



# Durga temple at Kudapatna : A Study on Art and Architecture

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## Introduction

The Durga temple of Kudapatna is one of the important Sakta shrines of the Prachi Valley. It is located at the village Kudapatna in the Balipatna Block of the Khurda district. The temple is situated about 5 km from Niali on the left bank of the river Prachi.<sup>1</sup> It is built on the ruins of the earlier thatched temple. The original temple of Barabhuja Durga was a brick monument of the Prachi valley.<sup>2</sup> The local people say that the present temple has been repaired in 1980s by the co-operation of the villagers. So it is completely a renovated temple of that locality. The temple consists of two structures such as *vimana* and *jagamohana*. It is built in sand stones and bricks. This temple faces to east. Besides the main temple, two additional shrines are also erected inside the temple complex. They are viz; one is Bhabakundalesvara Siva and another shrine is of Lord Narasimha. The presence of Lord Siva and Lord Narasimha in the temple complex suggests that the temple site is a co-ordinating place of Saktism, Saivism and Vaishnavism. Really, the Prachi valley is affluent with Durga images all around. Durga images of two handed to twelve handed speak about the evolution of Durga cult in Odisha.<sup>3</sup> These images are from the Pre-Gupta period to the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. <sup>4</sup> Among all the extant Durga images of the Prachi valley, the twelve handed



image of Mahisamardhini Durga of Kudapatna is a unique image from the iconographical point of view.<sup>5</sup> A modest attempt has been made in this article to highlight the detailed art and architecture of the Durga temple of Kudapatna.

## Art and Architecture of the Temple

### A. *Vimana* :

The *vimana* of the temple is a *pidha deula* and its height is about 25 feet from the surface of the temple complex.<sup>6</sup> It has four fold divisions such as *pistha*, *bada*, *gandi* and *mastaka*. The *pistha* is about 2 feet high from the surface of the temple complex. The *bada* is *panchanga* type i.e. having five fold divisions such as *pabhaga*, *tala jangha*, *bandhana*,



upper *jangha* and *baranda*. All the component parts of the *bada* are devoid of sculptural embellishments.

The central niches of the three sides of the *bada* are housed with the *parsva devata* images of Maha-Vairabhi, Maha-Sarasvati and Narayani. All the side deities are housed in the *nisha garbhakas* (shrines), which are built in same designs and height. Each *nisha* shrine is *pidha* order and it is about 15 feet high from the surface of the temple complex. The local devotees

have housed these *parsva devatas* of the temple in 1990s. Maha-Vairabhi is the *parsva devata* of the southern side. The four armed image of Maha-Vairabhi is carved in *lalitasana* pose on the double petalled lotus pedestal. She displays *khadga* in upper right hand, *abhaya mudra* in lower right hand, *pana patra* in upper left hand and the lower left hand possesses a *chhinna mastaka*. The backside of the head of Devi Vairabhi is decorated with a *prabhamandala*, which is designed in full blown lotus

flower. The image Maha Vairabhi is made of chlorite stone. It measures 11 inches in width and 1 foot 5 inches in height respectively. Maha-Sarasvati is the *parsva devata* of the western side. The four armed image of Maha-Sarasvati is carved in *lalitasana* pose on the single petalled lotus pedestal. She displays a circular indistinct object in upper right hand, *abhaya mudra* with rosary in lower right hand, a full blown lotus in upper left hand and *varada mudra* with *lekhani* in lower left hand respectively. The backside of



the head of Devi Maha-Sarasvati is carved with a *prabhamandala*, which is designed by lotus petals. The image Maha-Sarasvati is made of chlorite stone. It measures 1 foot 5 inches in height and 11 inches in width. Goddess Narayani is the *parsva devata* of the northern side. The four armed image of Narayani is carved in *lalitasana* pose on the double petalled lotus pedestal. One of Her legs has kept on the pedestal and another leg is pendent. She holds lotus flower in upper right hand, lotus bud in lower right hand, *shankha* in upper left hand and *gada* in lower left hand respectively.

The backside of the head of Devi Narayani is carved with a *prabhamandala*, which is decorated with lotus petals. The image Narayani is made of chlorite stone. The image Narayani measures 1 foot 5 inches in height and 11 inches in width respectively. This Goddess is being worshipped by the local people as Maha-Kali. Here B.K. Ratha refers to an image of Ambika in the side niche of the temple.<sup>7</sup> Now this Ambika image is not found preserved in the temple premises.

The *gandi* of the *vimana* is a pyramidal superstructure. It consists of two *potalas*, the lower and upper, which contain 4 and 3 *pidhas* respectively. Each *pidha* is decorated with *tankus* in all sides. The centre of the upper *pidha* of the lower *potala* is decorated with *pidha mastaka* designs in three sides except the front. A large sized *pidha mastaka* design is decorated at the centre of the front side *raha paga* of the *gandi*. *Deula Charini* figures and *dopichha* lions are



completely absent in their respective places above the *gandi*. The entire structure of the *vimana* is plastered with modern cement.

The *mastaka* of the *vimana* consists of *beki*, *ghanta*, above which there is another *beki*, *sila*, *khapuri*, *kalasa*, *ayudha* (*chakra*) and *dhvaja*. The sanctum preserves the large sized image of Goddess Durga as the presiding deity of the temple. The twelve armed image of Goddess Durga is carved in *ugra* posture on the plain pedestal. She is piercing into the neck of *Mahisasura* by a trident. Lion, the conventional mount of Goddess Durga is carved on the right of the pedestal. *Mahisasura*, the demon is depicted on the pedestal of the slab. The right side six hands of Goddess Durga display *khadga*, lotus, trident, *varada mudra*, an indistinct object and the backside hand is empty. The left side six hands hold shield, *gada*, bow, bell, snake and the backside hand is blank. The image Durga is made of chlorite stone. It measures 5 feet 5 inches in height and 2 feet 3 inches in width. This image is a unique sculpture of the Prachi Valley in the coastal-belt of Odisha. Observing the iconography of the presiding deity, Hansanatha Sahoo remarks that the image is an art of the Bhaumakara period.<sup>8</sup> Another stone image of eight armed Goddess Durga is also found worshipped on the left side of the presiding deity. The eight armed image of Goddess Durga is carved in standing posture on the pedestal. This image is made of chlorite stone. The right side hands of Devi display *khadga*, trident, lotus or conch and *chakra* while the left side four hands hold rosary, bow, snake and one hand holds the hair of *Mahisasura*. Lion, the conventional mount of Devi is carved on the right of the pedestal. The *Mahisasura* figure is depicted on the pedestal. The image *astabhuja* Durga measures 3 feet 4 inches in height and 1 foot 10 inches in width. Observing this Durga image, H.N. Sahoo remarks

that the attributes of conch and *chakra* with the upper hands and the lower right hand holds a trident and the left hand drags the hair of the demon is known as Durga-Madhava.<sup>9</sup> Besides, there is a brass image of Mahisamarddini Durga also found on the right side of the presiding deity. This image is considered as the *chalanti pratima* of the presiding deity. The image presiding deity is adorned with the *makara* headed arch supported by the pillar on each side. The presiding deity is installed on the *simhasana* of 2 feet high.

The sanctum has one doorway towards the *jagamohana* hall. Gaja-Lakshmi image is carved in *abhiseka* pose on the centre of the doorway lintel. *Navagrahas* are carved in standing posture on the architrave above the doorway lintel. They are depicted with as usual attributes in their hands. The right side base of the doorframe is inserted with a stone slab containing an image of Trivikrama.

In the right side doorway wall of the sanctum is inserted with an image of Ganesha. The four armed image of Ganesha is carved in dancing posture on the back of mouse. He displays broken tusk in upper right hand, rosary in lower right hand, a pot of *ladus* in upper left hand and *parashu* (hatchet) in lower left hand respectively. The image Ganesha is made of chlorite stone. The backside of the head of the deity is decorated with *prabhamandala*, which is designed with lotus petals. The image Ganesha measures 2 feet in height and 1 foot 2 inches in width. This image is built in the last quarter of the twentieth century. The left side doorway wall of the sanctum is fixed with an image of Karttikeya. The four armed image of Karttikeya is carved in standing posture on the double sectional pedestal. Peacock, the conventional mount of the deity is carved on the right of the pedestal. The lower part of the pedestal is decorated with lotus petals.



He displays trident in upper right hand, *abhaya mudra* in lower right hand, *sankha* in upper left hand and bow in lower left hand respectively. The backside of the head of deity is decorated with *prabhamandala*. The image Karttikeya is made of chlorite stone. It is about 2 feet in height.

### B. Jagamohana :

The *jagamohana* of the temple is a flat roof structure and its height is about 13 feet from the surface of the temple complex. It has been built in 2008. The structure of the *jagamohana* has four open doorways, two on the southern side and one on each side of the east and north respectively.

Lion, the conventional mount of Goddess Durga is installed at the centre of the *jagamohana* hall. Inner walls of the *jagamohana* are completely plain and are recently covered with glazed tiles. Two lion figures are installed on both sides of the eastern doorway. They are acting as the *dvarapalas* of the temple.

### Additional Shrines

Besides the main temple, there are two additional shrines also noticed inside the temple complex. They are the shrines of Bhabakundalesvara Siva and Lord Narasimha.

#### A. Shrine of Bhabakundalesvara :

In the north-east corner of the temple complex is occupied by a Saiva shrine, which is dedicated to Lord Bhabakundalesvara Siva. The shrine is a *pidha* order structure and it is about 18 feet high from the surface of the temple complex.

The central niches of the three sides of the *bada* of the additional shrine are housed with the *parsva devata* images of Ganesha, Karttikeya and Devi Parvati. Ganesha is the *parsva devata* of the southern side. The four armed image of

Ganesha is carved in *ardha paryanka* pose on the pedestal. He displays *parasu* in upper right hand, rosary in lower right hand, broken tusk in upper left hand and the lower left hand touches his belly. The backside of the head of deity is decorated with a *prabhamandala*. The image Ganesha is made of sand stone. The lower part of the pedestal is decorated with *kalasa*, *dhupadani*, etc. The image Ganesha measures 3 feet 5 inches in height and 1 foot 10 inches in width respectively. Karttikeya is the *parsva devata* of the eastern side. The two armed image of Karttikeya is carved in *lalitasana* pose on the pedestal. He holds dagger in right hand and the left hand lies on his secret organ. Peacock, the conventional mount of the deity is not found carved on the pedestal. The image Karttikeya is made of sand stone. It measures 3 feet in height and 1 foot 9 inches in width respectively. Devi Parvati is the *parsva devata* of the northern side. The four armed image of Devi Parvati is carved in standing posture on the double petalled lotus pedestal. The bottom part of the pedestal is decorated with scroll work. Lion, the conventional mount of Devi Parvati is carved on the right of the pedestal. Female *sakhi* figures are carved on both sides of Devi Parvati. She holds *nagapasa* in upper right hand, rosary in lower right hand, *ankusa* in upper left hand and stalk of a lotus flower in lower left hand respectively. The backside of the head of Devi Parvati is decorated with trefoil arch, *makara* head at the base and the *kirtimukha* motif at the apex. *Apsara* figure holding garland is depicted on both side top corners of the slab. The image Parvati measures 2 feet 6 inches in height and 1 foot 4 inches in width. It is made of chlorite stone. All the *parsva devatas* of the additional shrine are housed in the *pidha mundi* niches.

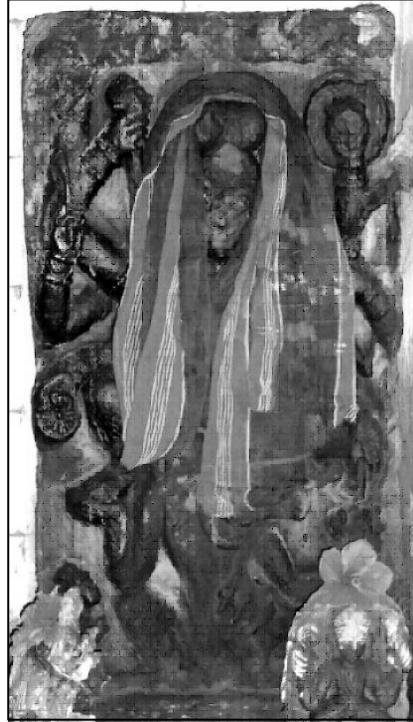
The *gandi* of the additional shrine is a pyramidal superstructure. The *mastaka* of the



shrine consists of *beki*, *ghanta*, *amalakasila*, *khopuri*, *kalasa*, *ayudha* (trident) and *dhvaja*.

The sanctum preserves the *Sivalingam* within the *Saktipitha* as the presiding deity of that shrine. The floor of the sanctum is about 10 feet below the surface of the temple complex. Masonry steps of the descending order are provided for approach towards the sanctum.

According to the local people, this shrine is earlier than the present (renovated) Durga temple of the complex. B. K. Ratha has mentioned that the Bhabakundalesvara shrine of the temple complex belongs to the twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> On the basis of the iconographical features of the *parsva devatas* (of the shrine), the construction period of the Bhabakundalesvara shrine is earlier than the present renovated Durga temple of the site.



pedestal. He holds *chakra* in upper right hand, *shankha* in upper left hand. The lower two hands of the deity are engaged to take out the entrails of Hiranya Kashyapa, the demon. The backside of the head of deity is decorated with elongated

*prabhamandala*. The image Narasimha is made of chlorite stone. It is built in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The doorway of the shrine is completely plain. The left side inner wall niche of the *jagamohana* is inserted with the *Dasavatara* panel of Lord Vishnu while the right side wall contains the *navagraha* panel are made in the same period of the presiding deity.

Recently, a *natamandapa* is being erected by the village community. Garuda, the conventional mount of the deity (Narasimha) is installed on the floor of the *natamandapa*. Mahavir Hanumana figures are installed

near the four gateways of the temple complex.

### Boundary Wall :

The temple complex is enclosed by a boundary wall, which is 6 feet in height. It is made of modern bricks. The temple complex has four entrances, one on each cardinal direction of the boundary wall.

### Date of the Temple

There is no authentic record with regard to the exact date of the original temple of *Barabhuja Mahisamarddini* Durga of Kudapatna. The local people say that before the present temple there was a thatched temple for

There is a *jagamohana* recently erected in front of the additional shrine. Three bull figures are installed on the open floor before the *jagamohana* hall. They are being considered as the *vahanas* of Lord Bhabakundalesvara Siva.

### B. Shrine of Narasimha

There is another additional shrine recently erected in the south-west corner of the temple complex. It is a *pidha deula* and is about 20 feet in height. The sanctum of the shrine preserves the image of Narasimha as the presiding deity. The four armed image of Narasimha is carved in standing posture on the lotus petal designed



the Goddess Durga. Here Hansanatha Sahoo, one of the senior scholars of the Prachi Valley, is of the view that the architectural and sculptural representation brings back to 6<sup>th</sup> -7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>11</sup> Original brick temple of Goddess Durga was completely destroyed by nature. Thereafter, a thatched temple was rebuilt on the ruins of the earlier one for worship of Goddess Durga. B.K. Ratha mentions that the temple of *Barabhuja* Durga was built in the eighteenth century A.D.<sup>12</sup> The original (earlier) temple of *Barabhuja* Durga may be assignable to the later part of the Somavamsi period or early part of the Ganga period. The earlier thatched temple has been completely renovated in 1980's by the co-operation of the villagers.

Now the temple is being managed by the Panda family of that village.

### Conclusion

Thus, it is known from the above discussion that the Durga temple of Kudapatna is an ancient Sakta shrine of the Prachi valley. The present Durga temple is erected on the earlier dilapidated thatched shrine of that site. The original side deities of the main temple are not found in the temple premises. The present *parvas devatas* of the temple are of the last quarter of the twentieth century. The iconographic feature of the presiding deity of the temple is a unique among all the extant Durga images of the Prachi valley. The additional shrine of Bhabakundalesvara inside the temple complex suggests that the original ruined temple of the Goddess Durga of the site must have been earlier than the present additional shrine of Lord Bhabakundalesvara. The presence of Narasimha shrine in the temple complex remind us that the site of the temple is a coordinating place of Saktism, Saivism and Vaishnavism. It indicates that during the medieval period the Sakta cult in the Prachi valley was closely associated with the

Saiva and Vaishnava faiths. From the religious point of view, the presiding deity (*Barabhuja* Durga) of the temple is well known in that locality. Considering the sacredness of the site, the Durga temple of Kudapatna can be regarded as one of the important Sakta shrines of the Prachi valley in Odisha.

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