

## Ekapada Bhairava: A Rock-Cut Art on Bhairava Hill, Balangir.

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### Abstract:

*Rock –Art probably came into existence about 50,000 years ago in the world. In Odisha it is documented towards 1933. Western Odisha has been well known for its rock art tradition in different historical epochs. The present paper deals with the Sapta-Matrika statues and life size sculpture of Ekapada Bhairava found on the Bhairava Hill near Gomuda of Bolangir district of west Odisha.*

*Western Odisha was ruled by various royal dynasties. Important among them was Somavamsis, who migrated from Madhya Pradesh and carved a kingdom in west Odisha. Somavamsis were the staunch worshiper of Siva – Bhairava as well as its Sakti.. Thus, Panchambari Bhadrabika was their tutelary goddess.*

*Growing importance of Saktism brought the Matrikas into greater prominence and the creed spread in post Samudragupta period in Odisha. It was a popular religious belief under the Somavamsis. As a result, number of Sakta Peethas sprang up in different parts of Odisha.*

*The research is preliminary in nature. Instead of worship in the temple, here we see the carving on the detached granite hill without any encloser. Saptamatrika figurines are carved in low relief; and Ekapada Bhairava was heading the Saptamatrika heptads in high relief. Other significant aspect of the group is a dancing matrika and some other worn out figures and figurines. The most striking aspect is the Ekpada Bhairava, whose iconographic details matches well with the Jagannath Triad at Puri.*

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## Introduction:

The present paper deals with the Bhairava worship, emphasized on the Bhairava Hill through Rock-Cut Art, belongs to the early medieval period.

Rock –Art probably came into existence 50,000 years ago in the world context.(Chavan 2023: 1) In Odisha it is noticed in 1933 by K.P.Jaiswal. Then by S.N.Rajguru1950 and J.P.Sing Deo in 1976. (Pradhan 2002: 26-27) In this context Western Odisha region also credited for some Rock-Cut Arts. A small hill named by local people as Bhairava Pahad(Hill) situated in Balangir district. The place also contains some other images related to Sapta Matrika has been carved on a large stone wall in a panel..

## Geography of Bolangir:-

Bolangir is situated on the western part of Odisha and eastern part of India. It is a significant place in early medieval period, that it served as the capital city of various dynasties in the name of Suvarnapura. The district is flanked in north-west by the Gandhmardana hills, a name of the Ramayana fame, and in the north-east by the rocky Mahanadi valley. The name Bolangir is said to have been derived from Balaramgarh, a fort built here in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Balaram Deo, the 19<sup>th</sup> Raja of Bolangir and founder of Sambalpur kingdom.(Datta 1968: 1-4) The district surrounded by Suvarnapura, Nuapada, Bargarh and Kalahandi in east, west north and south respectively. It covers the area of 6.575km<sup>2</sup>(2.539 sq miles). The district lies between 20 degree11'40 to 21 degree05'08 north latitude and 82 degree 41'15 to 83 degree 40'22 east longitude. Important places of the district: Titlagarh, Suvarnapura (undivided Bolangir), Ghodar, Sihini, Udeypur.(Nanda 2020: 1) (fig)



**Fig-I Physical Location of Bolangir (Courtesy Google Map)**

## History :-

The Deccan campaign of Samudragupta in the middle of 4<sup>th</sup> century C.E in the region Mahakantara where he defeated Vyaghraraj inaugurated a new chapter in the landmass.(Senapati 1980: 41-43) After his departure number of dynasties emerged to carve out their rule over the landmass. For evidence Matharas (the first historical dynasty), Nalas Parvatadwarakas Bhaumakaras, Somavamsis, Gangas etc... played their role. Most important among them is Somavamsis. They occupies a unique place not only in the field of polity, economy but also in the field of religion, art and architecture, Odisha in general and Bolangir in particular.

The original home of the Somavamsis was Sirpur Madhyaparadesh.(Yadav 2010: 24) Then they migrated to Kosala region towards 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E. and established their empire with Suvarnapura as their capital, situated on the south bank of river Mahanadi. Towards later part of 8<sup>th</sup> century or first part of 9<sup>th</sup> century they faced the invasion of Rashtrakutas under Govinda III. Gradually they migrated towards coastal region and established their strong power after defeating the Bhauma-Karas.(EI : 234)

In initial stage probably Somavamsis were the worshiper of Vishnu. As a result Vasatadevi mother of King Balarjuna built a Vishnu temple of brick at Sirpur (Madhya Pradesh).(Yadav 2010: 24) Later on they were the worshiper of Saiva. Subsequently they also followed Saktism and worshiped *Panchambari Bhadrabika*, as their tutelary deity a form of Durga. With the assimilation of Saiva and Sakta there emerged *Tantricism* not only in Western Odisha but also in coastal region, when they migrated to that place.(Sahu 1980: 177-78) J.D.Beglar first reported on the site of Sihini, Ghodar and Udeypur near Titlagarh in Bolangir district in 1874-75 and 1875-76. and he left a valuable account for the future generation.(Beglar 1874-75: 120-26)

Then many archaeologists visited the site and documented a panel of rock art near Sihini just 5 km away from Titlagarhof Balangir district. The art consists the images of *Sapta-Matrika*, *Eka Pada Bhairav*, *Ganesh* and many subsidiary deities. It is carved on a large piece of rock on a small hill locally called Bhairava Hill(Pahada).(Pradhan 2010: 10-12)

Moreover the growing importance of Saktism brought the *Matrikas* into greater prominence and distributed their cult in far and wide. Although Matrika worship was wide spread throughout Odisha at least as early as 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E, it was especially popular under the Somavamsis.(Bhattacharya 1999 : 172) As a result number of Sakta Pithas sprang up in

different parts of Odisha. For evidence Jajapur, Belkhandi{Kalahandi} were famous for *Sapta-Matrika* worship. Simultaneously *Yogini* Cult was also popular under the same Somavamsis.(Mishra 2009: 98-100) The places of Odisha like: Jajpur-Viraja kshetra, Belkhandi(Kalahandi), Hirapur and Ranipur-Jharial(Balangir) are famous for worship of *Saptamatrika* and *Yogini* Cult. The paper contains the literary sources and also the reports of J.D Beglar, who visited the site in 1874-75 and 1875-76 C.E and he left a valuable account for the future generation. *Saptamatrikas* were always associates with *Virabhadra* (Bhairava) and Ganesa because of tantric form. (Singdeo 2001: 51-57) (fig)

### **Bhairava:-**

Siva in Hindu ideology, has been depicted in many forms. He has two aspects: Benevolent (Saumya) and Malevolent(Ugra). It is known from Vishnudharmottara, III.48.4-6 that the southern face of Siva holds a fierce shape and is called Bhairava and he is associated with Sakta Pitha. Among various types of the terrific or Ugra forms of Siva may be mention as made of *Bhairava*.(Singdeo 2001: 80) *Agmatic* texts provide a list of sixty-four *Bhairvas*, divided into eight group consisting of eight in each group. These sixty-four *Bhairavas* are the male counterpart of sixty –four *Yoginis*. Siva is worshipped as Bhairava. As already stated above *Bhairvas* are always associated with *Sapta-Matrikas* and *Yogini* Cult because of the emergence of *Sapta-Matrika* and *Yogini* Cult, *Bhairava* creed became popular in Odisha during the 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Their common characteristics mention in fear full appearance with two arm or multy-armed, standing, sitting or dancing, snake and skull garland, *urdhva linga* (erect penis), one leg or two legs and the vehicle(*Vahana*) dog or horse etc.(Mishra 2009: 86)

Siva is worshipped as *Bhairava*. The fierce aspect of Siva which, as we know, was instrumental in the *Hinduization* process of other regions of India. It appears on many early temples throughout coastal Odisha, At least since the early Bhauma-Kara period he is shown in peculiar form of *Ekapada Bhairava*, the *Bhairava* with one foot. *Ekapada Bhairava* is a tantric deity whose association reflected in Tantric literature connecting him with the Vedic *Ajkapada* , with sacrifice, with fire, with the central pillar of the world and lastly, with the *Yoginis*. He is the supreme Lord. (Kulki 1978: 120)

### **Origin of Bhairava:-**

The origin of Mystic *Bhairava* is known from *Vamana Purana*, which describes that, there was a fierce battle between Andhakasura and Mahadeva Siva. While fighting Andhakasura hit the head of Siva with his mace. With this the blow, blood oozed out from the wound and flowed down the four sides. From this stream of blood that gushed out of the head of Mahadeva, the Bhairavas were created. From the blood flowing to the east was born-*Viduraja Bhairava*, from the flow to south was born-*Ramaraja Bhairava*, from the flow that to the west was born-*Nagaraja* and from the flow to the north was born *Svachhandachandra Bhairava*. From the total flow of the blood came out *Lambitaraja Bhairava* and there are eight Bhairavas such as: *Asnanga, Ruru, Chanda, Krodha, Unmatta, Kapala, Bhisana and Samhara* multiplied into eight, sixty-four *Bhairavas* the male counterpart of Sixty four *Yoginis*.(Singdeo 2001: 80-81)

The icon under our discussion is *Ajaikapada Bhairava* which has been noticed by late Kedarnath Mahapatra on a small hill Bhairava Pahada. Historically Bhairava worship began from Vedic *Ajaikapada Bhairava*. One *Ajaikapada Bhairava* is found at museum of Baripada(Balaso), Jajpur.

### **Iconographic Description of Ekapada Bhairav Shihini:-**

The god is carved on a slice of stone. . He has a jata Mukuta on his head, sunken eyes with terrific face. He has one leg(Ekapada) standing on a corpse. He has four arms. In upper right hand he holds a *Dambaru* and in left hand a long *trident*(Trisula) hanging a *skull* at the top of the trident. In the lower right hand he holds a dragger or small khadga and in lower left hand holds a bowl. He sunken belly, wears a skull garland on his neck. Besides another long garland is hanging up to the knee like *Vanamala*( a garland of wood-flower worn by Vishnu) A dog(vehicle) is standing at the left foot of the god, which is an important iconographic feature of Bhairava image.



### **Ekapada Bhairava: Bhairava Pahada, Bolangir**

#### **Assimilation with Jagannath Triad-**

The *Ekapada* form of Siva is considered to be one of its kind which denotes Siva as the supreme authority of the universe. He may be represented as an immobile pillar (*Ekapada*). This type of Siva iconography is mostly found in the Odisha region. (Donaldson 1987: 1107) The sculptural representation of *Ekapada Bhairava* shows a striking similarity with the Jagannatha image, especially with the earliest extant representation of *Jagannatha* from Konarka. In fact *Narasimha* image comes so close to the form of Jagannath as *Ekapada Bhairava*. Like *Narasimha*, he possesses the round eyes expressive of the *ugra* aspect of the deity. Unlike *Narasimha* he really is a post (*sthanu*) with one foot only rooted in the earth, one leg only rising from the ground. The leg gradually increases in width to merge with the trunk of the deity. This gives to *Ekapada Bhairava* the peculiar inverted conical shape, with a narrow base and a wide top which is also presented in the early *Lord Jagannath* images. (Kulki 1978: 120)

However there are two signs on the body of *Ekapada Bhairava* which, in addition to the emblem held in his hands, characterized him as Siva: erect phallus (*urdhvalinga*) and the tiger-skin which he wears on his hip. (Dehejia 1979: 75) Both could easily be discarded when the cult of the wooden God was appropriated by the *Vaishnava* at a later period. The iconography of *Jagannath* can be explained convincingly as derived from *Ekapada Bhairava*. So in his more sophisticated sculptural representation appears as a Hindu representative of the wooden god. A *Hinduization* of the wooden God through identification with Siva as *Ekapada Bhairava* appears possible both in view of their close iconographical correspondence and in relation to the general development of Hinduism in coastal Odisha in Pre-Ganga period.

Moreover there is also exists literary evidence, conforming that at one stage of history *Lord Jagannath* was identified with *Sakta Tirtha* of India and their presiding deities, Puri is mentioned as with *Vimala* as the *Sakti*(*Bhairavi*) and *Jagannath* as the corresponding *Bhairava*.

#### **Origin of Vimala:-**

According to *Puranic* tradition when *Sati*(wife of Siva) jumped into fire to end her life. After that, Siva became ferocious and carrying the body of *Sati* moved from place to place. At that time to calm down Siva, the gods were decided to destroy the body of *Sati*. In this context they requested to Vishnu and Vishnu sent his *Sudarsana Chakra* to cut into pieces *Sati's* body. In which places the pieces fallen it became a *Sakti Pitha* or place of Mother goddess. So one part of goddess *Sati* also fell in Puri, And this part is known as Mother goddess *Vimala* and the place is called as *Sakti Tirtha*. According to *Devi Bhagavata*, *Devi Purana* and *Kalki Purana* there are evidence of total 108 *Tantra Pithas*. But *Tantra Chudamani* mentions about 51 *Pithas* and the tenth *Pitha* is Puri, that is *Vimala Kshetra*. So it is says that, *Vimala in Purusottam kshetre* (Puri). (Mishra 2007: 72-73)

*Utkale nabhideshascha Viraja kshetramuchyate*

*Vimala sa Mahedevi Jagannathastu Bhairava*. (Tantra Chudamani, stanza-13)

Again in *Matsya Purana* it mentions that:-

*Gangaya Mangalanama Vimala Purusottame*.

*Vimala* is *Adi Sakati Bhairavi* who resides in centre of *Utkala*(Odisha) and *Lord Jagannath* is her male counterpart in the form of *Bhairava*.

*Vimala Bhairavi jatra Jagannathastu Bhairavaha*.

It is also known that Yayati Keshari of Somavamsi Dynasty installed goddess *Vimala* as his tutelary deity when he built early *Lord Jagannatha* temple at Puri, (Sahu 1980: 201)

Goddess *Vimala* is also known as *Uchhistabhojini* goddess. So Lord Jagannatha's *prasada* becomes "*Mahaparasada*" after *Vimala* is offered the same. (Rajguru 2021: 292)

*Rasana Udradeshecha Vimala Purusottame*

*Sadhushhistam Mahapithe Jagannathastu Vairaba*

*Kaivalya Daksinachara dravya kaibalya mebacha*

*Uddiyanparam kaula Vimala Vimalaprada*

Above mentioned all this evidence it is known that Ekapada Bhairava is considered as *Lord Jagannatha* and goddess *Vimala* is *Bhairavi* who is the female counterpart of *Lord Jagannatha*. or *Bhairava*.

Moreover in course of this Vaishnava representation, that Narasimha became prominent in the history of Jagannath. There is only one god in the Vaishnava : this is Narasimha, the *ugra* aspect of Siva is exchanged against the *ugra* aspect of Vishnu. In this context Ekapada Bhairav form denotes the deity as the supreme pillar that upholds the entire universe and the reason behind its creation, preservation and destruction. In Ekapada Trimurti iconography, Brahma and Vishnu can be seen emerging without legs from the body of Siva who is standing on one leg. (Kulki 1978: 120)

### **Conclusion:-**

The period of Somavamsis has witnessed a significant era in the early medieval history of Odisha Their contribution in the field of religion, art and architecture reachde its zenith during Somavamsis.

Due to the wide spread of Saivism and Saktism number of temples were erected in the western Odisha like: Someswar temple and Chousathi Yogini at Ranipur Jharial, Balangir district. Saptamatrika and Dhavaleswar temple at Belkhandi in Kalahandi district.

In the coastal region the Temple of Lingaraj, Rajarani, Brahmeswar, Mukteswar are the mute witness of their architectural contribution. However towards the first part of 12<sup>th</sup> century C.E both the Saivism and Saktism received its set back due to the advent of Vaishnavism under the Ganga ruler Chodagangadeva who built the gigantic temple of Lord Jagannath as the evidence of Vaishnaviam.



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