



The Cult of Saktism in Orissa

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The ancient scriptures of Buddhist texts *Hevajratantra* and *Sadhanamala* of Vajrayan speak of four centres of Saktism : Uddiyan, Kamrup, Purnagiri and Jalandhar where Vimala, Kamakshya, Purneswari and Jwalamukhi are worshipped respectively. 'Udra', the centre of Saktism described in *Kalika Purana* is no other than 'Uddiyan' of Buddhist text *Sadhanamala*. The presiding deity of the centre is Katyayani. The author of the Buddhist iconography suggests that Uddiyan is the same as 'Odra or Udra' and the presiding deity of Uddiyan is Katyayani. So is the opinion of Dr. R.L. Mitra, who says, 'Orissa comes from the word 'Odra' ... Orissa was well-known to the Indian Aryans from a very early period...' The epics like *Mahabharata*, *Brahmanda Purana* and *Manu Samhita* reveal Orissa as a centre of Saktism.

It is learnt from Buddhist texts that the original base of Saktism is Orissa and it spread all over India and beyond, in course of time. This has been brought to limelight by Mr. Malley and

Mansfield, the authors of *Orissa Gazetteers*, 1929 : "It is noticeable that Tapussa and Bhallika, the first-day disciples of Buddha are said to have been merchants from Utkala who were travelling

to Madhya desha with five hundred cartmen when they met Buddha at Buddha Gaya."

The Buddhist prophets Saraba Buddha, Luipa and Kukuripada had propagated *Kapala Tantra*, *Saputa Tilaka* and *Mahamaya Tantra* respectively. Kambalapada and Padma Bajra propagated Bajra tantra from Uddiyan pitha, Orissa.

By the 7th century A.D., Orissa or Uddiyan or Udra rose to prominence as one of the greatest centres of

Saktism. In 747 A.D., Padma Sambhab of Uddiyan had been to Tibet to teach tantricism and black magic. In the middle of the eighth century, Indrabhuti, the then king of Sambala (Sambalpur) brought about drastic reform to Tantrayan in giving a new shape entitled 'Bajrayana'. Lakshminkara, the sister of Indrabhati and queen of Lanka transformed Bajrayana to Sahajayana during later days. During the later part of the eleventh century,





the celebrated tantric women Nitei Dhobani and Pitei Sauruni were there in Sapta Matrika pitha of Puri at Markandeswar Sahi. They were worshippers of Sapta Matrika and venerating Lord Jagannath and Goddess Vimala as Vairaba and Vairabi respectively.

Some important scriptures available in Tibet reveal that Indrabhuti was the king of Uddiyan and in the preliminary prayer of '*Jnana Sidhi*', he had the vision of Lord Jagannath as Buddhist lord. Padma Sambhab, the adopted son of Indrabhuti, with the help of his wife Mandaraba, had achieved accomplishment in *Sahaja-Yoga*. Some of the antique scriptures of Nepal suggest that few centuries later, Lord Buddha incarnated himself as Padma Sambhab in Uddiyan. In the second century, Ptolemy, the geographer, stated that Sambal is situated in the basin of the river Manad. Sambal is no other than the present Sambalpur and Manad, the river Mahanadi. On the basis of the old copper-plates and archaeological remains, it is argued that Lanka was no other than the present Sonepur of Orissa.

It may easily be shown that Uddiyan or Orissa is the mother - centre of Saktism where Bhairaba is Lord Jagannath and Bhairabi, Vimala. There is sufficient mention in support of this in *Kalika Purana* and *Devi Bhagavata*. Vimala is one of the names of goddess Durga in *Devi Bhagavat* and *Biswa Saratantra*.

During marriage - ritual of Rukmini with Lord Krishna in Jagannath temple, Goddess Rukmini goes to the temple of Vimala for worship to get Lord Krishna as her husband. There Vimala is prayed as Katyayani by Rukmini.

Hence Uddiyan or Orissa is the mother centre of Saktism and Vimala (Katyayani) is the deity of Uddiyan pitha, encircled by Mother goddesses, namely, Viraja at Jajpur, Sarala at Jhankad, Mangala at Kakatpur, Bhagavati at

Banpur, Harachandi at Puri, Ramachandi at Konark, Charchika at Banki, Bag Devi at Kulad, Stambeswari at Aska and Sonepur, Hingula at Talcher, Narayani at Khalikote, Tara Tareni in Ganjam, Bhattarika at Badamba, Barunei at Khurda, Chandi at Cuttack, Sapta Matrika at Puri, Jajpur, Belakhandi, Titilagarh, Khiching, Dharmasala, Kundeswar and Seragarh and 64 - Yoginis at Hirapur and Ranipur - Jhariyal and Samaleswari at Sambalpur and many others.

There is a nice legend in connection with the inception of *Sakta - pithas* all over the country and beyond. Dakshyaprajapati, the father of goddess Sati, did not invite his son-in-law Lord Siva to his sacrificial rites. Sati went to the function uninvited against the will of Lord Siva. Dakshyaprajapati passed filthy comments on Lord Siva in presence of all divinities. Sati could not tolerate censure of her husband and threw herself to the sacred fires and committed suicide. Lord Shankar, with pangs of separation, moved her and there, carrying the dead body of his beloved wife on his shoulder. For the welfare of the world, Lord Visnu directed his missile (Sudarshan Chakra) to cut the dead body of Sati into pieces without the knowledge of Shankar. Innumerable *Sakta-pithas* were erected from every fragment of the body of Sati which fell to the ground. It is said that the dead body was cut into pieces. According to *Devi Bhagvat*, 108 centres of Saktism were erected out of 108 fragments. From the navel-chord was the Viraja - pitha of Jajpur and from the tongue of goddess Sati, Vimala - pitha at Puri, as mentioned in *Uddisa tantra*.

THE SHRINES

Vimala :

The temple of Vimala is situated in the South-West corner of the court-yard of Lord Jagannath temple at Puri. Mother goddess is in a



standing posture with four arms, holding garland of beads, noose, pitcher of nectar and in Japa-mudra. She is worshipped in Bhubaneswari mantra except on 7th, 8th and 9th bright days of the month of *Aswina* when non-vegetarian food is offered to Her.

Vimala is described as Supreme Vaishnavi goddess who takes *Kaibalya* or *Mahaprasad* of Lord Jagannath as her only food unlike other goddesses in Jagannath temple. She goes to bed only after Lord Jagannath retires. Vimala is most closely associated with the rituals of Lord Jagannath compared to other goddesses in the temple. When goddess Lakshmi has her separate arrangement for cooking other than Mahaprasad, Vimala takes Mahaprasad throughout the year except on 7th, 8th and 9th bright days of the month of *Aswina*. During these days of Durga Puja, she is offered two goats a day on each of the three days (total six goats) as sacrifice to Her due to the influence of 'Bamachar worship' of Saktism which seems to be a later introduction. The sacrifice of goats to Mother goddess is done late in the night after Lord Jagannath goes to bed which clearly shows that the priests of Lord Jagannath do not co-operate with *Bamachar* worship of Vimala and such worship is being performed by a few Bamachar worshippers in Vimala temple. The rituals of Lord Jagannath are based on *Sudhachar* only. The domed roof of Vimala with its inner surface reveal the figures of Vaishnavism. Though Vimala, the first and foremost deity of Uddiyan (Orissa) has been described as Bhairabi and Lord Jagannath as Bhairaba, the Vaishnavites treat her as wife of Lord Balabhadra.

Out of sixteen days of Durga Puja in the month of *Aswin*, Goddess Vimala does not wear any specific attire on first and last four days. During the rest eleven days, she is adorned as

Bhubaneswari, Bana Durga, Rajarajeswari, Ugratara, Matangini, Bagala, Narayani, Simhabahini, Jaya Durga, Shuli Durga and Harachandi respectively.

From the 8th dark day to the new moon-day of *Aswin* (eight days), Durga -Madhab (Durga and Madhab or Jagannath fastened together on a wooden platform) are seated on a cot in the Jagamohan of Vimala temple and from first bright day to ninth bright day take up on a journey to Narayani temple of Dolamandap Sahi on a chariot which is known as *Sakta gundicha* or *Car Festival of Durga Madhab*.

Viraja :

Viraja - tirtha on the sacred bank of river Baitarani found its celebration during Mahabharat days and commemorates ten Horse Sacrifices (*Dasaswamedha* Yajna), conducted by Lord Brahma in Puranic age and Yayati Keshari-I, the king of 10th century A.D. It has got its early name and fame as a Sakti-pitha in the Puranas like *Visnu Purana*, *Brahma Purana*, *Kapila Samhita*, *Kubjika tantra*, *Jnanaranaba tantra* and *Brihannila tantra* etc. It is said that the goddess emerged from the sacrificial fires of the *Aswamedha Yajna*.

Viraja mostly remains clothed. She firmly holds the tail of buffalo-demon by her left hand and pierces it with a spear by the right. Image of goddess with two hands dates back to 4th or 5th century A.D. It is one of the fifty-one distinguished Sakti-shrines of India, erected from the sacred navel - chord of goddess Sati. The nine day - festival of Durga Puja is celebrated with great fanfare and on the fifth day of the function, the car festival of Viraja is celebrated by thousands of devotees from all around which is known as 'Sakta-Gundicha'. Some are of opinion that Viraja is no other than Prajna - Paramita of Buddhism.



The goddess Viraja is clustered around with three Varahas, five Nrusimhas, seven Matrikas, eight Bhairabs, nine Durgas, twelve Madhavas, twelve Ganeshas and one hundred and eight Rudras. Though the deity relates to 4th century A.D., the present sanctum is of 200 years old only. The place Jajpur and its suburbs are full of icons of Buddhism and Jainism such as Bodhisattvas, Dhyani Buddhas and Jaina Tirthankars. Udayagiri, Ratnagiri, Lalitagiri and Altagiri are four ancient Sakta centres in the suburbs, with Buddhist deities Tara, Heruka, Kurukula and Aparajita.

Sarala

Goddess Sarala of Jhankad, a village in Jagatsinghpur district is being worshipped by people of Orissa as Goddess of Learning and wielder of powers as Minerva in Greek myth. According to a legend, Lord Parashuram, the incarnation of Lord Visnu gained all wisdom and powers to conquer the whole world twenty one times, by lying in prostration to goddess Sarala, and so the place is also known as Parashuram Pitha.

Goddess Sarala with her eight arms fought with the demon of beastly power, ignorance and leziness, Mahishasura, holding the gaping mouth of the demon with one hand and with the other seven, she brandishes weapons and a gong-bell. The lion, the *Bahana* or Vehicle of the goddess, attacked demon from right when she pressed the creature on the back with her mighty foot. Goddess Sarala has got some resemblance with image of Durga in Baital temple dating back to 8th century A.D. Sarala blessed Adikabi Sarala Das the epic poet of Odia Mahabharat. She bestowed grace on the illiterate Sarala Das to produce Odia Mahabharata a perennial source of illumination for scholars and the lovers of art and culture.

The original sanctum that stands in ruins has given place to the present shrine which is of two hundred years old only. The festivals during Dasahara, Raja Sankranti and Pana Sankranti are of special significance which draw millions of people from all around.

Mangala

The banks of sacred river Prachi were once the sites for accomplishment of tantricism. It stretched from Kakatpur of Puri district to Phulnakhara of Cuttack district, clustered around by gods and goddesses of antiquities, ranging from 2nd century A.D. to 11th century A.D.

Goddess Mangala dates back to 9th century A.D. and the temple in which she is enshrined relates to 15th century A.D. The Divine Mother seated on *Lalitasan* on a double lotus pedestal with her four arms, holding a full moon symbolising Dharma Chakra by her upper right hand, a bunch of lotus buds by left upper, a Japa mala (garland of beads) by lower right and Japa mudra in the left lower, looks graceful with her jewellery crown carved with super artistic refinement. The holy Mother has her special recognition among the devotees of Orissa because of her association with Lord Jagannath during Nabakalebar (the renovation ceremony of the body) of Lord Jagannath. It is believed that *Daitas*, the *Savara* Sevakas of Lord Jagannath, pray for her direction when they set out on a journey to locate holy log (Daru) for the icon of the Lord.

According to some scholars, Mother Mangala was originally Buddhist goddess Tara brought from Srilanka during the days of maritime relationship between Kalinga (Orissa) and Srilanka and was absorbed into Hindu pantheon later.

The name of the place Kakatpur has its origin from the name Kakati, the tutelary goddess



of the place. Some scholars believe that Mangala is no other than Kakatei. In the nearby village 'Chourasi' goddess Varahi is worshipped. She has the face of a boar, pot bellied, holding a fish in one hand and a cup in the others, and the image relates to 9th century A.D. Two armed goddess Mahisa Mardini of Someswara temple at Kakatpur seems to be contemporary of Viraja at Jajpur. Besides, four armed goddess of Motia, six armed goddess of Astaranga, eight armed goddess of Amanakuda, ten armed goddess of Lataharan, eight armed Chamunda of Angeswara temple and ten armed Chamunda of Mangala Temple at Kakatpur draw attention of scholars, archaeologists and historians.

Bhagavati :

The temple of Bhagavati is located on the river bank of Salia at Banpur of Puri district. It is about 300 years old. Goddess Bhagavati was tutelary deity of the demon - king Banasura, as the legend goes. Bhagavati was originally worshipped under a tree with the offerings of goat, buffalo and human beings. The present sanctum was constructed by one Sri Jagannath Harichandan, a king of Rathor dynasty whose royal court was adorned by the Oriya poet, Lokanath Bidyadhar, author of *Chitrakala*, *Sarbanga Sundari*, *Padmavati Parinaya* and *Niladri Mahotsab* etc. The king had allotted some landed property for the rituals of Bhagavati along with *Chhatisa Niyog - Sevakas*.

The temple is built in three parts. The front chamber is Jagamohan and the second chamber is Natamandir where the moving deity "*Vije Pratima*" remains in the form of a log of timber known as 'Kathi Thakurani'. In the third chamber 'Biman', dwells Bhagavati with eight arms. There are associate gods and goddess namely Ganesh in the South, Durga in the East and Bhubaneswari

in the North. In the courtyard of the temple, there are goddesses like Palakasuni, Virajai etc.

Goddess Bhagavati originally was of terrible nature, and as such a metal belt was kept embedded around the month. The moving form of Bhagavati 'Kathi Thakurani' joins in all the rituals except in Dasahara when Kanak Durga joins.

'Bali Jena' is one of the Sevakas of Bhagavati who enacts the role of human sacrifice falling senseless to the ground for some hours when his wife acts as widow. This signifies that in the older days, there prevailed the custom of human sacrifice to the goddess 'Bhagavati'. A good number of festivals are observed round the year namely Chandan Yatra, Savitri Amabasya, Sitala Sasti, Chitalagi Amabasya and Durga Puja etc.

Harachandi :

The temple of Harachandi is situated on a sand dune near the mouth of the lake Chilika joining with the Bay of Bengal. the Divine couple Chandra Sekhar and Harachandi are worshipped here. The deity is carved on a black granite with skilled art and refinement. To the opinion of some scholars, Goddess Harachandi seems to be contemporary of Mangala of Kakatpur and Sarala of Jhankad.

The temple of Harachandi was constructed by one Sri Rama Chandra Dev, then Gajapati king of Orissa, on the advice of a tantric Sadhak named Tratak Kapalika who attended full accomplishment by long prostration to goddess Harachandi. Now, during Durga Puja a betel - nut is offered to the goddess in commemoration of the memory of the Gajapati and Mahaprasad of Lord Jagannath is brought daily from Jagannath temple, Puri for offering to the Divine Mother. During Durga Puja a goat is offered by Gajapati for sacrifice to the goddess Harachandi.



Ramachandi :

The temple of Ramachandi is located on a sand dune near the mouths of the rivers Kushabhadra and Dhanua, four miles away on the sea-side from Konark, in an isolated place. Previously the temple was not negotiable by any road with only sands and shrubs around but now a pucca road leads to the temple from Konark and Puri. The place is famous for picnic for the natural beauties around and cool breeze of the sea.

The boat shaped roof of the entrance hall of the temple is the only shelter for the people coming over, for picnic or prostration to goddess Mother, in rain and Sun. Mahisha Mardini Durga Ramachandi sits in the temple facing North. Sri Krupasindhu Mishra, the historian has described in his book 'Konark' that originally Ramachandi was worshipped in South - West corner of the court-yard of Konark temple and later shifted to the present shrine. This has been admitted by Pandit Nilakantha Das although Adikabi Sarala Das and Balaram Das differ in their opinion. *Banaparva* of *Sarala Mahabharat* and *Aranyak Parba* of *Jagamohan Ramayan* speak of Lord Ramachandra's prostration to goddess Ramachandi before invasion of Lanka.

The deity outside the Western wall is of archeological importance. Two and half feet high, three faced and eight armed goddess stands on a chariot driven by seven horses. In four arms she carries goad, noose, bow and arrow and other four arms are broken. The skilled art of Konark temple is reflected in this deity flanked by Ganesh and Barahas.

Charchika :

The temple of goddess Charchika is situated on a mountain at Banki town of Cuttack district, by the side of the river Mahanadi and associated with Lord Parashuram who had long

meditation before goddess Charchika to get rid of the sin of matricide. So the place is known as Parashuram pitha. A river named Renuka (the name of the mother of Parashuram) was flowing by the side of the mountain in the long past. One of the kings of Dhala dynasty had constructed this temple. Though the main temple is architecturally of no attraction, its front wooden pavilion preserves Orissan antique art and architecture in wooden carving. The thickets encircling the temple have been replaced by a small town.

The presiding deity fixed to the back wall of sanctum - sanctorum has withered and a replica is kept in the central niche of the outer Southern wall of the main shrine which may be well identified with a Chamunda standing on a dead body, fully undressed, with a garland of skull around her neck. Goddess Charchika with her eight hands displays sword, trident, snake, goad, garland of beads, boon, damaru (small double faced drum) and severed head etc. Goddess Charchika does not come under goddess of Vaishnavism. She is Chamunda, for which non-vegetarian food is offered daily. From iconographic and artistic point of view, she may be placed to Bhaumakara period of Orissa.

There are Pancha Mahadev and Sri Mangala inside the temple of Charchika. *Pana Yatra*, *Jhamu Yatra*, *Durga Puja*, *Kumar Purnima*, *Basanti Puja* and *Dola Yatra* are the important festivals where thousands of people swarm about. On eighth bright night of Durga Puja, a buffalo is offered to goddess Mangala. On Kumar Purnima, Charchika is dressed up in Kumari attire.

Brahmin *Sevakas* were engaged in the worship of Goddess by the kings and landed property allotted to them to meet the expenses of the rituals, round the year.



Bag Devi

Bag Devi or Byaghra Devi is the tutelary deity of Bhanja dynasty of Southern Orissa, worshipped in Kulad fort of Ghumusar in Ganjam district. Originally she was propitiated in one of the caves of Bag Devi - mountain, spreading to the western side of the fort, on every Tuesday, untill she got enshrined in a temple constructed by late Dhananjaya Bhanja, grand-father of the great poet Upendra Bhanja.

Eight armed goddess Bag Devi with bow and arrow sits on a tiger, pressing down a dead body. Ruins of the palace are visible at a distance from the temple. Goddess Bag Devi is worshipped in both the temples on the top and bottom of the hill. The temple on the mountain is known as 'Yoga Pitha' and at the bottom 'Bhoga Pitha' of goddess Bag Devi. On every Sankranti, Tuesdays of the month Chaitra and Durga Puja, the sanctum is crowded by people from all around. During Durga Puja goats are sacrificed to the Goddess. The tutelary deity of the royal family of Ghumusar became deity of the common people.

Stambeswari

Goddess Stambeswari (popularly known as Khambeswari) is the tutelary deity of Sonapur and Aska. Stambeswari of Sonapur is made of timber - post with a face of vermillion pressed with metallic eyes, nose and mouth to indicate the face of the Divine Mother. Both tribal and not-tribal people worship Stambeswari although originally she is associated with the Adivasis. The Sevakas are known as 'Dumals'.

Goddess Mother is worshipped in the form of two black wooden posts fixed to the ground, one Khamashiri and the other Paramishiri; the former being worshipped by Dumals and later by Brahmins. The black colour of the goddess forbids Dumals to wear black cloth or black

ornament. The women wear sari with red border and red glass bangles instead of black and do not put mark of vermillion on their foreheads. Dumalas worship Khambeswari during the month of Aswin.

An ancient copper-plate of 5th - 6th century A.D., reveals the name of Khambeswari worshipped during the regime of Maharaja Tustikara Dev. In the copper plates relating to Sulki King 'Kulastambeswari', Goddess Mother has been described as 'Bhattarika'.

Stambeswari of Aska, one of the eight tribal goddesses named 'Khidising', was propitiated by the kings of Sului dynasty. Wooden Stambeswari of Non-Aryan (Kandha) origin was later replaced by stone Stambeswari by Aryans. Common people believe that the wooden Stambeswari was transformed to stone Stambeswari by the grace of the Divine Mother. But during Durga Puja when the doors of stone Stambeswari get closed, goats are sacrificed to a wooden deity of two feet height kept in front of stone Stambeswari. The wooden deity is perhaps no other than goddess Stambeswari originally propitiated by tribal people.

The face of stone Stambeswari of Aska is made of vermillion fixed with metallic eyes, nose and mouth. Some of the scholars bring analogy between Stambeswari of Aska and Subhadra of Jagannath temple. To them, Subhadra was originally like Stambeswari but transformed to present form during the regime of Ramachandra Dev in 16th century A.D. When goddess Subhadra is worshipped with Bhubaneswari Mantra, Stambeswari is worshipped with Bana Durga Mantra. Both the goddesses have been accepted as Vaishnavis.

Hingula

The temple of goddess Hingula is situated in a village named Gopal Prasad, near the rivulet



'Joda', 25 kms. away from the old palace of Talcher. At the entrance of the village, a pavilion has been erected on which goddess Hingula is worshipped. The pavilion is almost open in a building of 60 feet long and 25 feet wide. It was constructed during the regime of Raja Kishore Chandra Birabar Harichandan and prior to that goddess was propitiated on an earthen pavilion. The king had allotted some landed property for the rituals of the goddess. The *Sevakas* are known as *Dehuris* who claim themselves to be descendant of Nala dynasty.

The mouth of goddess Hingula is imagined to be fire and her complexion fire-red. Of all the festivals, Chaitra festival is of great significance which continues for about nine days from 14th bright day of the month of Chaitra. From first Thursday of the month, *Dehuri* lies in prostration to the goddess Hingula taking *Habishyanna* until he dreams of the location of Goddess. Generally goddess Hingula is seen in the shape of fire at eastern or western direction of the pavilion where she is kept preserved by Sandal wood and ghee and later by coal from all around to keep the divine fire burning upto nine days of the function. After the ninth day, the fire is extinguished with *Pana* and *Panchamrita*.

The renovation of goddess Hingula is done after the death of every king of Talcher. A log is cut out at night from a tree indicated to *Dehuri* in dreams and after the *Jibanyasa* given by a Brahmin, it is kept on the pavilion. The *Sevakas* join in a dinner with new clothing arranged by the king.

Narayani

The temple of Narayani is at the border of Puri and Ganjam district near Khalikote, a little distance away from the National Highway negotiated with a pucca road, on the plateau of the Vallery mountain range from which flows a

fountain, the water of which is collected in a cistern for the worship of the deity and the water that flows to the second cistern is used for the purpose of bath by the pilgrims.

The temple is of no architectural importance. Some of the scholars opine that it was originally a Buddhist pitha and later transformed to a centre of Saktism. During 17th century A.D., the king of Khalikote, Sri Balunkeswar Mardaraj, had allotted landed property for the rituals of goddess Mother. The *Sevakas* of the ten-armed goddess Narayani are known as *Devatas*. During spring and autumn the natural beauty of the place attracts many for the picnic. On *Mesha Sankranti*, *Raja Sankranti*, *Durga Puja* and Chaitra festival, thousands of devotees gather there. Goats are sacrificed to the Mother during festivals.

Tara Tarini

The temple of Tara Tarini is situated on a mountain near the bank of the river Rushikulya, 35 kms away from Berhampur town of Ganjam district. The deities are of 10" height, made of stone, one Tara by name and the other Tarini. Some believe that the heart of divine mother Sati fell at this place. Goddess Tara, the most prominent among Dasha Mahavidya is being worshipped here, they say. During festivals goats are offered to goddess.

The temple is negotiable with 999 steps flanked by big trees to give shade to the pilgrims and on the other side runs a jeepable road to the temple. Festivals are conducted during every Tuesday of the month of *Chaitra*, *Durga Puja*, *Dola Yatra*, all *Sankrantis* with thousands of people assembled from all around. A small rest-shed is there with provision of water and electricity. The beauty of nature from the top of the hill is of added charm for the visitors.



Sapta Matrika

The centres for worship of Sapta Matrikas spread over Puri, Bhubaneswar, Jajpur, Belakhandi, Titilagarh, Khiching, Dharmasala, Kundeswar and Seragarh etc. At Puri, in Markandeswar Sahi, Sapta Matrikas such as Brahmi, Maheswari, Koumari, Vaishnavi, Varahi, Indrani and Chamunda are propitiated as Sapta *Bhagini* (seven sisters). The Matrikas are flanked by the images of Birabhadra and Ganesh on either side both at Puri and Jajpur although the placing of Matrikas at Dashaswamedha ghat of Jajpur differ in order from that at Puri and includes Maheswari, Kaumari, Sivaduti, Vaishnavi, Indrani, Varahi and Chamunda.

Sapta Matrika described in *Amarakosha* are Brahmi, Vaishnavi, Aindri, Roudri, Varahi, Kouberi, Kaumari, being the Saktis of gods Brahma, Vishnu, Indra, Rudra, Varaha, Kubera and Kumara (Kartikaya). But nowhere in Orissa Kauberi is available among seven divine mothers and Kauberi is substituted by Chamunda.

Sixty Four Yoginis

Sixty four Yogini temple of Hirapur contains eighty (80) images carved out of chlorite stone, kept in niches out of which only 63 Yoginis (one Yogini is missing) are available, of which Mahamaya, the presiding deity is of ten arms whereas other 19 deities are of 4 arms and 43 deities are of two arms only. Bhairabis are in sitting posture whereas Yoginis are in standing pose. Most probably the temple was constructed by Hira Mahadevi, the queen of Bhaumekara king Santikara Deva during ninth century A.D. and the village Hirapur has been named after her.

The temple at Hirapur is of circular shape having outer circumference of 90 feet and inside diameter of 25 feet. There is a rectangular mandap (9'6" x 8'0") at the centre having images

of Bhairaba and few Yoginis. The outer surface contains nine images of Katyayani.

The sixty four Yogini temple at Ranipur-Jharial is of circular shape with inner diameter of 47 feet, having 64 niches for 64 Yoginis. But at present, there are only 47 images present in dancing form. At the centre is found a rectangular mandap with images of eight armed Bhairaba and Ganesh.

Samaleswari

Samaleswari popularly known as Samalei was originally worshipped by tribals. During 16th century A.D. she was propitiated by Chowhans, the rulers of the land as their tutelary deity. The temple of Samaleswari was erected by Sri Balaram Dev, the first Chowhan ruler of Sambalpur. Many temples have already been erected in Her honour at Sambalpur, Barapali and Sonapur. Sambalpur has derived her name from goddess Samaleswari or Samalei.

The image of Samalei does not resemble with any of the goddesses in Hindu iconography. It is a monolith, the middle of which is little elevated with two depressions on both sides and a groove underneath representing the mouth. Gold plates designed to the shape of eyes are pressed above the depressions to represent eyes of the mother. She looks scarbit throughout the year with vermilion except on new moon day of the month of Aswina, when she looks white with Sandal. Dasahara is the most important festival of goddess Samaleswari. Beside, Samaleswari, the Chowhans worshipped Pataneswari who resembles with the image of Kali, enshrined in a temple at Sambalpur near Samaleswari temple.

Bhattarika

The temple of Bhattarika located on the right bank of the river Mahanadi, near village Sasanga of Badamba of Cuttack district amidst



scenes of nature, is associated with Lord Parashuram, the incarnate of Lord Vishnu who got boon from goddess Mother by his deep meditation and destroyed all the kings (bhata) of the world establishing peoples' government. The goddess derived her name 'Bhattarika', the destroyer of kings there often. The other name of goddess is 'Brihadamba' (Brihat + Amba), the great Mother from which the place derived its name 'Badamba'.

The original temple which is in ruins, was constructed during the regime of King Hatta Kishore and Malla Kishore in the 13th century A.D. The present temple was erected 300 years back by king Phakir Mangaraj Mohapatra with its entrance hall by Padmanav Mangaraj and Mohan Dasarathi Mangaraj.

The Central niches of the side walls preserve 'Parsvadevatas' like Ganesh, Kartikeya and Mahishamardini and Jaga Mohan, images of Surya, Kubera and Ganesh etc. The presiding deity Bhattarika is seated on a full bloomed lotus pedestals cross legged, with a full blown lotus in her left hand and Barada Mudra in the right. The antiquities of the deity may be well compared with two armed Viraja of Jajpur. Bhattarika is honoured as 'Tripura Sundari' of Dashamahavidya and addressed in prayer as "Maa Rajarajeswari Mahamaya Tripura Sundari Siddhi Bhattarika" and in short 'Tripura' in her rituals although her iconographic features correspond with the image of Tara of Buddhist pantheon. Non-vegetarian food is offered to the Goddess with green coconut-water in a bowl of bell-metal which is equivalent to wine as per Dakshina Bamachar of tantricism. *Pana Sankranti*, *Akshaya Trutiya*, *Devi Snanotsab* and *Durga Puja* are the festivals observed during every year, out of which Durga Puja is of great importance to all pilgrims coming in thousands from adjoining area. During Mahastami-Puja a buffalo is sacrificed to the

Mother Bhattarika and goats in Mahanavami worship.

Katak Chandi

Goddess Katak Chandi was originally worshipped in fort Barabati of Cuttack town and was shifted to the present place due to attack of Kalapahad in 1569 A.D., where she was worshipped by an old woman-devotee 'Maina Dei' in a small temple. The present temple has been constructed by the generous people like Rayasaheb Giridhari Prasad Moda and many others.

In course of time Parswadevatas such as Lord Siva, Nabagraha, Ganesh, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati, Hanuman and Lakshmi Narayan have been consecrated in Katak Chandi temple, Katak Chandi, the goddess of the royal family has become the goddess of the people like Shyamakali at Puri or Bag Devi at Kulad. Durga Puja is the best of all the festivals when goddess Mother, appears in different attires and forms such as Jagadhatri, Katyayani, Siddhidatri, Shailaputri, Bhubaneswari, Shodashi, Ugratara, Tripura Bhairabi, Matangi, Kamala, Narayani, Bagala Mukhi, Maha Saraswati, Maha Lakshmi and Mahishamardini. Besides, during Dipavali festivals, goddess Chandi is adorned as Kali, in Kartika Purnima as Annapurna, on the thursday of the month of Margashir as Lakshmi and in Sripanchami of the month of Magha as Mahasaraswati. During the month of Chaitra, vernal festival of Divine Mother is observed for nine days. Goats were offered to the goddess on Mahastami of Durga Puja and vernal festival but the system has been abolished recently due to the protests of some intellectuals.

Barunei

The temple of Barunei is located one and a half miles away from Khurda town on a hillock,



150 feet from the ground level. There are two black stone images, Arunei and Barunei by name worshipped as presiding deities in the temple. The Vije Pratima (the moving deity) 'Kanak Durga' is worshipped during four days of Durga puja, i.e. from 7th bright day of Aswin to 10th bright day and rest of the days in the year. She remains worshipped in the residence of the priest. During the regime of Gajapati Maharaja of Orissa at Khurda Garh, Kanak Durga and Jaya Durga of royal palace got together on Dasahara in the particular place every year and dispersed after the function was over; Kanak Durga to the residence of the priest and Jaya Durga to the palace. Now Jaya Durga is worshipped in the palace of Gajapati Maharaja at Puri. At the foot of the mountain, there are Parswadevatas such as Mahadev, Mahavir and Dudhakhai Thakurani etc.

Daily, *Khiri* and *Enduri pitha* are offered to the goddess Arunei and Barunei. Some writers say that the Gajapati Maharaja of Orissa brought images of Uchista Ganesh (Bhanda Ganesh or Kamada Ganesh) and Arunei - Barunei from Kanchi and enshrined the Divine Mothers at Khurda and took Bhanda Ganesh to Jagannath Temple. Because of Her origin of worship in South India, *Enduri Pitha* (Idli) is offered to the goddess daily. *Raja Sankranti* is best of all the festivals when devotees in thousands from all around assemble. On Mahastami of the month of Aswin, goats are offered to the goddess.

Ugratara

The temple of Ugratara is located at Bhusandpur of Puri district, only two kms away from lake Chilika. The perennial flow of a fountain there provides transparent water to the devotees. The image of Goddess corresponds with Hindu Tara but not a Buddhist pantheon. The deity is only 1' 6" high, with her left leg on the chest of Lord Siva and right on his thigh. She is adorned

with garland of skulls around her neck and snakes around her arms. The place is full of scenery and looks like the temple of Kedar Gouri at Bhubaneswar. The place is considered to be the best for the 'Tantra-Sadhakas'. Raja Sankranti and Durga Puja are the important festivals of the year thronged by thousands of people from all around.

Maninaga

Maninaga is the tutelary deity of Raj-Ranpur and its suburbs. The original rulers of this Garajat were said to be the descendants of the Sabar-king Biswabasu, and subsequently Bagedis came into power. A piece of stone was originally worshipped on the mountain as Goddess. The offerings made to the goddess was eaten away by a cobra set with gem, as the legend goes. The mountain and the goddess derived their names as such.

Bagedis were very powerful due to the grace of Maninaga and could bring the suburb areas under their control. The neighbouring kings were tempted to steal away the deity from the mountain. Goddess Maninaga disappeared in the nether regions leaving a hole on the top of the mountain which was subsequently covered with golden plate and worshipped. A temple of 25 feet height having no architectural refinement, was erected on the mount to save the people from rain and Sun. It is said, in the month of Magha, a man was offered to the goddess as sacrifice which was discontinued after independence. A tribal Sevak named 'Jani' was engaged for the purpose of worship. Because of the difficulties to climb the mountain infested by wild animals, a temple was constructed later, by the then king at the foot of the mountain where the goddess is worshipped both by Jani and Brahmin priests. People going to the shrine on the top of the mountain worship the goddess irrespective of their caste or creed.



The morning food of Maninaga is arranged by Jani out of the landed property allotted to his forefathers by the king and night offerings by generous devotees. The shrine and its suburbs are now a good resort for picnic.

Kalijai

Surrounded by blue waters of the lake Chilika, the temple of Kalijai stands on a hillock, a little away from Balugaon of Puri district. It was constructed by one of the kings of Banpur after the kingdom shifted to Parikud in a critical period during British regime. The shrine is associated with a story written by Pandit Godabarish, the celebrated poet of the state. Jai, a newly married girl of village Banpur, was on the way to her father-in-law's house at Parikud, in a boat in the lake Chilika along with her guardians. Unfortunately the boat was capsized in a storm and Jai found missing amidst all others. The laugh and cry of a girl was often heard from the hill top and few days later, a shrine was erected in commemoration of Jai on the hillock where she was worshipped as goddess Jai or Kali Jai. But some of the critics opine that the story of Kali Jai has been written in imitation of Wordsworth's poems on Lucy. Makar Sankranti is the best of all the festivals at Kali Jai; goats and fowls are sacrificed to the goddess without being killed. The natural scenery of the Chilika lake attracts many during autumn and winter for picnic.

Bhadrakali

Bhadrakali of Bhadrak, formerly propitiated as Panna Devi dates back to 3rd century A.D. The old temple where this goddess originally enshrined is now in ruins. A stone of 6'-0" long, 1'-0" width and 1'-0" height of the old structure, kept preserved in State Museum of Bhubaneswar reveals the antiquities of the sanctum both in inscription and architecture. The present shrine was erected later on the bank of the river Salandi.

This four armed, black stone deity, daintily carved with ornamental refinement displays sword in the top right hand and a skull in the top left and with the bottom right a holy child on the lap. Jaya and Vijaya are the Parswadevatas in the temple.

Towards the north of Bhadrak town, in the village Bhuyan Mahal, Bhadrakali was originally worshipped, according to the legends. During the invasion of Kala Pahad, the deity was taken away from the temple and concealed in the river bed of Salandi. A few days later, one Anga Prusty, a devotee of the goddess constructed the present temple. One Sri Balabhadra Nath, a yogi, was worshipper of this goddess. Later his son-in-law and daughter Abhaya dedicated their lives to the noble services of the goddess. Bhadrakali was so much pleased that she left the unfathomed bed of the river Salandi and followed the son-in-law of Bhadrakali to the place of present structure.

Kanta Devi

Kanta Devi is the tutelary deity of Bonai, Pallahada and Deogarh area, worshipped by both Adivasi and Non-Adivasi people during Durga Puja every year with pomp and gaiety. She remains hidden in a cave of Khandadhara mountain range near the village Sanjal of the Adivasi Bhuyans. She looks like a Siva Linga, made of copper, iron and gold weighing 500 grams approx. Every year, during Dasahara festival, Bhuyan priest or Dehuri invites goddess Kanta Devi from the cave, offering fowl as sacrifice, generally on Newmoon, *Pratipada* and *Dwitiya* of the month of *Aswina*. She moves in a procession from house to house, village to village, being worshipped in the courtyards with the sacrifice of fowl and goat. Kanta Devi is worshipped with wine and blood. In some of the families, she is kept immersed in the wine. She is worshipped for a period of six to seven days till she reaches the village Kantajodi on Mahastami, adjacent to the royal palace of Bonaigarh. She is thereafter, received by the royal



family through the priest of the palace (but not Dehuri) and taken to royal palace where she takes rest for a day in the arsenal of the palace. On Vijaya Dasami, she returns in a different route being worshipped by the villagers in their houses till she comes back to her cave on Kumar Purnima. Dehuri keeps the goddess inside the cave, covered with a piece of stone.

Gouri

Gouri of Ekamra pitha, Bhubaneswar, has been described in Swarnadri Mahodaya and Kapila Samhita of fifteen century A.D. She is considered to be supreme goddess of eight Chandikas of Bhubaneswar pitha such as Kapali, Gouri, Uttarayani, Ambika, Dwarabasini, Bindhya basini, Dakshina Chandi and Ramayani. Gouri of Bhubaneswar has got resemblance with Tripura Gouri of *Agni Purana*. She stands on a full blown lotus with her four arms displaying noose in the right-top, garland of leads in the bottom-right, goad in the left top and Barada Mudra in left bottom. The female partners, Jaya and Vijaya, stand on both the sides. To the left and right side of the legs, stand deer and lion respectively. Gouri is the goddess of Vaishnavites. Durga Puja is the best of all the festivals, the expenditure which is borne by the committee of Lingaraj temple. Lord Lingaraj is celebrated as the Supreme God and Gouri the Supreme Goddess.

The art and architecture of Gouri temple dates back to 9th century A.D. The temple was constructed by Subhakara Dev of Bhoma dynasty and his queen Tribhuban Mahadevi. The copper plates found at Boud and Dhenkanal reveal that Tribhuban Mahadevi renamed herself as Siddha Gouri and took over the reign of administration after her husband. So is the case with Mohini temple which was constructed by the queen Mohini Devi.

Bhubaneswar though a centre of Saivism, is considered to be one of the leading *pithas* of

Saktism in Orissa since 7th century A.D. giving birth to Baitala, Gopalini, Gouri, Mohini and Savitri shrines. The Sapta Matrika of Parshurameswar temple is oldest of all. The shrines of Mohini, Kapali, Bhubaneswari and Savitri of eighth century A.D. , Gouri temple of ninth century A.D. and Parvati temple of 12th century A.D. depict antiquities of Saktism in Orissa.

Influence of Saktism :

The worship of plants, trees and log by the remote tribal race gave birth to the concept of Saktism. *Navaratra* worship which involves *Navapatrika* (nine plants) presided by nine goddesses called Nava Durga, clearly depicts its relationship with vegetation and fertility. *Devi Bhagavat* and *Kalika Purana* speak of mountain-resorts of Mother goddesses such as Siva in Himalayas, Mangala in Vindhya and Nanda in Malaya. Hence the goddess of vegetation propitiated by the tribal race in woods and hills crept into Hindu Pantheon in course of time as Stambeswari, Samaleswari and even the prime deities of Jagannath temple, along with their festivals of vegetation and fertility such as *Janhi Osha*, *Bata Osha*, *Phuluri Osha*, *Budhei Sudhei* and *Khudurukuni* etc.

The worship of Durga with Madhab, Parvati with Shankar, Subhadra with Jagannath and Balabhadra shows the intermingling of Saktism, Vaishnavism and Saivism. Vimala, the prime deity of Uddiyan was accepted as wife of Balabhadra by the Vaishnavites. This gave birth to KAULAS, who go far beyond the bonds of different cults and divinities with the realisation of one undivided supreme.

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