The temple of Rama-Chandi is one of the important Sakta shrines of Orissa. It is situated near the sea-shore, at a distance of 8 kms to the south of the Sun Temple of Konark. This temple is exactly located on the right side of the Marine Drive Road, which lies between Puri and Konark. It is considered by local people that Goddess Ramachandi is the presiding deity of the whole of Arkakshetra. From the architectural point of view, the temple of Ramachandi is not important but from the religious point of view, it is one of the famous Sakta pithas of Puri. The temple of Ramachandi is a small deula and it consists of two structures such as vimana and jagamohana. There is an open flat roof mandapa, recently built in front of the jagamohana. This temple is built in sand stones, laterite and bricks. It faces to north.

Architectural Features of the Temple

(A) Vimana

The vimana of the Ramachandi temple is a pancharatha pidha deula and its height is about 30 feet from the surface of the temple complex. The structure of the vimana is erected on the platform of 1 foot high. It has four parts such as pistha, bada, gandi and mastaka. The pista of the vimana is decorated with three horizontal mouldings, which are joined by vertical bonds. The bada of the vimana is panchanga type i.e. having five fold divisions such as pabhaga, talajangha, bandhana, upper jangha and baranda. All the components parts of the bada are completely undecorated.

The central niches of the three sides of the bada of vimana are housed with parsvadevata images of a headless Buddha, a four-armed Devi and Biranchi-Narayana. A disfigured image of Lord Buddha is the parsvadevata of the western side. The image has no head as well as hands. This headless deity has been installed on the double petalled lotus pedestal. He is carved in padmasana posture. Two sides knees of deity are completely broken. According to temple priests, this image was originally Buddha but in latter period, it broken by Kalapahada. A Devi image is the parsvadevata of the southern or backside. The
The mastaka of the vimana consists of beki, ghanta (bell shaped member) above which there is another beki, amalaka sila, khapuri, kalasa, ayudha, (chakra) and dhvaja.

The sanctum preserves ten-armed Goddess Rama Chandi as the presiding deity of the temple. She is worshipped in the form of Dasabhuja Durga. Her right five arms displays khadga, gada, chakra, trident and lotus flower whereas the left five hands hold panapatra, parasu, pasa, bow and dambaru respectively. The image is made of black chlorite and it is 30 inches in height. Here Goddess wears a silver mukuta on her head. Lion, the conventional mount of Devi is carved on the pedestal. She is piercing Mahimsasura, the demon by her trident. The image of Goddess Ramachandi is installed on the simhasana of 2 feet high. The deity is certainly more ancient than the Sun temple at Konark. Goddess Ramachandi, the presiding deity of the Konark region is worshipped here with great reverence.

(B) Jagamohana

The jagamohana or mukhasala of the temple has a vaulted roof or semi-cylindrical roof and it is about 12 feet in height. The outer walls of the jagamohana are completely plain. Both the structures of vimana and jagamohana are heavily plastered with lime mortar. There is a lion installed on the octagonal pillar of 2½ feet high and it is noticed in the floor of the jagamohana. The niches of the northern wall contain two images of Varaha and Trivikrama. Both these images are fashioned in as usual attributes in hands. The backside head...
of these two deities are decorated by trefoil arch. They are installed on the double petalled lotus pedestal. Both sides top corners of the slab are carved with flying apsara figures.

Inner walls of the mukhasala or jagamohana are depicted with paintings of Dasamahavidya figures such as Devi Lakshmi, Vairabhi, Bagala, Dhubabati, Chhinnamasta, Matangi, Bhubanesvari, Sodasi, Tara and Kali. They are depicted in traditional Patta style painting of Orissa. It is executed by the local artists of Puri.

The doorway of the jagamohana is devoid of decorative ornamentations. Two lions are installed on the both sides of mukhasala and they are acting as the dvarapalas of the temple.

(C) Natamandapa

Recently, a new open flat roof structure is built in front of the jagamohana hall. It is considered as the natamandapa of the temple. Lion, the conventional mount of presiding deity, installed on the floor of the natamandapa hall.

In the north west corner of the temple complex is occupied by a Siva temple named Ramesvara. A rescued Sivalinga is being worshipped in the sanctum. This small Saiva shrine faces to east.

The temple complex of Goddess Ramachandi is enclosed by a boundary wall and it measures approximately 80 feet in length and 40 feet in width respectively. This boundary wall is built in bricks.

Date of the Temple

According to local tradition, in the 16th century A.D. Goddess Ramachandi was being worshipped in a small shrine in the Sun Temple Complex of Konark. After destroyed it by Kalapahada, this Goddess was shifted to the present site. Then a temple was constructed here for the worship of Goddess. Dr. B.K. Ratha has said that the present temple of Goddess Ramachandi was constructed in the eighteenth century A.D. The architectural features of the main temple indicate that it was constructed not earlier than 300 years. The available of extant damaged sculptures, which noticed in the temple premises, prove that there was an old huge temple constructed there before the erection of the present temple. The jagamohana of the temple is built in the twentieth century.

It is known from the above discussion that the architectural feature of the temple is not so important but from the cultural point of view, the temple is considered as an important Sakta shrine of the Arkakshetra. The site of Ramachandi temple is also a picnic spot.

References:


Ratnakar Mohapatra is a Ph.D.Research Scholar in the Sambalpur University, Jyotivihar, Sambalpur, Bhubaneswar, Orissa.