrifice is abolished. Only cooked food and dry-food are offered to the goddess. Regular recitation of the Candi-text is a special Characteristic of this Pitha. The daily worship is done by the Sevayata called Raula. But the recitation of Candi Patha and homa are performed by the Vedic Brahmins.

Worship of Gauri

The goddess Gauri is worshipped in Ekakshari *mantra* i.e. Hrim and She has been conceived as Parama Vaisnavi. The sixteen day Puja during the month of Asvina is being celebrated every year. Three type of offerings offered to goddess during the three times of the day i.e. morning (Sakaladhupa), noon (Dvipaharadhupa), and evening (Sandhyadhupa) or Sayamdhupa. The Sevayatas of the Samantara and Pratihari family take the charge of worship and they enjoy the landed property for their duties.



During the Durgapuja, the recitation of Devi-Mahatmya popularly known as Candi-patha is done by the Vedic Brahmins everyday.

Besides the Durga Puja the festival of Sitala-Sasthi is celebrated with much pomp. The marriage of Siva with Gouri celebrated on this occasion.

Worship of Goddess Vimala :

The image Vimala of Sriksheeta has been worshipped in Ekakshari *mantra* viz. Hrim all through the year excepting during the Solapuja in the month of Asvina. Everyday the offering (bhoga) of Jagannatha are offered three times to Vimala in order to make it Mahaprasada. The Prasada becomes Mahaprasada only when it is offered to Vimala³ with the following *mantra*.

*"Kaivalya – bhajini – Devi Vimale Vimalaprade/
Gruhnantu Hari-Kaivalyam Srustisthityanta
Karinim."*

The goddess Vimala though, worshipped as Parama-Vaisnavi, during Durgapuja the offerings fish are given. Only during these three days i.e. Mahasaptami, Mahastami and Mahanavami, the non-vegetarian offerings are brought into temple premises of Lord Jagannatha. The Tantrikas use to enter into the temple campus through the western gate, where there are images of figures serving the duties of Dvarapala. Everyday during these three days, the temple is to be cleaned with lime-water after the sacrificial ceremony (Balikrutya) is over. In the temple premises though there are other images of goddesses such rituals are observed only at the temple of Vimala. Another peculiarity in the Durga Puja festival of Vimala is the Rathayatra which is called as Sakta – Gundica in Puri. This Durga worship in the temple of Vimala was perhaps introduced by the Gajapati Kings of Odisha to in the battles.⁴

Worship of the mother Viraja

Goddess Viraja of Jajpur is worshipped with Savitri Mantra, Ekakshari Mantra and Vanadurga Mantra in variations befitting the occasion. The temple ritual is performed basing on the text Bhubaneswari – Puja – Pallava written by the Purusottam Deva.

In the month of Asvina the sixteen-day worship of Goddess Viraja is most important. It starts from Mulastami and ends on Mahanavami and the next day which is called as Vijayadasami is observed as Vijayotsava of the goddess. During this celebration the representative image of Goddess Viraja is taken in a chariot just like the chariot of Subhadra of Puri and this chariot circumambulates nine times around the temple everyday from the Pratipada to Mahanavami. It is believed that the devotee who gets the chance to see the goddess Viraja staying in the chariot, is freed from fivesins.⁵

These are the prominent tantric temples of Odisha where tantric worships have been continued from ancient times. From these discussions it is accepted that all these worships of the mother goddesses have been influenced by the tantric method of rituals.

References :

1. B. Mohanty O.D.D, Part – II, P. 151
2. B.M. Mohanty (Ed.) O.D.D , Part – 1, P. 228.
3. Odisara Samskruti. P. 114.
4. M. Mishra, Vimalanka Solapuja Paurusa, (Pujasamkhyā) 1976.'
5. Ye pasyanti Ratharudham bhramantimanbikam punah Te Pancapatakairmuktayanti tasyah svarupam B.C. Das, YVKP. P. 161.

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