



## Bhadrakali : A Complete Study

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Rivers have always played a dominant role in shaping the culture and civilisation of a particular place. From the time immemorial civilisations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Indus et al. Owe their contributions to eternal flow of the rivers which fulfill the basic necessities of human life.

The Salandi valley culture at Bhadrak serves a glaring example in this context. The flow of Salandi and its tributaries have played a major role in enriching its tradition, culture and custom. When we try to reconstruct the glorious cultural heritage of the district the very first thing that strikes our mind is the name of Goddess Mahakali from Meghasani (origin of the river Salandi) to Bhadrakali, the daughter of Salandi - Presiding Deity of the region - Mahamaya

From ancient time till today the place has its own sanctity as one of the renowned shaktipithas of Orissa. Frequent references to this

Shaktipitha are found in different religious texts as well as mythologies. The premier Deity Durga being born out of yagna fire has assumed the name of Bhadrakali and has blessed the region. The presence of Sri Jagannath (the last incarnation of Krishna) in the same platform marks the peaceful co-existence of the place.

Shaktipuja or worship of Shakti occupies a very significant position in the ancient Indian tradition. Though various opinions have been put forward by the historians, Indologists, archaeologists about the origin of the cult, it is a universally accepted fact that shakti worship constitutes a very important aspect of our religion.

As per 'Devi-Sukta' Devi Shakti represents herself through various ways through deaming and knowledge in the form of Saraswati, through wealth in the form of Laxmi, through general benevolence in the form of Durga or through violence in the form of Kali.



*Goddess Bhadrakali, Bhadrak*

Bhadrakali.



*'Akeiba Shakti Paramesvarasya  
Bibidha badanti vyavahara kale  
Bhoge tu Bhavani Purushesu Laxmi  
Shakte tu Durga Pralaye tu Kali*

Form ancient scriptures as well as Tantrasastra it is clearly evident that from 3rd-4th century A.D. to 12th Century A.D. Shaktipithas grew into prominence in various parts of the Country. In the Tantric ritualistic descriptions Orissa has been regarded as one of the important pithas.

*Odrakhyam Pratham Pitha  
Dwitiya Jala Sailakami  
Trutiya Purnapithastu  
Kamarupam Chathurthakam*

Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab rightly opines that out of the four important Shaktipithas - Odrakha, Srihatta, Pumakoti and Kamakshya - Odrakha or Odyamsa or Orissa is the first pitha. Among the famous Devipithas of Orissa mention may be made of Sarala of Jhankad, Cuttack Chandi of Cuttack, Bhagavati of Banpur, Kichakeswari of Khiching, Charchika of Banki, Mangala of Kakatapur, Vimalapitha of Puri, Viraja of Jajpur,



Mahisamardini Durga, Khiching,  
circa 10th-11th Century A.D.

Samaleswari of Sambalpur and Bhadrakali of Bhadrak. They are all one and the same. They are the Shaktis of Mahakala Siva.

The image of goddess Bhadrakali is made of black chlorite stone. It is around four feet tall. She is four-handed and sits on a lion. In the

upper right hand she holds sword and in the upper left hand there is Kharpara. A baby (whom the devotees accept as Balgopal Krishna) is found in the lower right hand along with a garland of beads in the lower left hand. The hands, feet, shoulders, neck, nose, ears and head of the Deity are ornamentally carved. On both sides of mother, there are the images of Jaya and Vijaya. The five gods of Hindu tradition such as Ganesh, Vishnu, Bhaskar(Sun), Siva and Durga are also enshrined here. The mythological description of the Deity goes as follows :

*Srikali Bhadrakali danavadalini kesari  
Prusthasamstha,  
Srikrushnaka Santarupa nikhila Vayahara  
niradava trinetra  
Bakhoyordhe khadga bamecha  
Kharparadhara Anaya bhaktavatsala  
Vaishnavi Vishnu maya bhabatu varada patu mam  
Bhadrakali*

Mother Bhadrakali is a quite ancient mythological deity. The entire Indian tantra literature is full of prayers and hymns for mother. The Gadaparva of Mahabharata Padma Purana, Markandeya, Purana, Chandi Purana of Sarala Das, Vishnu Purana, Srimad Bhagabata Tantraprasanga of Sri Krishna and the second part of Harivamsa make vivid references to goddess Bhadrakali as all pervasive and eternal incarnation of Parambrahma.

The eleventh chapter of Saptasati Chandi makes references accordingly.

*Jwala Karala Mrutyugra Mahisasura Sadanam  
Trisula Patunobhite Bhadrakali namostute.*

According to Durga Astottara Satanama stotra :

*Agnijwala, Roudramukhi karalivi stapaswini,  
Narayani Bhadrakali Vishnumaya Jalodari*

Thus she is the Emancipator of human soul. For the general welfare of the universe she has appeared in a metaphysical form.



### Legendary Study :

The present Bhadrakali pitha is situated in the eastern side of Bhadrak town. From Sangat gurudwar of Puruna Bazar it is around five kilometres and from Bhadrak Kacheri Bazar it is about seven kilometres. The place is better known as Bhadrakali Sahi. On the Eastern side of the temple there is a tank and an opera mandap. River Salandi flows in the west. On the Northern and Southern sides there are residential complexes meant for the devotees. Besides, a Jagannath temple is there in the compound of Bhadrakali temple.

The popular belief goes that this is not the original seat of the goddess. Different legends also strengthen this view. If history is the life of civilisation, legend is its soul. Even though the legends are not research oriented findings like history, still then they play a very important role in shaping history.

According to one legend the original image of Bhadrakali was worshipped in a very beautiful temple at Bhuyan Mahala situated in the eastern side of Bhadrak town. The Muslim conquest of Orissa brought in its wake destruction of temples and places of Hindu worship. The original temple of the goddess also fell prey to Muslim invasion. The devotees of Bhuyan dynasty prayed mother who directed them in a dream to shift her place of worship. The devotees accordingly took the image in a boat in river Salandi and moved eastwards. Then she remained in a hidden form in the river.

Once the local kids had organised a picnic on the river bed. The kid-loving affectionate goddess overwhelmed with childlike simplicity took food with them in disguise for which the place became famous as 'Aharapada' (place of taking food).

After the Muslim menace was over a small temple was constructed. The Deity was shifted from the water to the temple. The particular portion of the river Salandi is known as 'Bhadrakali ganda' till date.



Mahisamardini Durga, Bindu Sarobara Tank, Bhubaneswar, circa 8th-9th Century A.D.

Legend goes that the Bhuyan devotees brought brahmins from Siddhesvara village of Jajpur to worship the Deity. The small temple gradually began to deteriorate with the ravages of time. So the present temple came into existence in between 1953 to 1959.

Another legend goes on to say that the original place of worship of the Deity was on the Meghasani hill in Mayurbhanj district. This being the starting point of river Salandi, one tantrik sage Tapas by name used to worship the Deity Bhadrakali. Oneday being overwhelmed with the hymns of the sage milk began to ooze from the left breast of the Deity. The flow of milk joined a spring and took the shape of a river. As it flowed through a forest of Sal trees, it took the name of Salandi.

The sage Tapas became extremely happy and drank the water of the river as the blessing of the Deity. Then his soul mingled with eternal soul. His disciple Bhadrnath created a tomb of his master and started worshipping the Deity.



One day surprisingly he saw that the body of his master had come out of the tomb. Being perturbed he started praying. Suddenly he heard a heavenly voice that he should give *pinda* to his master in the river. Further he should place the Deity in the water with pure heart. He should follow the sound of jingles attached to the feet of the goddess. He would stop his journey where the jingle would become silent. Bhadranath did accordingly. At a particular place he couldn't listen the sound of jingles. Out of suspicion when he looked back, the heavenly voice instructed him to stop there. Bhadranath stayed there and began to worship the Deity.

The legend further tells us that once two Chauhan Maratha brothers came to Purushottam Puri for pilgrimage. They lost their way and entered a dense forest. All on a sudden they came across a radiant glow and followed it. At last they reached a cottage.

It was the residence of yogi Bhadranath where two brothers took rest. The next day younger brother fell ill. The elder one advised him to take rest at the sage's cottage and started his journey. The daughter of the sage treated the younger brother with utmost care and affection, while he began to recover the two had fallen in love.

The Chauhan boy marked a peculiar thing that everyday Bhadranath was going to an unknown place. He followed him one day and reached the spot at a distance. To his utter surprise he found it to be a place of worship and the Deity who was being worshipped was none else but Mahamaya Bhadrakali.

That particular night the youngman saw a dream. The goddess gave him a flower with instruction to walk and cover as much distance as he could so that he would become the master of that entire area.

The next day holding the sacred flower the youngman proceeded being followed by Mahamaya. The jingle on her feet began to ring as she walked behind. While the youngman was covering the dry bed of the river Salandi, he couldn't hear the sound. Thinking that the goddess had deserted him, he looked back and the eternal mother took the shape of a stone image.

As per the description of Ratnakosha, goddess Bhadrakali was the family deity of Bhuyan dynasty. This Maratha youngman was the founder of Bhuyan dynasty. The name of the place was Bhuyan Mahala which was the ancient capital of Bhadrak. The Bhuyans were the rulers of the adjoining areas of Salandi river. They were worshippers of mother Bhadrakali. Later on they shifted their seat of rule to Dola Sahi after being attacked by ferocious Afghan invaders. The place is now well-known as Bhuyan Uasa from where their successors migrated to different areas. They are now better familiar as Samantaray family of Talapada, Bhuyan family of Kubera and Kanungo family of Nadigaon.

The historical background of the study of the deity can be traced back to a fragmentary inscription discovered from the present precinct of the Bhadrakali temple. The inscription occupies second place after Hatigumpha Inscription of the Kharavela so far as its date is concerned. It is written in Pali language with Brahmi script.

*(Siddham) Maharaja Sri Ganasah Samvat*

*(8) Mula japena Deva (3) Data*

*(Adha !) Bapa 80 Mahakulapati*

*- Aya Agni Samenam*

*Pani - Deva Dingi patichhidam*

*Adhirasa ka Bhada apabasara ghali adasam.*

The archaeologists place the inscription at 3rd century A.D. from its language and style. It is known from the inscription that by 3rd century



A.D. one king named 'Sri Gana' was ruling over the area presently known as Bhadrak.

It is evident that by 3rd century A.D. there was Murunda rule in Tosali with its capital at Uttar Kalinga or Amita Tosala. Maharaja Sri Gana of Bhadrak was probably a feudatory ruler under the Murundas because no other details are available due to the fragmentary nature of the inscription.

Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab opines that Maharaja Sri Gana of Bhadrakali inscription was a contemporary of the founder of Gupta dynasty - Maharaja Srigupta of 4th century A.D. The northern part of Orissa alongwith Bhadrak and Balasore were under Gupta hegemony.

But Bhadrakali of Bhuyan Mahala was worshipped much earlier than the establishment of Gupta rule in the region.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. K.C. Panigrahi has given a different version. He is of opinion that in 3rd and 4th Century B.C. the ruler of Bhadrak was Surasharma. In his 8th regnal year one lady named Rangoli made some gifts for a pious lady, Parnadevi.<sup>2</sup> But D.C. Sarkar has read the name as Maharaja 'Gana' instead of Maharaja Surasharma.<sup>3</sup> Dr. N.K. Sahu also opines that Maharaja Gana of Bhadrakali inscription was a feudatory of the Murunda king of Pataliputra.

Now the question arises who is this 'Parnadevi'. From legendary source we get the reference of one cottage. Is the word derived from 'parna kutira' (cottage made of leaves) or is she the goddess Parna Sabari of Vedic Age or Parna Sabari of Jain religion or Parna Devi of Buddhism? The riddle is yet to be solved because no other corroborative sources give us any information in this regard.

The iconographic feature of the image doesn't ascribe to 3rd Century A.D. The

description of the image of Bhadrakali in Devi Bhagavata, Tantrasara and the hymn of meditation (Dhyanamantra) of mother Bhadrakali bear no resemblance to the present image. Rather her feature ascribes it to Bhauma period (736 A.D.-960 A.D.). Most probably the original image of the deity was destroyed by the Muslim invaders and the present form appeared later on.

But one thing is clear from the legends that in the beginning mother Bhadrakali like Lord Jagannath was worshipped by the non-Aryans in the hilly region. In course of time the seat of worship was shifted to the plains and from the non-Aryan goddess she became the presiding deity of the Aryan Hindus.

Scholars are of opinion that the name 'Bhadrak' has been derived from goddess Bhadrakali. Bhagirathi Nanda Sharma cites the evidence that like Balasore from Basesvar, Sambalpur from Samalai, Bhubaneswar from Bhubaneswari, the name Bhadrak has also come from goddess Bhadrakali. Others even opine that the name Bhadrak may be the abridged form of full name 'Bhadrakali' like popular name Puri which comes from full name 'Purushottam Puri'.

The word 'Bhadra' means fortune, good, auspicious,<sup>4</sup> 'ka' means to get radiant.<sup>5</sup> So the meaning of Bhadrak is to get the radiant glow of goodness or welfare. Naturally the place is illuminated with the blessings of Bhadrakali.

*'Om 'Ka' Brahman 'Ka' Vishnu  
'Ka' Devi Maheswari  
'Ka' Bhadra 'Ka' 'Kali'  
Saikasha Bhadrakeswari'*

Mother Bhadrakali plays a very dominant role in the cultural life of the region. Raja festival, Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Chaitra Purnima and Maha Visuva Sankranti are the five major festivals of goddess Bhadrakali.



Mahisamardini Durga, Konarka, (now in the British Museum, London) circa 13th Century A.D.

The first day of every Oriya month (Sankranti) each dark night (Amavasya) and the full-moon night (Purnima) are important days of Devi-worship. On the New Moon day of Mahalaya before Durga Puja the mother takes 'Subhangi Vesa' which

is equivalent to 'Ganga Darshan'. From Pratipada (First Day after New Moon) to Vijaya Dasami (tenth day of New Moon) during the Durga Puja, the goddess appears in various apparels as mentioned in Chandi Purana.

During Kumar Purnima the deity takes the apparels of Raja Rajeswari (Laxmi) and in Dipavali New Moon day she is worshipped in the form of Shyama Special Pujas and Yanjnas are offered in Kali Puja.

Besides, horse-dance or Chaiti-ghoda festival in the month of Chaitra and Patua dance (Jhamu Yatra) of Visuva Sankranti deserve special attention. These festivals and ceremonies during different times of the year play a very dominant role in moulding the socio-cultural life of the region.

Mother goddess-worship is a very ancient tradition of Orissan culture. Not a single

village in Orissa is found where there is no place of worship of gramadevi or the village Deity. The villagers take refuge under the feet of the mother to lead a happy and prosperous life. She may be Sarala, Pataneswari Mahamayee, Jagulai, Batamangala, Basulei, Sureswari, Manikeswari, Viraja or Bhadrakali - the various incarnations of mother goddess in different forms.

All children are equal before the mother. Her children are objects of Her love, affection and mercy. She is beyond caste, creed or colour. She is 'Adyashakti Chandi'. She is the Destroyer of Evils. Her seat is the melting point of all religious. She is universal mother. Let mother Bhadrakali bestow all her blessings for the general welfare and benevolence of the mankind.

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- (iii) Bhadrakali by H.C. Das (Souvenir of Orissa History Congress 1997). Salandi Vally, Culture and Bhadrak - S.C. De (Centenary Souvenir of Bhadrak High School)
- (iv) History of Orissa - Vol.I - Dr. H.K. Mahtab.

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3. Epigraphia Indica, Vol.XXIX, p.169.
4. Puma Chandra Bhasakosa, Page 6039.
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