



Kirtimukha, Papadahandi

Kirtimukha, Roaring Lion and Flying Vidyadharas in the Temple Art

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The Head of Glory or *kirtimukha*, Roaring Lion or *jagrata*, and the Flying *vidyadhara* are profusely carved on the temple walls of the upper Mahanadi valley from the 9th century onwards, but the earliest of these motifs are found amidst the temple ruins at Mohangiri in the Kalahandi and Banei in Sundergarh districts. The *kirtimukha* motif of Mohangiri is akin to that found on the doorjamb of the Bharatesvara temple at Bhubanesvar, assigned to the 7th century. In this example, two lined threads instead of festoons of pearls, come out of the mouth of the *kirtimukha* forming the top-portion of the caitya - medallion. Its fierce look speaks of the hoary origin. A vase like object is seen above the head of this motif. The *kirtimukha* motif of Banei is carved on a broken pillar which is decorated with diamond-shaped floral medallions in the bottom, *kirtimukha* in a rectangular niche in the center and a semicircular floral motif in the top portion.

The roaring lion figures of Mohangiri are carved in the corners of a stone slab of the collapsed temple which suggest that in the 7th century it was yet to be adopted as a part of

the pillar decoration. These peculiar lion figures are standing on their hind legs and horns are seen on their heads. Similarly the flying *vidyadhara* is depicted as frontally-facing,

holding a garland in his hands raised up to his chest level. This type of frontally-facing *vidyadharas* are found carved in the top portion of the back slabs of the Uma Mahesvara image of the Indralath temple at Ranipur Jharial and the Ardhanarisvara image of the Kosalesvara temple at Patnagarh, both in the Balangir district. The figures at Mohangiri are not so deeply carved into the stone, but remind us of a lightly executed wood carving. The *kirtimukha*, roaring lions and flying *vidyadhara* found at Mohangiri, Banei and Sarsara are the precursors of their species in

temple art. In the northern balcony of the brick-built *jagamohana* hall of the Kosalesvara temple at Vaidyanath in Sonepur district a peculiar *kirtimukha* head is carved on brick, from the mouth of which bunches of leaves are flowing down. Such motifs in a row are found carved on the brick-built Lakshmanesvara



Kirtimukha, Baud



Kirtimukha, Mohangiri

temple at Sirpur in Chhattisgarh state, dated to the 8th century.

The *jagamohana* pillars of the Kosalesvara

temple at Vaidyanath are unique in the sense that those are made of pale red stone and are highly decorated, each of those rising out of a *puṇnaghata*. From the base, the shaft of the pillar is square on the *puṇnaghata*, but immediately becomes octagonal, with four alternate facets displaying a *kirtimukha* head in each side holding a bunch of three strings of pearls in its mouth with a bell in the chain hanging in between the strings and four roaring lions in four corners of the body of the pillar, holding the festoons of pearls coming from both sides being suspended from the mouth of the *kirtimukha* head with their raised forepaws and putting those into their mouths. The middle portions of these pillars are decorated with two bands of exquisitely carved flower designs, having *dhanuganthi* motifs. Similar *kirtimukha* heads occur in all eight facets of the abacus block of these pillars in the upper portion, two thick garlands hanging below from their mouths, being connected with a round-shaped flower design and also a bell in chain hanging in between both strings. The abacus block is surmounted by an octagonal bracket capital, which is also decorated with eight lion heads in high reliefs in all eight corners of it. In the case of the *jagamohana* pillars of the Kapilesvara temple at Charda, in this portion the *yakṣa* seated figure flanked by two standing lady attendants in both sides and the flying *vidyadhara* couple with garland in hands occur. In the octagonal pillars of the open balcony of the *jagamohana* at Vaidyanath also, eight bands

of flower designs are carved from below up. In the upper portion of these pillars eight *kirtimukhas* with two strings of pearls coming out from their mouths are carved with eight bells in the lowest portion of the chain hanging in between both strings. The figure of lion at Vaidyanath is standing straight in his hind legs, but the lion figure of Charda has taken a posture of sitting on a stool. In the northern balcony, a *kirtimukha* head is carved in the base of a pilaster, from the mouth of which a bunch of leaves are hanging downwards. Such motifs in repeated course is found as decorations on the temple wall of the brick-built Lakshmanesvara temple at Sirpur, belonging to the 8th century.

The *jagamohana* pillars of the Kosalesvara temple at Patnagarh and the loose pillars found at Sauntpur are extremely similar. These pillars are emerging from a square base having two molding courses with a caitya window motif having a human head in its center. Above these base moldings, beaded lining and a semicircular big petalled flower motif occur. Above this design, four crouching lions with raised forepaws are depicted in all four corners of the shaft portion of this *jagamohana* pillar. This roaring lion is holding in its forepaws beaded strings of pearls coming from both sides and putting those into its mouth. Both of these strings of pearls with a bell in chain hanging in between both strings are coming out

of a big *kirtimukha* head, which is depicted above the roaring lion figure in the middle portion of the shaft



Flying Vidyadhara Couple, Vaidyanath



Flying Vidyadhara Couple, Kusang

amidst lined floral scrollwork. The upper portion of the shaft above this band is carved like *alamba* motif of a miniature temple having multifaceted and twelve cornered angles on its body and four big *kirtimukha* heads in the center of all four sides, two beaded strings of pearls coming out from the mouth of the *kirtimukha* head with a bell in chain hanging in between both festoons of pearls. The capital portion of this *jagamohana* pillar is four cornered, having the design of twelve small *kirtimukha* heads, three in one side, with two strings of pearls coming out from the mouth in both sides, a bell in chain hanging in between and running from one *kirtimukha* mouth to the other simultaneously. Above this square capital a long beam runs on all eight pillars in two rows, four in each row in both sides of the *jagamohana* hall. Such pillars are seen in the temple ruins at Sauntpur also. The uniqueness of these pillars is that in the middle portion of the shaft in between the crouching and roaring lions, a rectangular niche is carved in all four sides in the center portion of the square-shaped pillar, in all four sides.

In front of the present *jagamohana* of the Kosalesvara temple at Patnagarh, there is a Nandi *mandapa*, measuring around eight feet in length, breadth and height, having four pillars in all four corners. Each of these pillars has a square base having three molding courses and small *caitya* window motifs carved in all four sides, in which five petalled flower, *kirtimukha* head, a seated Ganesa figure etc.

occur. Above the square base the pillar has become octagonal, depicting eight *kirtimukha* heads in all eight corners of the pillar, strings of pearls coming out from their mouth in both sides and a bell hanging in between. This design is surmounted by a petalled design again, above which minute trellis scrollwork occur. Just after this scrollwork, design of *purnaghata* with four big-sized leaves arranged on it is carved, which is again connected to a four-cornered band of flower design on the pillar. The top abacus is connected to an absolutely plain portion of the pillar having four small *kirtimukha* heads in all four corners. The abacus is having projection in both sides with eight-petalled flower designs on those pillars. At Belkhandi also there is a broken pillar, which is octagonal in shape, four *kirtimukhas* carved in four sides and the strings of pearls coming out from their mouths connected to a *campaka* flower alternately, also carved in the remaining four sides.

A peculiar temple pillar is found at Lalei in Sundargarh district, depicting a *kirtimukha* head in the upper portion. It has bulging eyes but closed, showing contemplation. The nose is prominently carved, but below the nostrils there is no mouth. Broad bands of threads in twelve lines are hanging from the nose portion completely covering the mouth and chin portions. Below this beard-like carving, there is a semi-circular plate on three dotted lines of *mali p h u l a p h a d i k a* motifs. Below these lines there is a



Gajakranta, Gandharadi



Gaja Virala,
Narsinghnath

round flower and in the bottom portion there are three beaded lines again.

In the *anartha* section of the twine temple at Gandharadi in the Baud district a small niche of the size of about fifteen inches in height and eight inches in breadth is carved, which is flanked by the design of a kirtimukha, from the mouth of which festoons of pearls are hanging, overlaying the *vanalata* scrollwork, as found in the *kanika* on the *jangha* portion of all three temple at Baud, dedicated to Bhubanesvara, Kapilesvara and Siddhesvara.

In the Baud examples, Nayika figures are carved in high relief on stone blocks projecting from the shaft above *tala-bandhana*. The shaft above the projecting blocks is decorated with scrollwork and strings of pearls hanging from the mouth of a kirtimukha overlaying the scrollwork. The square capital has a seated yaksa figure.

Female figure with her left hand in katyavalambita and right hand in boon-giving posture of abhayamudra is carved on the pillar of the northern balcony of the jagamohana of Kosalesvara temple at Vaidyanath. Her arm-band or keyura is ornamented with a kirtimukha. Her katimekhala

or ornate girdle of a bunch of four bands of ornamental chains is decorated by kirtimukhas with festoons of pearls coming out from their mouths and falling on her thighs. A kirtimukha head is also fitted to this katimekhala as a buckle in the center of the waist, from which is hanging a thick chain with a bell hanging in its lowest portion. This chain is hanging from her waist up to the ankle-level. As a prabhavali is behind her head and one of the two small statured standing female attendants (one to her right side) is holding a vase, this female figure seems to symbolize divinity related to the water goddess.



Nara Virala,
Narsinghnath

The headgear of a divinity (probably Parvati) now only the head portion is kept in the Narsinghnath Temple Museum at Paikmal, the forehead portion of the Nrta Ganapati image at Harishankar and the exquisitely carved mukuta adorning the head of the Durga image found in the Kumari temple precinct at Banei are decorated with kirtimukha heads, from the mouth of which festoons of pearls

are hanging and moving from one mouth to other alternately. The capital block of a pillar found lying amidst temple ruins at Sauntpur,



Elephant and lion motifs, Buddha image pedestal, Shyam Sundarpur



Kirtimukha, Belkhandi

octagonal in shape has eight *kirtimukha* heads in all eight sides, from the mouth of which festoons of pearls are hanging, going from mouth to mouth.

But on a temple pillar found at Ambabhona in the Bargarh district the top portion is square, below which there is another square design with a molding course connected by four *kirtimukha* heads in all four sides. From these *kirtimukha* heads are hanging broad bands of floral garlands connecting to eight *kirtimukha* heads below, which are carved in the lower portion of the pillar, which is octagonal in shape. Festoons of pearls are hanging from these eight *kirtimukhas* with a chain hanging in between them. In the middle as well as lower portions of this pillar the strings of pearls are overlapping a broad band of flower motifs



Bull-Lion, Palsada

carved in between two dotted lines. This pillar decoration seems to represent the transition phase i.e. 11th century.

Kirtimukha head almost vanished after 13th century and very rarely found on temple walls of the upper Mahanadi valley. The solitary and single depiction

of the *kirtimukha* head in the southern outer entrance portal of the *jagamohana* of the Nilakanthesvara temple at Papadahandi in Nawarangpur district is very ornately decorated with a mukuta. It is having a protruding tongue, bulging eyes and holding two thick bunches of garland,



Kirtimukha, Lalei

signifying the very meaning of *kirtimukha*, the Face of Glory. It is a fine example of the intricately carved and sculptured panel of the 14th century and after this depiction, the *Kirtimukha* completely vanished from the sculptural decorations of the temple, but to find a place on the top of a post or pillar of low height in front of the temples, surmounting it. Such *kirtimukhas* on pillars are found at Sonapur, the best example being the one found in the temple precinct of the Suvarnameru temple at Sonapur.

Lion motifs

Lion motifs as singular pieces are found in its earliest form at Bhikampali in the Jharsuguda district, Sauntpur and in the private possession of Rajasaheb Jitamitra Prasad Singh Deo of Khariar, a noted historian. The roaring lion of



Kirtimukha and Lion motifs, Sauntpur



Jagratas flanking Kalasa, Baud

Bhikampali is frontally faced, while the Sauntpur lion is in profile, its manes very systematically represented. The earliest of the dopichha-simha (lion with two hind parts) is found amidst temple ruins at Mohangiri, which is dated to the 8th century. The pouncing lion figure of Khariar is in profile, which can be taken to be of the 14th century. Lion as a solitary figure or with the elephant is found in the temple panels in between pilaster designs at Saintala and Sauntpur. At Saintala, the center of the panel is having the seated figure of an ascetic in padmasana, flanked in both sides by pouncing lion, one in each side and mithuna couple in the extreme end. But in the panel at Sauntpur, it is a peculiar depiction of an elephant standing behind a lion, instead of the reverse, what is generally thought of in the case of gajakranta, in which an elephant is pounced upon by an attacking lion. The peaceful coexistence of lion and elephant is found in a long panel, carved on the pedestal portion of a huge Buddha image, seated in the bhumisparsamudra on a visvapadma pedestal at Shyamasundarpur in the Baud district. In this panel, a crouching lion is carved in the center, flanked by two elephants running in the outer directions in both sides and two yakshas or bhararaksakas in the extreme sides lifting the pitha of the Buddha image. The lion is facing to proper left and almost behind the running elephant to the proper left, which concept might have been borrowed by the sculptors while executing the above-cited Sauntpur panel. The

anarthas of the Baud temples are elongated khakhara-mundis, which are crowned by a kalasa with flanking *jagrata* motifs. A *jagrata* motif is seen on the broken pitha of one of these Baud temples also.

The profile figure of roaring lion motif, standing on left leg and putting the raised right leg on a crouching elephant below is carved in three proper right side of a Visnu image, now from waist portion above existing and completely the left portion vanished, found in the Indralath temple at Ranipur Jharial. This is the only of its kind found in the back-slab of an image in high relief. From the 11th century onwards the lion figures standing on its hind legs became common decoration in the anuraha recesses of the lower jangha of the temple in a narrow rectangular niche. This type of lion is called *viraja* or *virala* in the Silpa Prakasa (I. 225), a treatise on the temple architecture dated to circa 10th - 12th century. All three types of virajas i.e. standing on a crouching elephant or a falling warrior and turning its face to the rear side, with a rider on its back and its face resembling a kirtimukha, and the lion-bodied but elephant-headed one (*gajavirala*). Such virajas are found in the anuraha recesses in the talajangha portion of the Narsinghnath temple at Paikmal in Bargarh district and the Nilakanthesvara temple at Papadahandi in the Nawarangpur district in a large number. Some type of the third category, called *gajavirala* is depicted in another form called *naravirala*,



Kirtimukha, Sauntpur



Kirtimukha on mukuta of goddess Durga, Banei

where the lion bodied animal standing on a prostrate demon has human head, the coiffure of which consists of serpent-coils radiating around the head. Two such naraviralas are found at Narsinghnath. The raha of the Narsinghnath temple has a two-story plan. The upper story has a *triratha* design with a center niche flanked by baranda moldings on each side and the niche is crowned by a projecting *gajakranta*, the lion pouncing on a crouching elephant.

Above the *bho*-type *vajramastaka* motif, which occurs at the base of the raha of the Narsinghnath temple, a kirtimukha with drooping festoons of pearls is depicted peculiar bull-lion figure is found in the center of a door-lintel (*dvaralalatavimba*) found at Bhulia Sikuan in the Nawapara district. It is a crouching figure. But such figures standing on hind legs are found at Palsada, Jharupada and Kapilapur, all in the Jharsuguda district, in all cases seen to be lifted by a yaksa or bhararaksaka. In the *beki* portion of the Nilakanthesvara temple at Papadahandi, instead of *dopichha simha*, a peculiar animal *dopichha* bull is fitted in all four cardinal directions.

The *Kirtimukha* became decorative motif in the center of the trefoil *torana* above the head of figures in the Chauhan period, i.e. 14th-15th century. Such a standing figure of a king, believed to be a king Vijjala Deva-II is found at Narsinghnath, having such trefoil *makara torana* above his head.

The last phase of the depiction of the this *viraja* motif is found in the *anuraha* recesses of the lower jangha of the jagamohana of the Jagannath temple at Sonapur and in the Harishankar temple of Balangir district, both belonging to the 15th century, but in a totally unplanned manner.

Vidyadharas

Like the *kirtimukha* and the lion motifs, the vidyadharas find a prominent place in the temple art of the upper Mahanadi valley, the earliest of their kind are found at Mohangiri, Belkhandi, Vaidyanath and Patnagarh. In the 7th century it appeared in the extreme corner of the back slab of images of the Vimalasvara temple at Mohangiri as a singular being, and its female counterpart in the opposite direction, both flying frontally carrying a thick garland in both hands by lifting it up to the chest/breast levels. Such vidyadharas as couple but still frontally faced, both carrying one garland together became popular in the 8th century but are found carved on the under side of a *chhattri* over the figures of a *matrumurti* (mother and child) and *salabhanjika* at Vaidyanath. Fragments of such *chhattris* with flying vidyadhara couple motifs are found at Belkhandi and Patnagarh, which can be assigned to the Panduvamsi period. The upper portion of these *chhattri* are decorated with garlands of pearls coming out of *kirtimukhas* and connected in the center at the top portion of the *chhattri* with a miniature version of the *amalak*, probably signifying the *chhattri* as a small temple. At Sauntpur such *chhattris* are decorated in the



Kirtimukha on Chhattri, Sauntpur



Kirtimukha, Ambabhona

under side with peculiar figures of esoteric nature, instead of the flying vidyadhara couples. Frontally faced vidyadhara in the center and male and female *vidyadharas* in both sides are carved on the upper portion of the life size Ardhanarisvara image of Patnagarh and the broken Uma

Mahesvara image in the Indralath temple at Patnagarh. Such a frontally faced vidyadhara is found in the temple of the Satrugnesvara temple at Bhubaneswar, belonging to the 7th century. A bigger vidyadhara couple figure is carved on the corner of a stone slab, suggesting it as a decoration in its original state in a niche or opening as the figures are carved on different faces of the stone meeting at a 90 degree angle. The garland held by the figures are very ornately detailed and tied in the center with a lotus rosette. This stone block measures around thirty inches in height and fifteen inches in breadth. The vidyadhara couples, two in number are found in both corners in the upper portion of the back slab of the Mahisamardini

Durga image, the central deity of the 11th century Kusangei temple at Kusang in Balangir district. It is an exquisitely carved vidyadhara couple figure in profile wearing mukuta on their heads signifying their semidivinity status. Extremely beautiful flying Vidyadharas carrying garlands of flower are carved in repeated courses in both sides of the



Kirtimukha, Banei

Gajalakshmi figure in the center, on the door lintel of both the doorways of the jagamohana (eastern and northern) of the Narsinghnath temple at Paikmal, which display the Somavamsi art in its extreme refinement, achieved in the 11th century.

The motifs of the kirtimukhas, lions and the vidyadharas as sculptural decorations can be studied in iconographic point of view more deeply to establish their development in a systematic manner from the 7th to 13th-14th century in the temple art of the upper Mahanadi valley, which requires further research.

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Flying Vidyadharas on Dvaralalatabimba of jagamohana doorway, Narsinghnath