

# SANSKRIT TEXTS IN THE NATURE OF PILGRIM'S GUIDE

*Dr. K. C. Panigrahi*

Some materials for the reconstruction of the history of the place, are also supplied by the four Sanskrit works, viz. the *Ekamra Purana*, *Svarnnadri-mahodaya*, *Ekamra-chandrika* and *Kapila-samhita*, which profess to deal with the origin and history of the notable temples at Bhubaneswar and with such other matters as the rituals, festivals and the merits that accrue from the worship of the particular deities. These works were copied from the old palm-leaf manuscripts and were for the first time published by Pandi Ratnakara Gargabatu of Bhubaneswar some twenty years ago. The *Ekamra Purana* and the *Kapila Samhita* have been noticed by Mr. M. M. Ganguly, but he seems to have missed certain traditions recorded in them, which can be utilized as the corroborative evidences for the purposes of history. Except some stray traditions giving definite historical and geographical names, other long stories given about the history of shrines, are, however, of no use to us, for, they attribute the origin and the construction of almost all temples to gods and supernatural beings. The origins of the shrines of Parasuramesvara, Brahmesvara, Yamesvara, Ramesvara and Kedaresvara, have, for instance, been attributed respectively to Parasurama, Brahma, Yama, Rama and the mount Himavat, who have also been represented as the builders of the temples. These stories have obviously been invented to push back the origin of the shrines to hoary antiquity and the names of the actual builders, who were no doubt human beings, have been suppressed. There is thus no chance of extracting historical information from these stories except from the incidental references embedded in them.

However, in some respects they furnish us with some definite information. They tell us the names of the temples together with their respective distances and directions. They also give us an idea about the number of the temples that existed at the time they were compiled. Some chapters in these works have been intended as pilgrim's guides and as such the names of the temples given in them cannot be taken to be the concocted ones, although some names might have since then been changed. Besides, they record the details of festivals, conventions and rituals from which certain inferences can be made about the cultural history of the place.

These works seem to have been composed at different times, but none of them can be taken to be earlier than, because all of them make a mention of the temple of Ananta-Vasudeva which was built in A.D. 1278. The *Ekamra Purana*, the most comprehensive of all, seems to be the oldest and its phraseology has been borrowed by the other works, particularly by the *Svarnnadri Mahodaya* and the *Ekamra Chandrika*. Again the *Ekamra Purana* has been referred to by the *Svarnnadri-mahodaya* in its twentyfirst chapter. The word *Mahapatra* occurs in the concluding portion of the fifty-first chapter of the *Ekamra Purana* and so far as is known, this word was for the first time used as the designation of the high officers towards the end of the Ganga Dynasty and Kapilesvaradeva, the founder

of the Suryavamsi Dynasty, was a *Mahapatra* under the last Ganga king. So, the *Ekamra Purana*, the earliest of these works, could not have been composed before the fourteenth century. The *Kapila Samhita* mentions in the seventh chapter the temple of *Varaha* at Jajpur, the erection of which is traditionally attributed to Prataparudradeva (A.D. 1497-1541). The internal evidences of these works thus show that they were composed during the Suryavamsi Period, but they certainly refer to events and contain traditions, which are much earlier than the date of their composition.

The *Tirtha-chintamani* by Vachaspati Misra which describes the notable sacred places of India, constitutes another Sanskrit work containing references to the numerous temples of Bhubaneswar. Unlike the authors of the other four works, Vachaspati Misra seems to have been an outsider, who acquired the knowledge of the Saiva shrines at Bhubaneswar, probably by his visit to the place and by his study of the sacred literature connected with it. This is indicated by the fact that he does to show so thorough a knowledge of the topography of the place as the authors of the other four works do. Moreover his indebtedness to the traditional Orissan texts is proved by the fact that he has incorporated two verses from the twenty-eighth chapter of the *Svarnnadri-mahodaya* without any change in the phraseology whatsoever. The verses in question are:

Tasmin ksetra-vare punye lingam jad-drisyate dvijah |  
Pujya-pujya-ncha sarvatra vane rathy-antarepiva ||  
Chatus-pathe smasane va yatra kutra cha tisthati |  
Dritsva tal-lingam-avyagrah sraddhaya susamahitah ||

The occurrence of these two verses in the *Tirtha-chintamani* also shows that its date cannot be earlier than that of the *Svarnnadrimahodaya* and its author Vachaspati Misra cannot be identical with Vachaspati Kavi, the composer of the *prasasti* of Bhavadeva Bhatta and his family, or with Vachaspati Misra, the well-known philosophical writer. The consideration of the style and language used in the *Tirtha-chintamani* also leads to the same conclusion, for, its author has scarcely shown the high standard of poetry or philosophy as his namesakes have done. Another evidence which proves the lateness of this work is the fact that it refers to the temple of Konarka built in the reign of the Ganga king Narasimha I (A.D.1238-1264) in the following verse:

Tatah sury-alayam gachchet puspa-madaya vag-yatah |  
Pravisya pujayed-bhanum kuryyat-tat-trih pradaksinam ||

The verse proves beyond doubt that the *Tirth-chintamani* could not have been composed before the middle of the thirteenth century and it also contradicts the theory that the temple of the sun at Konarka was never completed or consecrated.

All these works contain earlier traditions relating to the numerous temples of Bhubaneswar, but the late traditions are to be found in the *Madala Panji*, the temple chronicle of the Jagannath temple at Puri, which has also been utilized in the present work.

*Extract from the book Archaeological Remains at Bhubaneswar, pp.21-24*