



Bhairava, Urladani

Bhairava Worship in Upper Mahanadi Valley

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Bhairava
Narsinghnath

The *Nalas* were ruling the western and south-western parts of Orissa in around the 4th-5th century A.D. Their capital was Puskari, which has been identified with the present Podagad in the Umerkot tahsil area of Nawarangpur district. In two copper-plate charters of the *Nalas*, namely, Kesaribeda Plates of Arthapati¹ and the Rithapur Plates of Bhavadattavarman,² it has been mentioned in the very first line that they flourished by the blessings of Mahesvara and Mahasena (Lord Siva and his son Kartikeya) - *Mahesvara Mahasenasrustha Rajya Bivabhah*. Their names like *Vrsa* - dhvaja, (first king), *Bhava datta* denote their devotion to Lord Siva (*Bhava*). The name of another *Nala* king *Skanda* - Varman testify to their reverence to *Skanda* (Kartikeya). In their gold coins also, the figure of a couchant humped bull facing right and a crescent moon behind it are found embossed. The figure of Nandi bull, the *Vahana* of Lord Siva is very beautifully executed on these gold coins found from Edenga⁴ and Kulia.⁵ It seems that during the rule of the *Nala* kings Saivism got royal patronage. But kings of the dynasty which succeeded in the upper Mahanadi valley, i.e. the *Parvatadvarakas* seem to be the worshippers of goddess Stambhesvari (the goddess of pillar or post). Another dynasty, called the *Sarabhapuriyas* (or the kings of the

Amararyakula) who captured this region and ruled in around 5th-6th century A.D. were all *Parama Bhagavatas* (devout worshippers of Lord Visnu). The *Sarabhapuriya* power declined in around the last quarter of the 6th century A.D. when the *Panduvamsis* captured power in the upper Mahanadi valley. While the founder of this dynasty, Mahasiva Tivaradeva, his son Maha Nannaraja and Queen Regent Vasata (mother of Balarjuna) were staunch *Vaisnava* (*Parama Vaisnava*); kings like Chandraguptaraja (whose dignity was commensurated with his devotion to the Lord of Goblins - *Bhutapati* - Lord Siva)⁶ and Balarjuna were great devotees of Lord Siva. Although Queen Regent Vasata has mentioned herself as a great devotee of Lord Purusottama Nrsimha, she has mentioned herself as the 'daughter of the mountain' (Parvati) and 'the mother of him who rides the peacock' (Kartikeya) in verse - 15 of Sirpur Stone Inscription.⁷ The most powerful *Panduvamsi* king Mahasivagupta Balarjuna, the son of Harshadeva, (grand-son of Tivara's brother) who ruled for more than 58 years was a *Parama Mahesvara*. It is probable that his *Ranaka* (a governor) Durgaraksita, donated land in a village called Gudasarkaraka in favour of the god *Madanarati* (Siva). In village Kodasima he also donated land to the

Saiva ascetic Sadasivacharya, who was a spiritual successor of Sadyahsivacharya, another ascetic instrumental in conversion of the king to the Saivite faith. Sadyahsivacharya is said to have hailed from a penance grove (*Tapovana*) called Amardaka. This stone inscription (found from Senakapat) begins with the *Siddham* symbol followed by the *Mangala : Namah Sivaya*. The Verse-1 constitutes a *Mangala* in praise of the god *Bhava* (Siva) and Verse-2 of his consort, the goddess Parvati.⁸ The second part of the inscription starts with Verse-22. In the Verse-23, it has been mentioned that "the *Saiva* ascetics had to arrange for a sacrificial ceremony (*Yaga*) as well as for the initiation of people into the *Saiva* faith (*Diksa*) which is capable of securing spiritual emancipation, the exposition of the *Saiva* doctrine and the running of a free feeding establishment (*Annasya-satram*) every year during the full-moon day of *Asadha*, *Kartika* and *Magha*.⁹ In his copper-plate grants like the Bardula Plates,¹⁰ Mallar Plates,¹¹ Bonda Plates¹² and Lodhia Plates,¹³ the *Panduvamsi* king Mahasivagupta Balarjuna has been mentioned as *Parama Mahesvara*, the devout worshipper of Lord Mahesvara (Siva). Through his last Charter the Lodhia plates, he made land grant in Vaidyapadraka village to Lord *Isanesvara Bhattaraka* of Khadirapadraka village for the *vali, charu, satra, naivedya* of the Lord as well as repair of the temple dedicated to him. In this charter, the sacred feet of Sri Sulapani, the disciple of Sri Pramathachaya have been



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worshipped for increase of religious merits of his (king's) parents. Here also it is mentioned that both the Saivacharyas were hailing from *Panchayajna Tapovana* of *Dvaitavana*.¹⁴ Dr. S.N. Rajaguru has taken these Saivacharyas to be of the *Pasupata* School of Saivism.¹⁵ The royal seals attached to the charters of king Balarjuna have the emblems of bull Nandi and Trisula in front of a *Purnakumbha*.¹⁶

Most probably from the time of the *Panduvamsi* king Mahasivagupta Balarjuna (2nd half of the 8th century A.D.), Saivism was strongly entrenched in the religious arena of the upper Mahanadi valley. This trend continued unabated when his successors, known as the *Somavamsis*, shifted to Suvarnapura from Sirpur (Sripura) sometime in the first half of the 9th century A.D. They drove out either the Bhanja king Ranabhanja or his successor from that region (Baudh-Sonepur region) during the time of the *Somavamsi* king Mahabhavagupta Janmejaya, sometime around 850 A.D. It is said that during his rule Acharya Gaganasiva, a *Saivacharya* of the *Mattamayura* cult of Saivism constructed a temple of Lord Siva,¹⁷ at Ranipur Jharial which is known as Somesvara temple now. All *Somavamsi* kings were *Parama Mahesvara* (devout worshippers of Lord Siva).

The *Bhanja* kings of Khinjali Mandala, who were ousted from the Baudh-Sonepur region were great devotees of Bhairava, the

Ugra aspect of Lord Siva. Three kings of this dynasty are known from records : Sri Silabhanjadeva Angadi, Satrubhanjadeva Gandhata and Ranabhanjadeva. The last ruler had a long reign of 54 years or so. In the invocatory verse of the copper plates of Satrubhanjadeva and Ranabhanjadeva,¹⁸ Bhairava is worshipped : *Samhara Kala Hrutbhug Vikarala Ghora | Samvranta Kinkara Krutanta Nitantavinnam Vinnandhakasura Mahagahanatapatram | Tad Bhairavam Hara Vapurbhavatah Prapatu ||*

It seems probable that the *Bhanja* kings popularised the Bhairava Cult in the upper Mahanadi valley in the 8th-9th century A.D.

As evidenced from stone inscriptions, the Bhairava worship was prevalent in the upper Mahanadi valley of Orissa atleast from the 1st century A.D. The discovery of a two-lined inscription on the pedestal of a standing image of furious looking Batuka Bhairava at Junagad in the Kalahandi district by this scholar in April, 1983 throws new light on the cult of Bhairava. It is somewhat astounding that Pandit Satya Narayan Rajaguru has deciphered this inscription to be written in the *Pali Prakrit* in around 1st century A.D.¹⁹ On the broken pedestal of another Bhairava image of around six feet in height, found in the Banka Paik Pada of Junagad town, the last letter of an inscription 'Ra' is seen to be engraved. Such 'Ra' alphabet was used during the period from the 4th to 8th century.²⁰ Another short stone inscription of the 8th century A.D., found in the Dhavalesvara Siva temple at Mohangiri, also in the Kalahandi district, has been deciphered as *Vyuha Bhairava* by Pandit S.N. Rajaguru.²¹ In the proper right base of the doorjamb of the *Garbhagrha* of this Siva temple, a dancing Bhairava figure is carved as *Dvarapala*,

whereas in the left side is a Saivite figure standing in *Samabhanga* and holding a long staff (*Danda*). As in another loose panel of this temple a seated figure of Lakulisa, the great *Pasupata* teacher is carved alongwith one of his disciple; at Mohangiri, we find the Bhairava Cult (mostly of *Kapalika* sect) accommodating the *Pasupata* sect of Saivism also. As known from the copper-plate grants of the *Bhanja* king Ranabhanjadeva, he has invoked the grace of Bhairava and at the same time claims to have been blessed by the Divine Mother Stambhesvari (*Stambhesvari Lavdha Vara Prasada*).²² Like the cult of Bhairava, Stambhesvari worship was also popular in the upper Mahanadi valley, as known from the Teresingha copper-plate grant of Maharaja Tustikara of the *Parvatadvaraka* dynasty.²³

Learned scholar Dr. L.K. Panda is of the view that the Bhairava Cult became popular in Orissa from the 8th century onwards.²⁴ But it is not so, as we find Bhairava image belonging to the 1st century A.D. at Junagad. This image of Bhairava in the Batuka Bhairava form is stark naked, his *Linga* and *Kosa* seen to be hanging downwards, four-handed, holding a long *Trisula* in his lower right hand, the bottom portion of it resting near his right foot. The eyes of this image is round, having an uncanny look with side-tusks coming out from both corners of his mouth. This figure has very long ears, flat nose and a big garland of skulls apart from a small necklace hanging around his neck. His *Jatas* are forming a *Mandala* in the shape of a flat *Mukuta*. It is of the height of three feet and is carved on a square pedestal where the two-lined inscription in *Pali Prakrit* occurs. Besides this Bhairava image, there are two more Bhairava images of smaller sizes in the same site, called '*Bhainrogudi*', which is situated in the back-side of the

Panchayat Samittee Office of Junagad. One image is of the height of around 16", four-handed, both the lower hands in hanging position and seen to be holding a *Trisula* and a *Kapala* (skull-cup) in his upper right and left hands. One beast (dog ?) is seated near his left foot. The other image of Bhairava is also a four-handed standing figure of the height of around 30", seen to be adorned with ornaments like stripes of necklaces (*Haras*) around his neck, waist-band, bracelets and *Makara Kundalas* and seen wearing a loin cloth upto his knees. He is holding a sword (*Khadga*) in his upper left hand and a *Trisula* in his lower right hand, remaining two hands being mutilated. Side-tusks are also seen coming out from both corners of his lips. This figure can be taken as that of Svarnakarsana Bhairava, whose appearance suggests 'Perfect happiness coupled with masterful authoritativeness.' In another place of Junagad town, called



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Banka Paik Pada, this author saw a Bhairava image of around six feet high. Bhairava is standing in *Samabhanga* and is fierce-looking. A conical *Mukuta* (cap-type) is adorning his head. He is *Urdhvalinga*. A *Sula* and a *Kapala* are in his up-raised left and right back hands respectively, while the front right hand is in *Katyavalambita*. In his front left hand, which is hanging up to his thigh-level, he is holding a *Kamandalu*. Something like a long snake is going around his entire body upto the knee-level and also coiled in his left hand. A devotee is standing on the pedestal beside his

right leg. The conical cap-type *Mukuta* on the head of this Bhairava image is exactly similar to the *Mukuta* of Lord Mahesvara of the Uma-Mahesvara image found at Podagad in the neighbouring Nawarangpur district. This image can be dated to the 5th-6th century A.D. An exactly similar huge Bhairava image of the same height is lying flat on the ground at

Belkhandi, also in Kalahandi district, amidst sculptures unearthed during excavations by the-then Kalahandi Durbar Administration in 1946 under the supervision of the State Archaeologist Mr. Kedar Nath Mahapatra. In the opinion of this scholar this Bhairava image of Belkhandi was the central deity and was worshipped along-with the *Saptamatrkas* in the remote past. This image is also fierce-looking and four-armed, seen to be holding a short trident (*Sula*) and a *Dambaru* in his upper left and right hands respectively. A skull-cup (*Kapala*) is in his lower left

hand, while the lower right hand is in *Varadamudra*. This figure of Bhairava is standing in *Dvibhanga* posture, being flanked by two devotees on the pedestal. Very peculiarly enough, in both the Uma Mahesvara images of Belkhandi, Lord Mahesvara is *Urdhvalinga* like in the cases of Bhairava images of the upper Mahanadi valley. In another site, called Sankushgad, which is not far off from Belkhandi, a terrifying image of Bhairava of the height of around four feet, standing in *Samabhanga* posture is worshipped as the central deity of a temple. His eyes are

round as well as burning and; he is *Urdhvalinga*. Here in this image, the Lord is seen wearing *Patra Kundalas* in his ears, while a *Karanda Mukuta* is adorning his head. The *Prabha Mandala* is semi-oval in shape and has lotus-petal designs in a repeated course. It is a four-handed figure of Bhairava, and objects in the upper and lower right hands are *Dambaru* and *Aksamala*, while in the upper left hand is a *Khakhara* (alarm staff). The lower left hand is broken from elbow portion. In the top-corners of the back-slab, flying *Vidyadhara* couple are depicted with garland in hands, female in the right and male in the left side respectively. The right side of the slab is carved from top to bottom portions with figures of dancing males (*Sivaganas*). A female devotee is standing in *Dvibhanga* posture just below these *Sivaganas* in the right side of the Lord. Her left hand is in the *Katyavalambita* posture, while in her raised right hand she is holding a *Chauri* (fly-whisk). Another standing female with a lotus-stem in her right hand and left hand in *Katyavalambita* is standing beside the other lady. Two more female attendants of bigger sizes, of the height of about one foot each, standing in *Dvibhanga* posture are depicted in both sides of Lord. They have in each case, *Chauri* in one hand and the other hand in *Katyavalambita*. In the extreme left side of the pedestal, there is the crouching figure of the bull Nandi, the *Vahana* of the Lord. It is looking up at the Lord with raised head, what is described in *Matsya Purana* as *Devaviksanatatparah*. In the central portion of the pedestal, two smaller front-faced figures of a couple are carved, while in the right side, one profiled female figure in kneeled down position and both her hands folded in obeisance (*Anjalimudra*) is carved. To the extreme right side of the pedestal, there is the seated figure

of a front-faced and pot-bellied *Yaksa*. A broken Uma Mahesvara image (up-waist existing) is also found at Sankushgad. As the sculptures of Sankushgad are strikingly similar in workmanship with of Mohangiri images, those can be safely dated to the 7th-8th century A.D.²⁴ Another Bhairava image of the height of around three feet, standing in the *Samabhanga* posture and very much akeen to the Bhairava image of Sankushgad has been enshrined in a temple by the ex-Zamindar of Lanjigad, being shifted from Topigaon. Flying *Vidyadhara* couple with garland in hands are carved on both top-corners of the back slab. Three female devotees, seated in kneeled down position and *Anjalimudra* are carved in both sides of the side slab, numbering six devotees in total. This image is worshipped as Agni Bhairava.

At a distance of around 5km from Titilagarh town of Balangir district there is a hillock called '*Bhainro Pahad*' near Ghudar village, where Ekapada Bhairava has been carved on a huge monolithic rock. To the proper right of this rock-cut sculpture there are two more rock-cut panels, the lower panel depicting a fighting scene of Kali or Yogesvari with one *Asura* and seated figures of *Matrkas* Vaisnavi and Mahesvari. To the left of this rock, on another rock, rock-cut figures of *Matrka* Varahi, dancing Chamunda and Ganesa are carved. Just above the Ekapada Bhairava rock, to the extreme north of the hillock, on another monolithic rock lotus-rosette motif (*Asthadalapadma*) and a pair of foot prints are carved. In between the rock having the square *Yantra* symbols bearing footprints and the rock with Ekapada Bhairava, Andhakasura Vadha and *Matrkas* figures, on another rock are carved figure of four-handed Bhairava seated in *Utkutikasana* with *Yogapatta* tied around

his thighs and the *Vahana* dog running nearby. Scholar L.K. Panda has rightly observed that the representation of a circle having foot-print of the *Saivacharya* was very common to the *tantrika* school.

To the north-west of the Ghudar village, there is a monolithic rocky elevation of about eight feet in height and thirty feet in length on which *Saptamatrkas* alongwith Bhairava in *Urdhvalinga* and Ganesa figures are carved in a panel. Just in the back side of this rock, another four-handed figure of Bhairava dancing in *Chatura* mode is carved. He has a furious-looking appearance with sunken eyes and is *Urdhvalinga*. A *Kartri* (knife) and *Sula* (trident) are in his upper right and left hands respectively, while a *Sarpa* (snake) is in his lower left hand. Another snake has raised its single hood just above the right shoulder of this Bhairava figure. To this scholar, it seems that, in the remote past Ghudar was a great centre of tantricism, where Ekapada Bhairava was worshipped by the *Saivacharyas* of the *Kapalika* sect.

At Ghudar alone, Ekapada Bhairava and another image of dancing Bhairava are depicted with *Urdhvalinga*. Similarly, at Ranipur Jharial, a three-headed and eight-handed figure of Bhairava in the dancing pose of *Ananda Tandava* is enshrined in an open *Mandapa* just in the centre of the circular open-air temple, where the sixty-four *Yoginis* are placed in the dancing posture of *Adbhu*.

Although this image of Ranipur Jharial has been taken as the Nataraja aspect of Lord Siva by scholars, this researcher disagrees and thinks it to be "*Urdhvalinga Bhairava*" the central deity of the *Chausath Yoginipitha*. The Lord's left foot is placed on the back of the crouching bull Nandi, who is looking up at the Lord with raised head - '*Devaviksanataparah*.' The bull

of the *Bhairava* image of Sankushgad is also depicted in the same pose. Near the right foot of the dancing Bhairava of Ranipur Jharial, there is a four-handed seated figure of Ganesa. This dancing Bhairava is wearing a broad necklace, armlets, *Jatamukuta* and *Sankha-Patra Kundalas*. A *Sarpa* is encircling his waist-portion and raising its hood above his left shoulder. He is also holding another snake over his head in his upper hands. They are the famous snakes like Taksaka and Dhananjaya, who helped Lord Siva during his fight with Andhakasura. The

Lord is holding a small trident (*Sula*) in his upper left hand and a *Dambaru* placed on his right thigh which he holds in his third right hand. His fourth right hand is below his chest portion in *Varadamudra*. Similarly, in his upper left hand, he is holding a club (*Gada*) and in the third left hand a rosary (*Aksamala*) respectively. His eyes are closed. It seems to be the pacified form of the Lord. Siva in his *Ugra* aspect of Bhairava was a *Yogi*, who troubled the *Yoginis*. A story in *Kathasaritasagara* mentions that Chandrasvamin saw in the middle hour of the night a Circle of *Matrkas* (*Matruchakra*),



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headed by Narayani (Vaisnavi), who were impatiently waiting for Bhairava to present him with a variety of gifts. Immediately after goddess Narayani finished her narration explaining the delay of Lord Bhairava, the Lord of the Circle of Mothers arrived there. The *Matrkas* there-after presented their gifts to him, after which he danced and sported with the *Yoginis* (*Tandavena Ksanam Nrtyannakridad Yoginisahah*).²⁶ In the Agni Purana, we find the mention of Bhairava as the Lord of the Mothers (*Matrunatha*), who is to be worshipped at the centre of the mothers (*Matrumadhye Pujyah*).²⁷ In the *Tantrika Kaula* texts like *Kularnava* and *Meru Tantra* also, Bhairava has been mentioned as the central deity, whose position is to be at the centre of the Circle of Yoginis (*Yoginichakramadhyastham*).²⁸

An unique image of four-handed dancing Bhairava with *Urdhvalinga*, which is exactly similar to the dancing Bhairava of Ranipur Jharial is found in a Siva temple at Mahagaon in Balangir district. But in this case it is one-headed. The upper right hand of the Lord is in *Abhayamudra* with one *Aksamala* hanging from it, while the upper left hand is placed on his right thigh. In the lower left hand, which is slightly raised, the Lord is holding a *Kapala*, while in his lower right hand is a small *Khatvanga*. Bull Nandi, the *Vahana* of the Lord is seen to be crouching in a profiled posture behind the Lord, and looking up at his master in *Devaviksanatatparah*. The Lord is wearing *Hara* and *Aksamala* (strings of rosary beads) around his body. He is wearing strings of rosary beads as *Kundalas* also. A crescent moon symbol is carved on the left side of the *Jatamukuta* and the Lord has a pleasant smiling face. An image of four-handed Camunda is also found in this site.²⁹

Bhairava images at Belkhandi, Ghudar, Patnagad and Ranipur Jharial are found amidst *Saptamatrkas* (the Seven Mothers) and with Uma Mahesvara images at Sankushgad, Deogaon (Banei) and Topigaon. Camunda images are found alongwith Bhairava at Junagad (Hemgir) and Mahagaon. Lord Mahesvara (Siva) of the Uma Mahesvara images of Belkhandi and Topigaon are also *Urdhvalinga*. An image of Bhairava, made of soft red sand stone has been collected from Manikgarh in Maraguda valley of Nuapada district and kept in *Lokadrusti*, a Khariar-based NGO (Voluntary Organisation).³⁰ It is an image of two-handed Bhairava standing in *Tribhanga*, holding a sword (*Khadga*) in his right hand. His *Vahana* dog is standing near his left leg. He is wearing an elongated *Mukuta*, *Kundalas* and a *dhoti* - type garment. It is of the size of around 8" in height and 6" in breadth. It is assigned to the 10th century by Dr. Nagarch. A four-handed Bhairava image with his *Vahana* dog, carved on a stone-block measuring around 18" and breadth of 10" is kept in the Siva temple at Chhuriagad in the Kalahandi district.³¹

A four-handed standing image of Bhairava is fitted to the northern *Parsvadevata* niche of the Kosalesvara Siva temple at Patnagad. In the up-raised left and right hands are *Aksamala* and *Trisula*, while in the lower left hand is a *Sarpa*. The lower right hand is in *Varadamudra*, touching the mouth of his *Vahana* dog, which is seated near his right leg. *Jatamukuta* is adorning the head of the Lord. Exactly similarly Bhairava images are found as loose sculptures at Sauntpur and Charda. In the image of Sauntpur, the lower left hand of the Lord is broken from elbow portion. In the up-raised upper right hand he is holding a long spear, while the lower right hand is touching

the mouth of his *Vahana* dog, sitting near his right leg. Object in the up-raised upper left hand is not clear. A *Jatamukuta* adorns the head of this Bhairava image, who is standing in a *Dvibhanga* posture. Another Bhairava image, also standing in *Dvibhanga* posture is found at Charda. Both the lower hands are broken. In the up-raised upper left and right hands are *Sarpa* and spear respectively.

Instead of *Jatamukuta*, a *Karanda Mukuta* is adorning his head. His *Vahana* dog is sitting front-faced near his right leg, looking up at the master.³² Like the Bhairava image of Patnagad, the Bhairava images of Sauntpur and Charda might have been fitted to the *Parsvadevata niches* of Siva temples in the original state. Another unique image of a four-handed Bhairava image, standing in the *Alidha* posture is kept near the Suresvari temple at Sonapur. In his up-raised upper right hand he is holding a long sword (*Khadga*) just behind his head. Object in his up-raised upper left hand is a skull-cup (*Kapala*), while in his lower left hand is a knife (*Kartri*). His lower right hand is in *Katyavalambita*. He has slightly raised his left leg and put it on the head of a prostrate body lying below. It might be that of Kala. His *Vahana* dog is running in profile behind his right leg towards this flatly-lying body. A long garland (probably of skulls) is around his neck, which is hanging upto the knee-level. Three round of knotted *Jata* are forming the *Jatabhara* on his head. He is wearing *Patrakundalas* in his ears. The image can be dated to the pre-Somavamsi period, i.e. early



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part of 9th century A.D., when this area was ruled by the *Bhanja* kings of Khinjali Mandala. Another image of Bhairava, seated in *Lalitasana* is enshrined in a small temple near the Suresvari temple at Sonapur. It is a four-handed image, holding a long sword (*Khadga*) and skull-up (*Kapala*) in his up-raised right and left hands respectively. A long cobra snake (*Sarpa*) is hold by the Lord in his lower left hand like a gas baloon, the one-hooded snake going up above his head portion. An *Aksamala* is in the lower right hand of the Lord. His *Vahana* dog in profile is carved on the pedestal. A *Karanda Mukuta* is adorning his head. This image can be dated to the *Chauhan* period, i.e. 18th century A.D. A four-handed Bhairava image, just in the posture of commencing dance is found at Menda in Sonapur district.³² Another four-handed front-faced Bhairava image in the stance of dancing is enshrined in a small shrine in the same campus of Swapnesvara temple at Puintala in Balangir district. It is a skeletoned figure.

As in other places, a small image of Uma Mahesvara is found in the same temple precinct at Puintala also. This Bhairava image of Puintala can be dated to the *Bhanja* period, i.e. first half of 9th century A.D.

While discussing about the independent loose sculptures of Bhairava, it is important to discuss about two eight-handed image of Bhairava, one enshrined at Deogaon (Balangir) and another in a modern temple to the east of the Garh (old fort) area of Patnagad town. The eight-handed image of Bhairava at Deogaon is

kept in a hut on the embankment of a huge reservoir called *Yogisagar*, near Deogaon, a *Panchayat Samittee* head-quarters of Balangir district. It is of the height of around four feet, dancing on a male figure (*Kala*), lying flat on the pedestal. One Hara made of rosary beads is around his neck. Besides this, a long garland of skulls (*Naramundamala*) is hanging from the neck upto the navel portion of the deity. In the right hands from top to bottom, he is holding *Khadga*, short trident (*Sula*) and Vajra respectively, while object in the lowest right hand (fourth) can not be identified as the hand is broken. In the left hand objects hold from top to bottom are *Sankha*, *Sarpa*, *Kapala* and *Gada* respectively.³³ The Bhairava image of Patnagad is a furious-looking eight-handed image of the height of around 30" and breadth of 18". Objects in his right hands are *Danda*, *Trisula*, *Musala* and *Khadga*, while in the left hands are *Khetaka*, *Sarpa*, *Vajra* and *Agni*. In this image, Bhairava is depicted as dancing on a male figure (*Kala*), which is lying flat below, while raising both his hands over his own head in the *Anjalimudra* in obeisance to the Lord. A *Karanda Mukuta* is adorning the head of this male lying below.

This eight-handed divinity seems to be Aghora, an *Ugra* form of Siva, whose face is terrible in appearance with side tusks coming out in both corners of the lips and the flat figure lying below seems to be that of *Kala*. The Bhairava figure is flanked by seven female attendants, two standing and three seated in the proper left side, and two standing in the proper right side. These seven maidens are apparently the local sculptor's representation of the seven *Tantrika* maidens namely, Gangi Gauduni, Sua Teluni, Jnanadei Maluni, Netai Dhobani, Luhukuti Luhuruni, Sukuti Chamaruni and Patrapindhi Sauruni, who were experts in the

esoteric rites. It is surprising to be noted that in another stone panel now fitted to the outer eastern wall of the *Jagamohana* hall of the Kosalesvara Siva temple at Patnagad (to the proper right of the entrance door to the *Jagamohana*), seven standing maidens are depicted, going in a procession, holding a canopy or *Chhatra* over their heads. The Aghoramurti of Patnagad was most probably forming a part of the Kosalesvara Siva temple in its original state.³⁴

Another Bhairava image is worshipped in a small shrine near the Harishankar Temple of Balangir district, which is situated at a distance of 40 km from Patnagad town. Other two Bhairava images, one found in the Kosalesvara Siva temple at Kusang and another enshrined in a small temple in the Paschima Somnath temple precinct at Sonapur town seem to belong to the *Chauhan* period i.e. 15th-16th century A.D. The front-faced Bhairava image of Kusang is four-handed holding a *Dambaru* in his up-raised upper left hand, and *Khadga* and *Kapala* in the lower right and left hands respectively. Object in the up-raised upper right hand is not clear. This Bhairava image is in a dancing posture called *Adbhu*,³⁵ in which heels are kept close and knees apart, posed in a manner as if ready to commence the dance. The image of Bhairava enshrined in a small temple at Sonapur in the Paschima Somanath temple precinct is also four-handed, but standing in an *Alidha* posture to the proper right direction. A long *Khadga* is in his lower right hand which is resting on his right shoulder and a *Kapala* is in his up-raised upper left hand. Objects in other hands are not clear.

It is worthy to focuss on a Bhairava image found in the proper right of the inner

side of the entrance to the Banesvara Siva temple precinct at Deogaon, which is situated at a distance of only 3 km from Banei, a *tahsil* head-quarters of Sundargarh district. This four-handed ferocious-looking Bhairava image is worshipped separately. He is in the *Alidha* posture, carrying a *Kapala* in his lower left hand, the other hands being broken. *Patrakundalas* are hanging from his ears and hair is arranged in many knots like that of Buddha. His look is terrible with tusks coming out in both sides of his mouth. Two round lotus-rosette motifs are carved in both top corners of the back-slab.³⁶ This type of lotus rosette motifs are found in top-corners of the back slabs of sculptures at Narsinghnath also and this sculpture can be dated safely to the post-*Somavamsi* period i.e. 12th-13th century A.D.

A four-handed Bhairava image, dancing by placing both his feet on the severed head of a demon is enshrined in a small hut, which is constructed in the northern side of the Siva temple at Sukhabandh (near Himgir) in Sundargarh district. In his up-raised proper right hand he is holding a *Khadga*, while a severed human head is in his lower proper left hand. The up-raised upper left hand is in *Abhaya* and the lower right hand is in *Varada*. His long hairs are flowing in both sides of his shoulders. He is wearing a long garland of severed human heads, with a *ghanta* hanging from it upto the knee-level. His *Vahana* dog is

sitting on the pedestal in profile near the left foot of the Lord and looking up at the master. Another dog is standing near his right foot on the pedestal. This image can be dated to the period of the later *Kesari* (*Somavamsi*) kings, who were ruling from Junagad (near Sukhabandh) in around 13th-14th century A.D. A Chamunda image is also found at Sukhabandh.³⁷



Bhairava, Sonepur

An image of Kala Bhairava is enshrined in a small temple, which is constructed to the proper left of the main entrance gate to the temple premises of goddess Samlei at Sambalpur. This beautiful image, made of black chlorite, is four-handed, where the Lord is seen to be standing in *Samabhanga* on Kala, a male figure lying prostrate below. In his upper and lower right hands are *Khadga* and *Trisula*, while in the lower left hand is a *Dambaru*. His hair is arranged in eight serpentine coils, fanning out on both sides of his head. At the top

of his coiffure is a crescent moon and the Lord has moustache, as found in other Saivite divinities of the Chauhan period. Iconographically this image can be dated to the 16th century A.D. This temple of Kala Bhairava faces the east.³⁸

The Bhairava cult of Saivism, which gained strength during the rule of the *Bhanjas* of Khinjali Mandala in the second half of the 8th century A.D. and first half of the 9th century

A.D. continued unabated in this tribal belt of western Orissa for a pretty long period.

In almost all cases the Bhairava images are *Urdhvalinga*. Even the Nataraja images of Mahagaon, Dungripali (Budhikomna) and Ranipur Jharia (both of the *Chausath Yogini Pitha* and the Indralath brick temple) are *Urdhvalinga*. Mahesvara in the Uma Mahesvara images of Topigaon and Belkhandi are also *Urdhvalinga*.

Images with *Urdhvalinga* have been found as early as the Kushana period. Such images are generally found in Assam, Bengal and Orissa. This feature of *Urdhva-Retas* is defined as the indication of the state of perpetual celibacy.³⁹ The story of Kamadahana is very popular in Hindu mythology and it describes how Siva destroyed Kama who attempted to distract the Lord who was in deep austerities.⁴⁰ Thus Siva is also known in Indian mythology for his supreme control over physical desires.

Like the Ekapada Bhairava and the *Saptamatrkas* worshipped on a huge monolithic rocky mountain near Ghudar village in the Titilagarh sub-division of Balangir district, an eight-handed dancing Bhairava in *Urdhvalinga* is carved on a huge monolithic rocky mountain called Tandel Dangar,⁴¹ situated to the west of Dunguripali village near Budhi Komna in Nuapada district. In another monolithic rock nearby a female deity standing in the *Alidha* position is copulating with a male which is lying flat below with *Urdhvalinga*. It is called goddess *Jharni* by the local tribal

populace. But it seems to be the rock-cut sculpture of goddess Daksina Kalika, who is generally depicted as having intercourse on the corpse of Siva. The iconography of this goddess corresponds to description found in the *Karpuradi-stotra*, giving the *Mantroddhara* of the deity. In her aspect of Daksina Kalika, she represents the beneficent

Grantor of *Nirvana* : "I worship Kali the Destructress of Kala and Shining One, who is the *Bija Krim* who is Kama who is beyond *Kala* and who is Daksina Kalika."⁴²

This procedure of open-air worship of Bhairava alongwith the *Matrkas* and *Yoginis* is suggestive of these *Pithas* possibly used by the *Kapalikas* for sexo-yogic practices. Learned scholar Dr. H.C. Das has rightly put that "the hypaethral 64 *Yogini* temple is the expression of intense form of Tantricism, where Bhairava, the central figure is encircled by terrifying images of



Bhairava, Deogaon (Banei)

64 *Yoginis*."⁴³

The description of Bhairavas has been found in the *Visnudharmottara*, prominent among which are Vatuka Bhairava and Svarnakarsana Bhairava etc. Further we know about eight forms of Bhairavas named *Asitanga*, *Ruru*, *Chanda*, *Krodha*, *Unmatta*, *Kapala*, *Bhisana* and *Samhara*, each one further sub-divided into eight sub-ordinate forms, thus making sixty-four in total, whose iconographic details are found in *Rudrayamala*.⁴⁴

Scholars think that historically the Bhairava cult owes its origin to the Ajaikapada Bhairava (Aja-Ekapada Bhairava) - "The

Bhairava with One Foot." Ekapada Bhairava is a *tantrika* deity. Associations reflected in Tantric literature connect him with the Vedic Aja Ekapada, with fire, with sacrifice, with the central pillar of the world and, lastly, with the *Yoginis*. He is the Supreme Lord. Objects held in his hands, characterise him as a manifestation of Siva. He is *Urdhvalinga* and clad by tiger skin on his hip. Stietencron thinks the iconography of Jagannath to have been derived from this Ekapada Bhairava.⁴⁵ It is really an exception that Ekapada Bhairava is carved in association with the Saptamatrkas, instead of Virabhadra in both the rock-cut *Saptamatrka* panels of Ranipur Jharial. But in the rock-cut sculptural panel of *Saptamatrkas* at Ghudar, which is on a monolithic rock of a paddy field, a four-handed dancing Bhairava with *Urdhvalinga* is carved in the first niche of the carved panel.



Bhairava, Patnagarh

Learned scholar Dr. L.K. Panda goes a little further and says that "sometimes, some of the *Saivacharyas* of the Bhairava cult were considered to be identical with the Bhairavas." In his opinion, "Under the influence of tantric Buddhism the Saivite teachers of the Bhairava cult were worshipping Siva in his terrific aspect as Bhairava, surrounded by sixty-four *Yoginis*."⁴⁶

The *Aghora* aspect of Bhairava alongwith seven *Tantrika* maidens of *Kuanri Patana* (Patnagad) is carved on one stone-slab found at Patnagad, representing the tradition of '*Satbahen*' (Seven Sisters) among the tribal and local populace of western Orissa. It

strengthens the above-cited view that the Bhairava cult was further popularised by the famous *Tantrika* teacher Laksminkara, (sister of the celebrated king Indrabhuti of Sambala) the propounder of the *Sahajayana* stream of tantric Buddhism in around the 8th century A.D.

As mentioned earlier, Bhairava alongwith his consort Chamunda are invoked in tantric rituals. In the mythology, on the death and dismemberment of *Sati*, it is stated that wherever the dismembered part of the body of *Sati* fell, there emerged a *Saktipitha*, and Siva assuming the form of Bhairavas emerged in the vicinities of the *Saktipithas* to keep a watch over the severed parts of *Sati's* body. Prof. Thomas E. Donaldson is of the view that 'invariably an image of Bhairava is thus found near or within a *Sakta* compound.'⁴⁷ Bhairava is the most fearful form of Lord Siva and according to Stella Kramrisch, he is Siva entire, 'whether spoken of as emanated from Siva, or seen on the highest level of Siva, as Mahadeva Kalabhairava, the Great God Kala Bhairava.'⁴⁸

A four-handed Bhairava, standing in *Adbhu* posture is found at Ingsa in the Agalpur *Panchayat Samittee* area of Balangir district. A *Khetaka* (shield) and *Khadga* (sword) are in his lower left and right hands respectively, while a *Sula* is in his upper left hand. A conical *Mukuta* is adorning his head. It can be dated to the 17th-18th century A.D. But a broken image (now up-waist existing) of a four-handed moustached Bhairava, found at Podagad in the Umarmkot *tahsil* area of Nawarangpur district can be assigned to the *Nala* period, i.e. circa

4th-5th century A.D. The upper right hand of this image is on the waist, with a long *Sula* inserted into the space in between the body and the hand in the elbow portion. Both the lower hands are broken, while a *Kapala* is in the up-raised upper left hand of the Lord. The *Kankana* tied to both wrists and the *Hara* around the neck of Bhairava are made of strings of rosary beads. Another image of Bhairava was located at Parva near Raighar in the Dandakaranya area in 1946 by learned scholar G. Ramdas during exploration in the Podagad area, which was the capital city site of Puskari of the Nala empire in 4th-5th century A.D. He could locate a ruined temple of Bhairava at Podagad also.⁴⁹

From the *Dhyana-sloka* of Ksetrapala, given by Aghorasivacharya in his *Vighnesvara-Pratisthavidhi* it is evident that Ksetrapala is none other than Bhairava, who protects the towns and villages from evil deities and from bad men. His shrine is to be located in the north-east corner of the town or village. In the texts like *Amsumabhedagama*, *Suprabhedagama* and *Karanagama* two types of Ksetrapala, *Satvika* and *Rajasika murtis* are prescribed for installation.⁵⁰

Such a four-handed image of Ksetrapala, standing in the *Samabhanga* posture is found at Sauntpur, a village situated at a distance of 10 km from Balangir town. In his upper hands are *Dambaru* and *Sula*, while a *Gada* is hold by both lower hands it being placed on the pedestal in between both legs.⁵¹ One two-handed standing image of Ksetrapala, carrying a long sword (*Khadga*) in his right

hand, which is raised up is enshrined in a small temple which is situated on the embankment of a pond, in front of the Suresvari temple at Sonepur.⁵² Both these Ksetrapala images can be dated to the Bhanja period, i.e. circa 8th-9th century A.D., when Bhairava worship was at the apex.

Bhairavas in the squatting position have been placed in the *Beki* portion of the temples of 11th -12th century A.D. just above the Raha. Such a *Beki-Bhairava* is found amidst loose sculptures kept in front of the Budhima temple at Sonepur town.



Ekapada Bhairava, Ghudar

Bhairava is still worshipped in places like Lanjigad, Madanpur Rampur, Mohangiri, Urladani, Sankushgad, Digsira, Belkhandi, Junagad, Topigaon, Medinipur, Kamthana and many other places of Kalahandi district of Orissa. This ferocious - looking god has special shrines at Sonepur, Sambalpur, Harishankar, Lanjigad, Puntala and Junagad (Himgir). According to the tribal tradition, there are twelve forms of Bhairava, namely, *Budha*, *Agni*, *Bali*, *Betal*, *Suhar*, *Sadhan*, *Kana*, *Bana*, *Ran*, *Jal*, *Dand* and *Hunkar Bhairo*. In tribal tradition twelve is an auspicious number and their gods are generally grouped in twelve number, like *Barabhai Lanth*, *Barabhai Bhima*, *Bara Pahad*, *Barabhai Maral* and *Barabhai Bentakar* etc.

It can be aptly said that Bhairava or *Bhainro* is a widely popular tribal god, adored by all sections of the society in the upper Mahanadi valley atleast from the early Christian era, i.e. 1st-2nd century A.D. It was basically a tribal god and subsequently assimilated into the Hindu fold.

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