

## THE REFLECTION OF ARTISTIC EXCELLENCY OF ODIA PEOPLE THROUGH THEIR FAMOUS MONUMENTS

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**Received: 28 Jun 2018**

**Accepted: 18 Jul 2018**

**Published: 24 Jul 2018**

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### ABSTRACT

*Known for its utkarsh in kala, i.e, excellent in art Odisha is considered as India's one of the most hidden splendid cultural landscapes. Traditionally archaeology and monuments have been the prime motivation for a visitor to Odisha who usually returns with enchanting experience, enduring thoughts and lingering memories of an endearing and hospitable Odia people, their picturesque land and above all the magnificent monuments. For touristic interest, this ancient land of Odisha offers its rich and varied archaeological treasures and wealth of monuments in a pristine and fortunately intact form. The entire length and breadth of the state are dotted with a large number of standing monuments and archaeological sites which would be around 4000- in the figure. The range of monuments includes early Jaina caves and temples; Buddhist Viharas (Monasteries), chaityas (apsidal structures), stupas; Hindu temples; mosques; churches; ancient and medieval forts; palaces of erstwhile kings and the colonial architecture. The great tradition of monument building which is as old as the recorded history or even older, finds an echo in the religious and cultural life of the people till today.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Archaeology, Monuments, Architecture, Sculpture, Gigantic*

### INTRODUCTION

Renowned for its artistic beauty, Odisha retains its distinct identity in the form of sculptural art, folk art, and performing art. It is blessed with its palm-fringed beaches, shimmering lakes, serpentine rivers, mighty waterfalls, forest-clad blue hills of the Eastern Ghats, which are home to rich flora and fauna that impress and lure tourists from all over the world.

When we turn the pages of history, we are confronted with the great Kalinga War of Ashok, in the third century B.C. which formed a turning point in his life, in the history of Buddhism as well as in the history of Odisha. It is difficult to know the pre-Asokan culture that survived the holocaust of the Great War but it is definite that the occupation of ancient Odisha by Ashoka gave a boost to Odishan art and architecture.

Dotted with numerous architecturally celebrated temples with famous sculpture and architecture, world fame monument like Sun Temple at Konark, Jagannath Temple at Puri, Lingaraj Temple, Mukteswar temple at Bhubaneswar, other temples sacred shrines, and historical Buddhist monuments like number of viharas, monasteries at Ratnagiri, Lalitgiri, Udaigiri and other locations, Jain monuments and caves at Sisupalgarh, Khandagiri-Udayagiri and other locations, Odisha is considered India's one of the most hidden splendid cultural landscapes. Orissa has a rich and unique heritage of art traditions beginning from the sophisticated ornate temple architecture and sculpture to folk arts in different

forms. Manomohan Ganguli in his monumental work “Orissan Art and Architecture” wrote: “I am inclined to think that Orissa has a far more glorious tradition of past history than any other province in the hierarchy of the Indian nations”. Stella Kramrisch has rightly stated, “Architecture in Orissa is but sculpture on a gigantic scale”.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following works give us some information about the art and Architectural glory of Orissa:

- M.M. Ganguly, *Orissa and her Remains: Ancient and Medieval*.
- A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*.
- Vidya Dehejia, *Early Stone Temples of Orissa*.
- Charles Fabric, *History of the Art of Orissa*.
- James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture (2 volumes)*.
- R.L. Mitra, *Antiquities of Orissa, 2 vols*.
- K.C. Panigrahi, *Archeological Remains at Bhubaneswar*.
- Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture, Buddhist and Hindu*.
- E.T. Donaldson, *Hindu Temple Art of Orissa*.
- Deval Mitra, *Udayagiri and Khandagiri Bhubaneswar, Glimpses of Jaina Art in Orissa, Buddhist Vestiges in Orissa*.
- R.P. Mahapatra, *Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves, Jaina Monuments of Orissa*.
- K.S. Behera, *Konark, The Heritage of Mankind, 2 vols*

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the artistic excellence of the odia people
- To evaluate how art and architecture play a pivotal role in the in the life of the people of Odisha.
- To study the regions of the flourishing of Jaina, Buddhist and Hindu monuments (temples) of Odisha.
- To evaluate the benefits from age-old traditional art and architecture of Odisha.

## SCOPE OF STUDY

Odisha dots a significant place in the field of art and architecture map of India owing to its exquisite and throbbing cultural symbols. The main concern of the study is to discuss the various and variegated facets of the art and architecture from Kalinga war to Ganga period of Orissa. The main focus of the study is confined to the sculptural art of the Jains, Buddhist and Hindu temple art of Odisha in the different period.

## Methodology

The study is mainly based on primary sources collected from the different museums, archives, libraries and

through the means of field study. Interview with the artists, the sculptors and their survivors was undertaken to know the genesis and condition of the sculptors, and artists who shed their sweat and blood and devoted their life for the construction of these temples. Checking and cross-checking of source materials were done before their utilization and interpretation. The modern scientific historical research methodology was adopted very minutely for the preparation of this paper. Thus, both analytical and descriptive methods have been adopted to complete this work.

### Jain Art and Architecture

Orissa has played an important role in the growth and development of Jainism. Under the royal patronage of King Karakandu and Kharavela it became the state religion of Kalinga.<sup>1</sup> A number of Jain relics in the form of caves, temples, sculptures and statues are found in the different parts of Orissa which speak the volumes of Jain cultures and heritage of Orissa.

In the first century B.C. Jainism appears to have reached the highest pinnacle of glory during the time of Mahameghavahana Kharavela. By his royal patronage, Jainism became the state religion as is apparently clear from the *Hathigumpha* inscription which contains a salutation to *Arhats* and *Siddhas*. It was Kharavela who was responsible in selecting the secluded location to accommodate the Jain ascetics (monks) during the *Varsha Basa* (rainy retreat) at Udayagiri-Khandagiri hills popularly known as Kumara and Kumari Parvata in literature, which was 8 kms. Away from the capital city of Bhubaneswar.<sup>2</sup>

There are 44 caves in the Udayagiri hill and 19 in the Khandagiri hill. These caves can be counted as the first rock-cut workmanship of the Jain community and are fascinating as a continuous document for the development of sculptural art. Though the beginning of the architectural and sculptural art of Khandagiri-Udayagiri started within Kharavela period, but the growth of Jainism also continued to flourish in Orissa during the time of Somavamsis and Imperial Gangas and later Gajapati Kings.<sup>3</sup>

The most important caves Udayagiri are the *Hathigumpha* (inscription of King Kharavela) the *Ranigumpha*, *Swargapuri* and *Manchapuri* Caves, *aneshagumpha*, *Chhota Hathigumpha*, *Alakapuri* caves, *Sarpagumpha*, *Parvatigumpha*, *Baghgumpha* or tiger caves, *Haridasgumpha*, *Jagannathgumpha*. All the sculptures and inscriptions in these caves are important source materials towards re-construction of the past history of Orissa.<sup>4</sup>

Within the sculptural panels one could visualize popular legends (Dushanta Sakuntala, Udayana-Vasavadatta episode), historical episodes, religious worship, (installation of Kalinga Jina, God, Goddesses, Semi-Divine beings), music, dance performances, warfare, hunting scene, water sports, social gatherings, education, costumes, jewelry, flora-fauna, *chaitya briksha* and *yupa* with railing, bracket figures with winged animals etc. all pertaining to the society of Pre-Christian era. The buildings, palaces, edifices shown in the panels portray the wooden prototype.<sup>5</sup>

In the lower storey of Udayagiri, a Scythian door-keeper is seen in a standing posture. The forest scene is made lively with deer, birds, porcupine, toddy-cat etc. Other noteworthy sculptures are shrines of worship, King seated amidst queens, dancing women with orchestral arrangement formed by a woman playing on the "*Mridanga*" another playing a "*Dhap*" third playing "on Harp" and a fourth producing "*Venu-gana*".<sup>6</sup>

Likewise in Khandagiri, the *Tatvagumpha* and the *Anantagumpha* are the most important for its art and architecture. The iconography of Gajalakshmi, Surya, Chaitya-vriksha with railing, Swastika, Nandipada, Triratna, Panchaparamashtin are noteworthy. The other caves of Khandagiri hills of later date are: Dhyanaagar, Nava-muni cave, Barabhuji cave, Trisula cave, Lalatendu Kesari cave (mediaeval origin)<sup>7</sup> etc.

The name *Navamunigumpha* derived from the figures of nine Tirthankaras carved on its rear and right walls. On the right wall are two reliefs, one Parsvanath and the other Rishabhanatha. On the left wall is a small caved figure of Chandraprabha seated on a lotus flower.<sup>8</sup>

*Barabhuji* (*bara-bhuji*) figures of Sasanadevis carved on the side walls. Under the Tirthankaras, their respective Sasanadevis dressed in sarees and ornamented with bangles, necklace, ear ornaments, girdles and jata-mukutas are very attractive.<sup>9</sup>

*Mahaviragumpha* is another wonder of sculptural art. On three sides of chambers, there are eight Tirthankaras standing in Kayastorga pose. Thus the sculptures of Udayagiri-Khandagiri which depict artistic excellence marked by vigor and simplicity are unparalleled in the history of ancient Indian sculptural art. The twin hills of Udaygiri Khandagiri stand as a mute testimony of early Jaina, religion, Art and Culture.<sup>10</sup>

### **Buddhist Art and Architecture**

Orissa occupies a prominent place in history of Buddhism and Buddhist culture. Orissa contributed immensely to the three different phases of Buddhism like, Himayana, Mahayana, and Bajrayana (Tantrayana). It is the huge repository of Buddhist artifacts in India (next to Bihar). As a matter of fact, Orissa's contribution towards the preservation of Buddhist art and architecture, sculpture and culture are enormous. Innumerable sculptures of the Buddha and Buddhist divinities from different parts of Orissa speaks of its popularity in its heydays and continued up to the final extinction of Buddhism in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries A.D. Though many Buddhist sites are reported from different parts of Orissa, most important and popular among them are Ratnagiri, Lalitagiri and Udayagiri.

### **Ratnagiri**

Ratnagiri Buddhist establishment in Jajpur district of Orissa is situated on an isolated hill of Asia range of Orissa. Ratnagiri was excavated by Dr. Devala Mitra and has brought to light huge remains of Buddhist establishment on the hill-top consisting of two monastic complexes, *stupas* of various sizes, *chaityas*, temples, a large number of sculptures, seals, sealings etc. The date of Ratnagiri goes back to fifth or sixth Century A.D.<sup>11</sup>

Excavation by ASI in 1960 yielded the remains of an impressive *stupa* (Stupa-I). Surrounded by an overwhelmingly large number of *stupas* of varying dimensions, two quadrangular monasteries (1 and 2), spectacular even in their ruins, a single-winged monastery and remains of eight temples with small *stupa* around them, hundreds of votive *stupas*, myriads of sculptures, architectural fragments etc.

Two circular walls were built around the main *stupa*. The space between the two walls served as the *Pradaksinapatha*.<sup>12</sup> Further, the existence of a Rekha temple with enshrined deity Mahakala is only one of its kinds discovered in Orissa.

A large number of stone sculptures, a few bronze and brass images of the Buddha and the Buddhist pantheon including inscribed tablets, terra-cotta seals, and sealings were discovered. The inscription of the sealing which runs as follows: "Sri Ratnagiri Mahavihara Arjya Biksu Samghasya, tends to prove that Ratnagiri was great Tantric center of Buddhism comparable to that of Vikramshila and Nalanda in Bihar.<sup>13</sup>

The site also yielded a rich crop of antiquities. Among these antiquities, bronze and stone images of the Buddha and host of divinities including Tara, Lokeshwara, Padmapani, Vajrapani, Aparajita, Heruka, Jambhala, Vajra Tara, Hariti etc. are noteworthy. A life-size image of Tara depicted her actions in saving the followers/worshippers from eight different calamities, like fire, snake bite, attack of a wild animal, shipwreck etc.- commonly the traders used to come across, is worth mentionable.<sup>14</sup>

### **Lalitagiri**

In Lalitagiri also there has been displayed over 25 votive *stupas* on pedestal in front of the existing sculpture, besides providing a modestly dressed stone staircase for allowing tourist to reach with ease to the *stupa* at the back of the sculpture shed which had yielded the precious relic caskets in 1985.<sup>15</sup>

Lalitagiri is the oldest Buddhist complex in the state and one of the earliest Buddhist establishments of the world. An extensive monastery complex with a long stairway, sculptures of Dhayani Buddha and Bodhisattvas and an image of Lokeshwara holding a large lotus are among the precious remains excavated from the site.<sup>16</sup>

Besides the above discoveries, the excavation at Lalitagiri has yielded four nos. of monasteries so far. Among notable sculptures found from the excavation are life-size images of the Buddha, Aparajita, Avalokitesvar, Manjusri, Tara, Jambhala and Hariti. Five rare sculptures of the Buddha seated on coils of the snake with seven hooded canopy speaks of Muchalinda Buddha, that was reported earlier from Ganiapali of Sambalpur.<sup>17</sup>

### **Udayagiri**

Located in the Jajpur district of Orissa on the right bank of the river Birupa, Udayagiri is another wonder of Buddhist art and sculpture.<sup>18</sup>

Udayagiri treasures the largest Buddhist complex of Orissa. A large brick monastery with many Buddhist sculptures has been unearthed from this site. Besides, Bodhisattva and Dhayani Buddha-figures have also been recovered.<sup>19</sup>

In Monastery I, we found a colossal image of the Buddha in Bhumisparsha Mudra, a beautifully carved stone door-jamb and lintel depicting scrolls, floral design, Yaksas and Kinnaras, doorkeepers, the image of the Buddha flanked by Gandharvas.<sup>20</sup> etc. They speak of the artistic skill of the then artists of Udayagiri with superior workmanship and lively finish. Besides, the images of the Buddha in all the five popular poses., i.e. Bhumisparsha, Dharmacakra, Abhaya, Varada and Dhyna Mudras, images of Tara, Avalokitesvar, Maitreya, Aparajita, Vasudhara, Jambhala, Hariti are also discovered which are noteworthy.

## Langudi

A famous Buddhist site has been recently discovered at Langudi in the Jajpur district of Orissa which stands distinct with its 34 unique rock-cut *stupas*. These *stupas* of varying size and resemble Amaravati group of Buddhist art in south India. Discovery of an inscription from this site has confirmed Langudi's identity as Puspagiri which finds mention in Hiuen Tsang's travelogue Si-U-Ki.<sup>21</sup>

## Dhauri

Dhauri Hill on the bank of river Daya in the outskirts of Bhubaneswar is a site of great historical significance. The Dhauri Rock Edict was discovered in the year 1837 by Lt. Kittoe. The rock-cut elephant above the edicts is the earliest Buddhist sculpture of Orissa. At the top of Dhauri Hill, stands a majestic white Peace Pagoda (*Shanti Stupa*) built by the Japanese monks in 1970s.<sup>22</sup>

## Other places

Buddhist monasteries, *stupas*, *viharas*, caves and statues are also found at Kuruma, Achyutrajpur, Banerwanasi, Choudwar, Jajpur, Ayodhya, Khadipada, Solampur, Khichinga, Ganiapali, Boud, Buddhakhola and many other places. The existence of such a number of Buddhist remains speaks of the glorious heritage of Buddhism in Orissa.<sup>23</sup>

## Temple Art

Orissa is known throughout the world as the land of temples. It is famous for its magnificent and majestic temples. By observing the beauty of the temples of Orissa Abul Fazl was amazed and solemnly exclaimed that "... it belongs exclusively to the Gods, it is a place of continual pilgrimage".<sup>24</sup> Regarding the number of temples Lieutenant Kittoe during his tour in Orissa in 1838 remarked, "It possesses more temples, sacred spots, and relics than any other province in Hindustan".

The Oriyas displayed their remarkable creative power in these temples. While they built their temples like giants, they sculptured the walls of the temples like master-artists. Referring to the talent of the Oriya sculptors, M.N.Das writes "it is in these magnificent temples, the stones speak and each chisel mark signs the artistic glory and the rich cultural heritage of Orissa".<sup>25</sup>

According to the spatial distribution and peculiar features, the temples of India have been divided into three main categories namely Nagar, Dravida style and *Besara* style. But, the Orissan temples built from the 7<sup>th</sup> century to 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D. belong to a special category for their distinctive characteristics. This group is famous as *Kalinga* style of temples. In their size, design, and arrangement they form an altogether different group. It is a sub-class of *Nagara* Indo-Aryan group of Indian temples.<sup>26</sup>

According to *Silpa-sastras* of Orissa, like "Bhubana Pradipa", "Silpa Prakash", "Silpa Ratnakoosh", "Silpa Sarini", and "Deula Tola" The *Kalinga* or the Orissan temples is subdivided into three categories such as *Rekha*, *Bhadra* and *Khakara*. The walls of the *Rekha* temple rise straight upto a short height and then began to curve inwards gradually. These *Rekha* or *Vimana* types of temples represent a surmounting curvilinear tower which contains the presiding deity. Its interior is called sanctum.<sup>27</sup> The *Pidha* or *Bhadra* type of temple or pyramidal structure consists of several *Pidhas* (tiers). These temples are usually called *Jagamohan* or *Mukhasala* (audience hall). The third category or *Khakarais* a

different design similar to the Dravidian style of temples. The *Khakara* types of temples are mainly built for Sakti divinities or Goddesses. The *Khakara* temple is rectangular in shape and resembles a water-melon (*kakharu*) or *Boita*(boat).<sup>28</sup> Though, at first the temples of Odisha were the combination of both rekha and Pidha types, but later on two more structures were added, such as Natamandap or the dancing hall and Bhoga-mandap or the hall of offering.<sup>29</sup>

### Temples of Sailodbhavas

The Sailodbhava kings were the first kings who started the temple building activities in Orissa. As the great devotees of Siva and patrons of art and architecture, the Sailodbhavas inaugurated an era of temple building activities in Orissa. Temples of Siva of all varieties- big and small were constructed by the kings of Sailodbhavas. The Sailodbhavas built the earliest groups of temples in Orissa.<sup>30</sup>

The Satrugneswar temple is found to be a mature conception of the origin of the temple building activities in Orissa. It represents sikhara temples. The sculptures of the Satrugneswar are marked by the vigor and exuberance of designs recalling the best characteristics of post-gupta art.

In the Swarnajaleswara the interesting scene is the representation of the marvelous and miraculous prowess of the monkey hero Hanumana. In one place Hanumana is found running probably carrying Gandhamardana mountain.<sup>31</sup> It is one of the most lavishly decorated temples at Bhubaneswar.

Parasurameswara temple is also very important from the architectural point of view. The most interesting aspect of Siva's marriage with Parvati marriage scene in the presence of Ganesha who, according to the Hindu mythology, is the eldest son of Siva and Parvati. K.C.Panigrahi considers the presence of Ganesha in this scene as an anachronism.<sup>32</sup> Similarly a hunting scene and other scenes of fights with wild animals readily attract the attention of the visitor.

### Temples of Bhaumakaras

The next phase of the development of temple architecture took place in the Bhaumakara period from the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century to the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The Bhaumakara period witnessed outstanding architectural activities in quality as well as quantity under the royal patronage of Bhaumakara kings the architects and artists achieved a high standard of perfection. The typical specimen of this group is the temple of Sisireswara.<sup>33</sup>

The Vital temple of Bhubaneswar is a different style of temple architecture built by the Bhaumakara rulers. It is an excellent example of a Khakhara temple. According to K.C.Panigrahi, the name Vital is derived from the words Betala (Spirits) worshipped by the Kapalikas for their *siddhis*. This proves that, the tantric form of Buddhism became conspicuous in Orissa during the Bhaumakara period.<sup>34</sup>

The Vaital temple is so striking in appearance that even the first impression of a visitor to Bhubaneswar is that this temple is an alien structure on the soil of Orissa.

The Gauri temple of old Bhubaneswar is yet another experiment in which certain unusual elephants have been superimposed on the indigenous architectural mode.



### Temples Art of Somavamsi Period

The traditional Kalinga style of temple architecture assumed its final shape and became distinct during the Somavamsi period. The *Jagamohana* became an inseparable element in the temple architecture and emerged as a *Pidha* temple.

Mukteswar Temple is acclaimed as “the gem of Orissan architecture”. The most notable features of the temple are found in its ornately decorated arched gateway, known as *Torana*. The Mukteswara Temple marks a transition between the earlier groups and the later standardized temples of Orissa.<sup>35</sup> *Nagas* and *Naginis*, Elephants, bears, stags and other animals, griffins and dwarfs, medallions, tassels and scrolls, all contribute to make it one of the most richly carved temples in Orissa.

Built around the mid 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the Rajarani Temple marks another phase of evolution in Orissan temple architecture. Originally known as Indreswara Temple, the Rajarani Temple is devoid of a reigning deity.<sup>36</sup> The cluster of miniature shikharas around the superstructure are reminiscent of the Kandariya Mahadev Temple of Khajuraho. The temple is known for its exotic combination of architecture excellence, sculptural elegance, ornate decoration and multiple scroll work. Standing at the end of a vast and well-maintained garden, the Rajarani Temple attracts many visitors- both Indians and foreigners all year around.<sup>37</sup> The statuary sculpture of this temple is one of the strong features that first attract the attention of the visitor.

Constructed by Lilavati, the mother of Somavamsi king Udyatakesari in the 18<sup>th</sup> year of his reign,<sup>38</sup> the Brahmeswara temple of Bhubaneswar is also very attractive.

Among all the temples built during the Somavamsi period the Lingaraj temple of Bhubaneswar deserves special commendation. A gigantic structure of about 180 feet high dominating the entire landscape at Bhubaneswar, the temple stands with in a spacious compound of laterite measuring 520 by 465 feet surrounded by a number of smaller temples. The presiding deity of this temple is known as *Tribhubaneswar* from which the city has derived its name.<sup>39</sup> It is the grandest and loftiest temple marking the culmination of the architectural activity at Bhubaneswar.

According to tradition and accounts of *madalapanji*, the temple was completed in three generations- it was begun by Yayati-Kesari continued by Ananta-Kesari and completed by Lalatendu-Kesari.

The majestic Lingaraj temple belongs to *pancharatha* structure like the Konark and Puri temples. It is a landmark in the temple architecture of India with a maturity and blooming of Orissan style showing fully developed *vimana*, *jagamohana*, *natamandira* and *bhogamandapa*. It bears architectural splendour and is regarded as one of the best archaeological monument of the eastern India reflecting Kalinga style of architecture with all its perfection.<sup>40</sup>

### Temples Art of Ganga Period

The Ganga period left its indelible foot-prints in the field of art and architecture of India. During the reign of the Ganga kings the Orissan temple architecture reached its perfection and the highest pinnacle of glory.<sup>41</sup>

Among all the temples built during the Ganga period, the Jagannath temple at Puri deserves commendation. It occupies a significant position in the religious history of Orissa. Among the existing temples of Orissa the temple of Jagannath is highest. This temple (214 ft. 8 inches high) is on a perfect *pancharatha* plan.<sup>42</sup> Its architectural splendor makes



the pilgrims spell bound. This temple displays a synthetic culture and God Jagannath occupies the body, mind and soul of every people of Orissa. Puri is regarded as one of the four important *dhamas* of India, the three other being Badrinath, Dwaraka and Ramesvaram.<sup>43</sup> The temple of Lord Jagannath, a monument of architectural splendor of the Ganga period, has allured the attention of the people world.

Started by Chodaganga Dev and completed by Anangabhima Dev-III the Jagannath temple at Puri was the best presentation of the Kalinga style of art. The imposing structure consists of the *Vimana*, *Jagamohana*, *Natamandira* and *Bhogamandapa*. The last two structures were, perhaps, constructed during the Suryavamsi Gajapati period. The entire Jagannath temple is surrounded by an outer wall known as the *Meghanada Prachira*.

The large gate-ways on each side of the enclosure walls are lavishly ornamented and their architraves contain the *navagraha* reliefs. All the gates also depict small images of Siva, Vishnu, Hanuman, Durga and Narasimha. Ornaments like bangles, arm-lets, necklaces, ear-rings and *mukutas* adorn the deities.<sup>44</sup>

When one enters into the temple through the main gate, one comes across the grand and imposingly beautiful one-stone-piece-pillar, *Arunastambha* of exquisite workmanship and elegant proportion.

### The Sun Temple at Konark

Famed worldwide as the Black Pagoda, the Sun Temple at Konark is an architectural marvel and rightly finds a place in the world Heritage list. Dating back to the 13th century A.D., the Konark Temple has been built in the form of a colossal chariot of twenty-four wheels of the mythical Sun-god drawn by seven horses. The architectural plan and execution of the temple speak about the excellent craftsmanship of Orissa's sculptors. The embellishments on the structure create a sense of wonder for the beauty they display.

The Sun temple at Konark, "the grandest achievement of the Eastern School of Architecture" Standing majestically on the sandy coast of the Bay of Bengal in East Orissa, the porch in its solitary grandeur is an eloquent testimony of a glorious and mysterious past. Dedicated to Sun-God, this temple was constructed by Raja Narasimha-I the king of the Ganga Dynasty of Orissa in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>45</sup>

Architecturally, the Sun temple of Konark is divided into three parts- the *Deula*, *Jagamohana* and *Natamandira*. The *deula* and *Jagamohana* stand close to each other while the *Natamandira* is detached from the *Jagamohana*. The temple faces the east. It was originally built in a *ratha* (chariot) form.<sup>46</sup>

The *Aruna-stambha* was another attraction of the Sun temple of Konark. Now it stands in front in front of the main gate of the Jagannath temple at Puri. It was shifted during the Maratha rule over Orissa.<sup>47</sup> The *Navagraha* sculptor of the temple is another marvelous piece of architectural creation.

### Salient Features of Konark Sculptures

Regarding the sculpture of Konark, Fergusson remarks, "... perhaps I do not exaggerate when I say that, it is, for its size, the most richly ornamented building- externally at least- in the whole world".<sup>48</sup>

The sculptures of Konark present variety not only in their styles but also as regards their dimensions. They could "build like giants and finish like jewelers". The sculptured forms of Konark can be broadly classified into several groups i.e. cult deities, human figures, animals both real and imaginary, birds, flowers, composite or mythical figures and various

architectural, flora-vegetal and geometric designs are noteworthy.

One of the most striking features in the sculptural art of the temples of Orissa is the abundance of erotic motifs. These sculptures by their number, variety, forthright luxuriance and frank nakedness, attract the attention of the onlookers even at the first sight. Recently, an American writer Lowell Thomas, who visited the temple and spent the whole day in minutely investigating the ruined Konark temple described "it is the most beautiful" and at the same time "the most obscene building in the world".<sup>49</sup>

Erotica may be found displayed in varying degrees in temples throughout India. But the Konark temple surpasses all the temples of the world in its erotic sculptures. Nude women, exciting dancing figures, women engaged in various personal acts and the ever-present 'mithunas'- the loving couples are abundantly found here. The statues, sometimes life-size, found in this temples represent men and women engaged in coitus with a clear modeling of their sexual organs.

Late Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru while referring to the charm of Indian art stated: "In India we find during every period, when her civilization bloomed, an intense joy of life and nature, a pleasure in the art of living, the development of art, music, and literature, song, dancing and painting, theatres and highly sophisticated enquiry into sex relations".<sup>50</sup>

Really, the Sun temple at Konark is the fewest specimen of the creative genius of the Oriya artists. The Kalinga style of art reached the pinnacle of perfection with the creation of the Sun temple at Konark.

## CONCLUSIONS

The above description of the various aspects of Odishan art and architecture shows not only the achievements of Orissan art but also gives us a fair insight into their characteristic features. By using Khondolite and chlorite stone the sculptor of Odisha had shown their mastery of art and architecture. The large hoard of bronze images discovered from Achutarajpur indicates the height of excellence reached in metallic sculpture. Anyone who has visited Orissa is aware of the magnificent richness of Orissan art. The artistic pursuits, however, continued down to the modern times. The present generation of artists is trying to take Orissa ahead in the fields of art. But whatever they do or achieve, they are sure to derive inspiration from the rich heritage of the past.

Art in the form of miniatures, wall paintings, sculptures has long been a peephole into history. The tribal art and the temple art both provide information of our bygone civilizations. It is through these that we came to understand how our ancestors lived.

Art is not only an enriching experience. Moreover, it adds to the beauty in our lives. A book without a picture is less preferred than an illustrated one. It provides an admirable taste to our senses.

Art in the form of sculptures of Gods and Goddesses is a common phenomenon. Lord Buddha, Jaina Tirthankaras, Lord Jagannath, Siva, Ganesh and Goddess Durga in Odisha are the common sculptures found as religious idols. So art is not only used for decorative and aesthetic purpose but it has a religion attached to it.

Art provides a voice to the soul. It helps us to know what and who we are. It enhances and helps us realize our potential and illuminates the path we should follow. It makes us face to face with our abilities, skills and wants. Creativity and optimism become a part of our life. Art in the form of painting, sculpture, architecture etc. is known as a pen to write our emotions. These forms of art are long known and followed as ambitions by aspiring creative minds.

It not only gives pleasure to our senses but is a true reflection of someone's soul. Being an odia I am proud of them.

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