



Saivism in Western Odisha (India): a historical journey from ancient period

Subal Tandi^{1*} and Dr. Rabindranath Sarma²

¹ PhD, Research Scholar (Sociology), Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Central University of Jharkhand, Brambe, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

² Associate Professor, Department of Tribal Studies, Central University of Jharkhand, Brambe, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

Correspondence Author: Subal Tandi

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Abstract

Western Odisha is the meeting ground of all religions. The paper finds the fusion of Hindu beliefs and local faiths. Local faiths are found assimilated in the Saivite religion of Western Odisha. Many fairs and festivals are observed in this region that profoundly impact our society. Many kings patronized Saivism along with Vaisnavism and Saktism in this region. So this region became a confluence of Saivism with Vaisnavism and the Sakta cult. As a result, they paid attention to the construction of monuments in different parts of Western Odisha to spread the religion. One thing is noticed that the Thanapatis (non-Brahmin caste) worship Lord Siva in most of the temples of western Odisha. The Saiva worship develops the aesthetic sense in the human mind, and with this sense, they lead a peaceful social life. These Saivite Monuments are the rich legacies of the cultural development of western Odisha. These Saivite monuments are greatly responsible for enriching the art and architecture of Odisha (India) in general and Western Odisha in particular.

Keywords: aesthetic, cultural, religion, saivism, western odisha

Introduction

India is a land of religion, in which several deities were adored from time immemorial. Some of them had been quite prominent and were following never disappeared ever since. Their appearance on the Indian religious scene though some of them disappeared and vanished into oblivion as rapidly as they had mushroomed. God, worship and religion are in spirit, relative factor in the history of social progress of human society. Generally, God is a different type of personality; worship is the quintessence of religious life, and religion is the state of salvation in which man remains in the exclusive company of God. From remote past to the present day, it would be seen that where there is neither God nor religion, indeed there is the worship of full-fledged human life, and it fits into the aim and object of the liturgy of religions. To see or make life full-fledged was the humanitarian go, and it certainly was at work the dawn of civilization. At a given time, Siva happens to be one such deity whose antiquity has to the third millennium B.C. when the non-Aryan of the Indus valley appeared in the limelight of the Photo historical period as the worshippers of Pasupati, the prototype of Rudra Siva of the Vedic age (Bhandarkar, 1965) ^[9]. Archaeological remains of the Indus valley indicate that Saivism is Pre Aryan concept that seems to have been spread in different parts of India from 3000 BC. In Vedic literature, he was more popularly known as Rudra and was later known as Siva. In the earlier stages, he was known in abstract form as Rudra and was considered the God of mountains and storms (Bhattacharya, 1975) ^[7].

The Fair and Festivals are joyous feasting based on religious beliefs and rituals. It is a group observance on a specific

occasion, especially community worship. It is such an occasion that people who had avowed to worship the deities assembled and participated in the ceremonial ceremony. The celebration of the festivals continued in popular tradition, and once they had begun, they persisted through the ages (Agrawal, 1970) ^[1]. The fairs and festivals are the product of primitive religious beliefs taking a long time to assume their present forms through an evolutionary process. These are accompaniments to honour and appease the gods and spirits supposed to bring better crops, better health, better rain and protecting the community (Archak, 2002) ^[2].

Concept of saivism

Siva is also known as *Mahadeva*, *Dhurjati*, *Nilakantha*, *Trinetra* and also appears in *Saumya*, *Ugra* and *Samhara* forms in which different functions are attributed to him for the benefit of gods. Out of these forms, *Soumya-Murit* bestows his kindness and blessing to all. In his *Ugra* form, he kills the demons even punishes Kala, the God of death. In his *Samhara* form, he killed *Andhaka* and other terrific monsters. He is also the lord of dance and music. As *Nataraj*, he is the lord of dancers. Saivism, especially Saiva Siddhanta, developed a sophisticated symbolized in its fivefold activities *Panchakriyas*, (i) *Sristi* (Creation and evolution), (ii) *Sthiti* (Preservation and Protection) (iii) *Samhara* (Destruction) (iv) *Tirobhava* (embodiment and attraction) and (v) *Anugraha* (liberation grace and salvation). They reflect the cosmic activity, which is the central motif of the dance. The texts testify that creation arises from the drum variation, the *dambaru*, protection proceeds from the hand of hope, i.e.,

Abhayahasta, from the fire proceed the hand pointing down words represents embodiment, and salvation proceeds from the food held aloft. The root area of the dance is the primal rhythmic energy underlying all phenomenal appearances and activities. According to the *Bharatas Natya Sastra*, one hundred and eight variations of dance were performed by Siva at different places on various occasions and emblems, decorations, and the numbers of arms differentiate them from one another (Nagar, 2006a) [22].

Siva is known as the God of gods, *Mahadev or Dedvadhidev*, the lord of *Yogis, Yogisvara*, who enlightens the Universe as Jagat Guru, the lord of creation. *Bhutapati*, the lord of animals, *Pusupati*, approachable to all living, mourning and playing with even the uncultured strata of human society and extremely ferocious types of animals one easily pleased with all forms of worship even without the ritualistic paraphernalia. Temples of Siva are found in high hills, dense forests, dark caves, small villages, domestic establishments, crowded cities and open fields (Nagar, 2006b) [22].

Siva is usually described as having matted locks of hair tied in a top knot, commonly known as *Jatamukuta*, is generally studded with a hooded cobra, human skull or a crescent or all combined. However, when Siva appears in *Ugra* or dancing pose, these *Jatas* get dishevelled or loose and move around with great force. The *Jatamukuta* is further artistically represented by the depiction of the Ganga issuing from the same. He is called *Asutosa*, or the one who gets easily pleased. He is prepared to drink the poison produced by people's malicious and indiscreet actions and to save them from distress and death. He is self-absorbed and an all-absorbing, all assimilating and all unifying force. He is the one dwelling in cremation ground (*Smasana*-the abode of the dead), the region where all worldly differences *Vansh*. Where all that is impermanent disappears and only the external and permanent remains. It is a place where all creatures ultimately must take refuge. Siva waits there to receive all into his loving arms and bestow on their immortality and bliss. This is the Saivite concept of supreme deity and Saivite ideal of spiritual life (Nagar, 2006c) [22].

Important of saivism

For a proper cognition of the civilization and culture of man, a systematic study of his religion seems as indispensable as that of other aspects of his lifting, whatever may be the definition and nature of religion in its connotation in modern times. It is a general impression with the scholars that it was the product of belief with primitive man. Thought originates in a psychological congruence with a feeling from experience. The primitive man living in the lap of nature with the natural and primordial simplicity began to gather different mental experiences while keeping his body and soul together. The primitive man became grateful to several phenomena of nature which helped his animate continuity but became fearful of many other natural wonders that appeared dangerous and destructive to him. The benevolent and malevolent aspects of nature become the objects of his super honest faith and his worship prompted by his desire to continue longevity (Rao, 1979) [33]. In the primitive world of the primary day's supernatural beliefs and practices thus from the foundation of all primitive religions and magic in the whole world. The primitive religions and magic, even in the face of their

admissibility of supernatural belief and veneration, are distinguished from each other (Tylor, 1871a) [42]. In the religion-state of mind, the individual relies on compassion and mercy of the spirits. In contrast, in a magical bent of mind, he believes that predictable results must be attained if the prescribed instruction and worship are applied in the mystical practices the adherent feels that he was power overpowered (Tylor, 1871b) [42]. The path of magic associated with several dangerous rites was characterized by few courageous primitives, whereas religion based on devotion or polite appeal prevailed universally in the primitive world.

Religions can be defined as a way of life with a series of doctrines and beliefs relating to the Origin and constitution of the creation to earn religious merit through good deeds. It is a means of seeing love, guidance, fortune, protection, etc., through prayer, offerings, charity, erecting religious monuments, etc. Man evolved such a system from ancient times, which became more complex and sectarian as time recedes in the darkness of the past. The Indian religions from the early period it expressed as 'Hinduism', which is a synthesis of Harappan culture and Vedic Aryan Culture. In the fold of Hinduism included numerous religions and cult-like Vaishnavism, Saivism, Saktism and many other minor religious sects. Saivism is one of the ancient cults, and its Origin goes back to the Harappan period to 3 this B.C. when Lord Siva was worshipped as Pasupati Siva. Saivism is the culmination of two lines of cultural development, namely the pre-Aryan and the Aryan. Saivism cantering round the worship of Siva both in his phallic and iconic form. The element of phallic worship of this religion is borrowed from pre-Aryan Indus culture. The Yogic posture male god found at Mahenjodaro is considered by the scholar as Rudra Siva of the Aryan. In the Rigveda, we do not find Siva as a noun, whereas Rudra is described as a terrible God (Tylor, 1871c) [42]. This Origin of Saivism in India can be traced back at least to the Indus Valley civilization. Where Siva was worshipped in phallic and anthropomorphic forms, unlike other parts of India, Odisha inherits the Siva cult, which is more mythical than historical. In Odisha, Saivism is the real arsenal and soil for the mythic production legendary and artistic.

The primary concepts of the magnanimous Siva of the subsequent days began to grow in the iconic ideas of the ithyphallic figure of the seal of Mahenjodaro and the attributes of Rudra described in Rigveda. The primary and the feeding concepts of culminating Siva thus continued to evolve in two different cultural trends of indigenous Origin, namely the Non-Aryan culture and Aryan Culture. The primordial Non-Aryan image of Siva grew in the lap of Harappan civilization, in the religious belief of the stragglers in the forest and the view and practices of the Vratyas and Nisads. The primary Aryan notion of Siva began to grow in the concept of Rudra in Rigveda. Atharva Veda, several Brahman texts and Upanishads. The primary ideas of both cultural trends united in the age of the epics of Sanskrit literature in India, and Siva continued to be acquainted as a supreme God in the amalgam of both the Non- Aryan Aryan attributes (Bhandarkar, 1965b) [9]. In the Puranic age, primarily when Siva and Linga Puranas were written, his supreme majesty knew no bounds. He was described as Paramasiva and the Mrityunjaya or immortal Supreme Noumenon, the causal potency of everything of the Universe.

Historicity of saivism in India

The Origin of Saivism are lost in obscurity, but it is clear that the Saivism of history is a blend of two lines of development, the Aryan or Vedic and the Pre-Aryan. The hold of Saivism extends not only over the whole of India, from the Indus valley to Bengal, but strategies out across these to Greater India and the Archipelago, and beyond the northern mountains to Central Asia (Bhattacharya, 1995) [8]. The characteristics of Saivism are the exaltation of Siva above all other gods, the highly concrete conception of the deity and the intensely personal nature of the relation between him and his devotees. These traits are most clearly seen in *Sveta Svataara Upanisad*, a treatise that resembles the *Bhagavad Gita* in many ways but seems to have been the work of an earlier age. The Svetasvatara expound the supremacy of Siva as the result of the theistic strain of thought developed in the Upanishads.

On the one hand, Siva is here identified with eternal Absolute. There is no form for him whose name is a top celebrity. On the other hand, he is the God of all gods, potent for good and evil. He is Girisa; he holds the arrow in his hand, ready to shoot, he is the great master (Isana), the given of boons, the Origin of the gods Rudra, the great seer, the supreme Lord (Maheswara) and so on. His nature is revealed in the repetition of the Rag Vedic Prayer to Rudra, imploring him to accept the havis (Oblation) and spare the lines and property of the worshipper and his kindred. He is attained by authentic tapas (austerity), and then comes the removal of all bondage (Ibid, p.63). With time, Siva became more and more popular and was conceived to be the God of mountains, who married the daughter of maintaining. He happens to be the lord of the Yogis begins the foremost teacher of Yoga. He has been an exponent of all the mystic and cult doctrine, religious cults of Tantras, Aghamas and Samhitas. In the Vedic texts, he has been conceived as the immortal God who has entered the mortal beings (Ibid, p.64). He is wrapped in Samadhi or mental illumination where universal consciousness throws open its innermost secrets to the man's vision. The power of the cortex or higher brain is still a mystery to modern man (Nagar, 2006) [22]. But the Yoga- Vidya has discussed the same in orthodox symbolism or terminology that deserves to be studied and interpreted by modern who intends to fully understand the fully chartered map of his true personality as expressed on the level of mind material elements vital airs.

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Historicity of saivism in Odisha

In Odisha, Saivism flourished early, but due to the paucity of evidence, we cannot trace it to the Indus or Vedic civilization. But archaeological evidence during the 4th-5th Century A.D. proved that Saivism is one of the major religions in Odisha. The Asanpat Stone inscription, found in the Keonjhar district, containing the image of Nataraja Siva, is the earliest inscription that provides evidence of Siva worship in ancient Odisha. It records the building of a temple for Lord Siva by Maharaja Sri Satrubhanja and is ascribed to the 4th Century A.D. The Natraj Image in dancing posture having eight hands of which two are engaged in playing Vina across the chest and on the upper two hands holding a snake over his head of the other hands, one displays Varadamudra while the other three hold the Trisula, Akshamala and Bambara, the image is one of the beautiful specimens of Orissan Art and suggesting the popularity of Saivism in this region in that period (Das, 1969) [11].

In Orissa, Saivism seems to have replaced Buddhism towards the 5th Century A.D. due to contact with the Gupta Empire. Archaeological and literary sources provide evidence of the conflict between the Buddhists and the Saivites and the victory of Saivites. The Ekamra Purana refers to a dispute between demons and the Gods, in which Siva defeated the demons. According to K.C Panigrahi, the war was fought on the bank of the river Gandhavati (Presently Ganga) and pointed out that the huge Sivalinga, now enshrined at

Bhaskarasvara Siva temple at Bhubaneswar, is to be the remnant part of the Ashokan pillar destroyed by the Saiva into a phallic emblem and the crowing part, which bears the inscription was also parting damaged and buried in the close proximity of the temple. This led to Hinduism's revival in Odisha during Gupta rule in India (Panda, 1985) ^[26].

The early Nala Kings, Bhavadattavaman and Arthapatiraja, in 5th Century A.D. were great devotees of Siva. They have declared in their charters that their kingdom was bestowed on them by Lord Maheswar and Mahasena (Panda, 1999) ^[27].

The early Gangas of Kalinga were also great followers of Saivism. Their tutelary deity was Gokarnesvara Siva, enshrined on the peak of the mountain Mahendra. The earliest ruler of this dynasty, Indravaraman-I, in his charters, has paid homage to Paramasvara who is described as creator, sustainer and destroyer of all the worlds. In the last quarter of the 6th Century A.D. Maharaja Sri Sambhuyasa of the Mudgala dynasty was also a devout worshipper of Lord Siva (Das, 1969) ^[11].

In the early part of the 7th Century AD, King Sasanka of Gauda occupied Utkal. This event marked the destruction of Buddhism and the spread of Saivism in Orissa. He was a great and devout patron of Saivism. The Ekamra Purana refers to constructing the magnificent temple for the Lingaraj of Tribhubaneswar at Ekamra by King Sasanka. This tradition of is also mentioned in the Kapila Samhita, the Svarndri Mahodaya and the Ekamra Chandrika (Sahu, et al 1981) ^[38]. It proves that the worship of Siva was popular in Ekamra (Bhubaneswar) long before Sasanka. Subsequently, many Siva temples were constructed in Bhubaneswar, which became a significant centre of Saivism in India. Saivism received the royal patronage of the Sailodbhavas of Kangoda Mandala. In this period a number of Siva temples were built at Bhubaneswar such as Parasuramesvara temple, Satrugnesvara, Bharatesvara, Svarnajalesvara and Lakshmanesvara temple. The rulers of the Sailodbhava dynasty were great devotees of Lord Siva. Their Charters begin with a preamble in which the blessing of Lord Siva is sought. King Chharamparaja and Madhavaraja-II have expressed their profound faith in Trilochan Siva and Tribhuvana, respectively. Another development is Saivism came with spreading the Lakulisa-Pasupata cult in Odisha. In the Bharatesvara and Pasuramesvara temple, Lakulisa was given a prominent place (Sahu, et al 1981, p. 286) ^[38].

Though the early Bhaumakanas were Buddhists, they showed tolerance to Saivism. Madhavi Devi, the queen of Subhakaradeva-I, patronized the construction of the Madhavesvara Siva temple and appointed Siva acharya to worship the deity. Subhakaradeva-IV was also a Saivite and declared himself as Paramamahesvara. On the copper plates of the dynasty, the seal bears the figure of a couchant bull. The visit of Sankaracharya to Puri in the 9th Century might have impeded the cause of Saivism. The reigning queen Prithvi Mahadevi donated a village to worship Uma-Mahesvara, enshrined in the temple of Nannesvara Siva. Vakula Mahadevi Dandi Mahadevi were also a devout worshipper of Siva. Many feudatories of the Bhaumakarar were followers of Saivism. Over time, Buddhism, under Tantrism's influence, came very close to Saivism. As a result, there took place a revival of the Saivite activities in Odisha during the latter Bhaumakarar, who patronized Saivism. The

Sullki rulers like Ranastambha, Jaya Stamba and Kulastambha were great devotees of Siva and bore the epithet Parama Mahesvara (Sahu *et al.* 1981, p. 287) ^[38].

Several rulers of the Nanda and Tunga dynasties, such as Devananda, Vinitatunga and Gayatunga, were devout worshippers of Mahesvara as known from their records. Saivism also was prominent faith in the Bhanja rulers of Khinjali Mandal and Khichinga Mandal in the 9th and 10th Century A.D. However, the early Bhanjas were Vaishnavas. Ranabhanja in the 1st part of the reign, was a Vaisnava, although his Chief queen Vijaya Mahadevi was a devotee of Siva. During this period, the twin temple of Nilamadhava (Vishnu) and Siddheswara (Siva) at Gandheradi near Baud stand today as a mute witness to the co-existence of Vaisnavism and Saivism in the Bhanja Kingdom. After Ranabhanja, the Bhanjas shifted to the Ghumsar region and made Vanjulvaka their headquarters. The Verse in the Charters of the Ghumsar-Bharijas shows that they were patrons of the Mattamayur sect. The verse also describes Sadasiva with matted hair, present moon ashes and cobra (Sahu *et al.* 1981, p. 300) ^[38].

In the Somavamsi period, Saivism reached the Zenith of popularity. The Somavamsi rulers were staunch Saivites and assumed Parama Mahesvara besides using the bull symbol on the royal seal. Hundreds of Siva temples were built, and liberal endowments were bestowed for their maintenance. Some of their rulers also had surnames, such as Mahasiv Gupta. The Somavamsis were influenced by the Matamayura sect of Saivism, which was then prevalent in central India. Famous Saiva ascetics like Pramatha Charya of Dvaitavam received royal patronage to propagate Saivism. Other Saiva Acharyas who visited Odisha were Sadasiva, Sandhya Siva etc., who bore various Saivite cult-like Lakulisa and Mattamayura. Acharya Gaganasiva was prominent of Mattamayur cult in South Koshala, known from his inscription in the old Somesvara temple at Ranipur Jharial. He received the royal patronage of the Somavamsi king. Mahabhava Gupta Janmejaya-I cult the Siva temple at Ranipadraka (Ranipur Jharial) and named it the temple of Somesvara became the critical centre of the Mattamayura sect (Sahu, et al. 1981, p. 305) ^[38].

After the Somavamsis occupied the coastal regions of Odisha in Cir. 1000 AD, they constructed several Siva temples in Bhubaneswar. Yayati-I constructed the Muktesvara temple, which is one of the finest examples of Odishan Art and Architecture. The Rajarani temple, a Siva temple, was probably built by Indraprastha. The most famous Siva temple was the gigantic Lingaraja temple built by Mahasiva Gupta Yayati-II, rising to a height of about 1800 feet, is regarded as the most magnificent Siva temple in India. Kolavati Devi, the queen of Yayati-II also constructed the Brahmesvatra temple at Bhubaneswar, during the reign of her son Udyota Kesari and dedicated to Lord Siva (Das, 1969) ^[11].

The Later Gangas who succeeded the Somavamsis were originally also devotees of Siva. They were the worshippers of Gokarnesvara Siva, whose seat was on the mountain Mahendragiri in the Gajapati district. The copperplate grants of the Ganga describe the glory of the God Gokarnesvar, their family deity. King Vajrahastradeva granted land for the maintenance of God Katesvara. The temple of Madhakesvara was built by Kamarnava-II. Anantavarma Chodagangadeva,

in his early records, expressed his devotion to Lord Siva. He also presented a village in honour of God Rajarajesvara. However, subsequently, he became a follower of Vaishnavism. Royal Patronage was given to Vaishnavism, and the great Jagannath temple at Puri was constructed. As a result, Saivism lost its prominence in Odisha but continued co-existing peacefully with Vaishnavism. In this period, efforts were made to bring about a synthesis of Saivism and Vaishnavism. Despite the dominance of Vaishnavism, Saivism did not lose its hold on the people in the Ganga and the Suryavansi periods. Both Saivism and Vaishnavism tried to achieve synthesis. Hari-Hara's conception and Hari-Shankar resulted from this synthesis (Sahu, *Op. Cit.*, p. 306) [38]. As noticed in Lingaraja, worshipping similarly in Jagannath cult and tradition of synthesis is found.

However, in Odisha, the worship of Siva seems to have existed in the phallic form from very early times. The Pulindos Kiratas and Savaras, who were the inhabitants of the Vidhya range and the Mahendragir, were the great devotees of Siva. The worship of Siva is known from the early medieval inscription of Odisha. Some of the early descriptions of Odisha referred to Siva as 'Sthanu' (Static or immovable thing), a branchless trunk. It seems the worship of Siva Lingam has emerged from the primitive tree worship, which finds corroboration in literary work known as Mukhalingam Ketra Manatmgam (Rajguru, 1966) [34], which is a part of the Skanda Purana. In the process of Aryanisation, in the cause of time, the tree worship of Sabaras and pulindas mingled and merged with the worship of Rudra Siva.

From archaeological, literary and epigraphically sources, it is known that Saivism existed as the religious faith of Odishan people from a very early time. Saivism seems to have received due patronage under the rule of the Mahameghavahanas of Kalinga. It is known from the Hatigumpha inscription that Kharavela was a staunch Jaina by faith, patronizing the devotees of all sects (Mishra, 1971) [20]. Almost all the historic dynasties patronized and popularised Saivism and built a member of Saiva temples in different parts of Odisha.

Saivism in Western Odisha

The history of Saivism in Odisha will remain incomplete without studying the rise and growth of Saivism in South Koshala. The Kingdom South Koshala is the present Western Odisha.

From remote antiquity, South Koshala seems to have emerged as a far-famed kingdom in the territorial as a far-famed kingdom in the territorial records of India. It was undoubtedly a far-flung empire in the heyday of its glory (Dora, 2012) [13]. When Somavanshis ruled it. However, the territories extent of this kingdom was subject to fluctuation in different phases of time, Sirpur, Raipur, Bilaspur, Sakti, Raigarh, Sambalpur, Binitpur, Sonapur, Yakti and the neighbouring regions of these places formed an integral part of this kingdom. Its antiquity goes back to the Sanskrit epic in India (Srimad-Valmiki Ramayan:- Uttarakhand Sarga or Chap. 138 Verses 4-5, Vayu Puran Chap- 89 Verses 199-200, Sri Mahabharat Sabhaparvan (Gita Press Gorakhpur) p.754 Chapter-31 verses- 12-13 Page 752 Chap. 30 verses I-3) [41] and in the cause of its evolution through many up and downs, it was ruled by royal houses of eloquent encomium and efficiencies

like Kshavakus, Sarabhapuriyas Samavamsis and others. This kingdom had thus an enduring continuity and exerted a profound influence on the annals and antiquates of Odisha Central Province in India. It roughly comprised the presence of Sambalpur, Sundargarh, Bolangir, Kalahandi, Boudh, Phulbani and Koraput of Odisha and Raipur and Bilaspur district of Chhatisgarh.

The Saiva School and Siddhanta doctrine originated in North India as early as the closing Part of 1st Century BC. The Matamayur Saivism Originated in the lap of the Siddhanta doctrine of Saiva School in the regions around Delhi and Kurukshetra. The Mattamayura Saivicharya tradition, in consonance with the description, is mentioned in several inscriptions (Orissa Historical Research Journal, 1954.p.69) [24]. Many of the Saiva ascetics whose nomenclatures figure are consociated with the Saivite Cultures of Odisha.

Epigraphical records do not throw light on the state of Saivism in South Koshala in the pre-Gupta period. The Gunji rock inscription and the Aranga plates, which speak about the political condition of South Koshala in the pre-Gupta and Gupta periods, are devoid of information as to the prevalence of Saivism in that region. Only the Arang plates of Maharaja Bhimasena and his predecessors referred to themselves only as devotees of gods, Brahmanas and teachers. However, the Saiva temple of Bhumra and the Tala in the Chhatisgarh region are important pieces of archaeological evidence indicating that Saivism must have been a dominant faith in South Koshala in the 4th & 5th Century A.D. though Buddhism partially overshadowed it (Mookerji, 1987) [19].

Sripura was the capital of Koshala in the seventh century A.D., which continued to be the political headquarters of Panduvamsis or Mosavamsis at least from the time of Mahasivagupta Trivara Deva. According to Puranic tradition, the Tivara deva lineage hailed from Mekala, which was associated with Utkala. Mekala is identified with the Modern Maikal range, which links Satpura and Vandhjan and Stretches from Khainagarh to Rewa in Madhya Pradesh, where the celebrated Amarakantaka, one of the significant Saivite centres of India, is located. The Skanda Purana mentions that the first fall of Kapildham of the River Narmada, which rises from the Satpura range, is in the hill of Amarakantaka, a famous pilgrim centre of Hindus. Varahamihira also connects the people of Mekala with the pulinda, who were the traditional worshipper of Lord Siva (Panda, 1985) [26].

From the Bahamani plates, we know that Bharatavala, the earliest king of the Pandava Dynasty, was a devout worshipper of Siva. One of his predecessors, Indrajala, is known as a Puran Mahesvara from his Malga plates. There is an allusion in the inscription that Lord Siva is Sailendraraja, meditating upon by the Siddhas on the golden peak (of the Himalayas). The donee of this Malga Plate was a Brahmin called Bhava, one of the names of Lord Siva. The engraver of the Bahamani plate was Siva, and his father was named Isana, another name of Lord Siva. These references in the records of Panduvanshis who ruled over Mekala indicates that they were Saivites, with their abiding faith in Lord Siva enshrined in the Amarakantaka hills (Behera, 2018) [4].

The inscription of Tivaradeva mentions the Origin of the Pandunsis from Udayana and refers to his as 'Sasadhanvaya'. The predecessors of Trivaradeva were petty feudatory chiefs

under Sarabhapuriyas of Sripura South Koshala. Mahadeva Tivaradva captured the territory of South Kosala from Sudevaraja of the Sarabhapuriya family Mahasudevaraja, who was pramabhagavata was known from Kauvatal plates. According to Bonda Plate, Mahasiva Tivar was also a Parama Vaishnuava under the Sarabhapuriyas who ruled a considerable part of South Kosala ever. Vaisnavism was the most popular at that time, and it continued to exert its influence even under Mahasivagupta Tivaradev as late as the 7th Century A.D. While the Sarabhapuriya and the Vakataks were ruling over Sripura and Vidarbha, there emerged powerful kings called Nalas. We get a continuous and clean picture of Saivism in South Koshala with the coming of the Nalas, who ruled over the Koraput region of Odisha and the ex-State of Bastar in Chhatisgarh in the 4th and 5th Century A.D. Thirty-two gold coins of Nalas are discovered from Edenga in the ex-Bastar state. These inscriptions on coins have been assigned to 5th Century A.D. and refer to Varaharaja, Arthapati and Bhavadatta. Like Bhavadatta Sivaraman and Arthapati, the Nala king were devout worshippers of lord Siva, known from their Rithapur and Kesaribeda plates. The name Bhavadatta indicates that he was the gift of 'Bhava' (Lord Siva). On the obverse of the gold coins of Nala kings, there is the representation of couchant bull and crescent moon. The symbols undoubtedly refer to Nala embracing Saivism in the 5th Century A.D. The kings have recorded that they acquired the property and souveighte by Maheswar and Mahasena (Mahesvara Mahasenisriata Rajya Vibhavah). Dr D.C Sircar Gives that correct interpretation by referring to Mahasvara and Mahasena as two district deities by whose grace Bhavadatta obtained royal virtues or to whom the kingdom of Bhavadatta was dedicated (Agrawal, 1970) [1].

Dr Sircar suggests that Under the influence of Saivite teachers who possibly came to South Koshala and Kalinga from North after South Indian campaigns of Samudragupta, Arthapati and Bhavadatta of Nala dynasty of Kosala and Anantavarman of the Vasishtha lineage of Kalinga embraced Saivism. The Nala inscriptions were issued from Puskari at the early stage. Later on, they have defected Vakatakas and occupied Nandivardhana identified with modern Nagardhana near Nagpur. Further, they have extended their territory as far as Prayage. Bhavadattavarman was known to have taken a sacred rithapur plate reveals that Bhavadattavarman donated a village called Kadambagiri to Matraddhya Arya of Parasara gotra and his eight sons. Kadambagiri, which was located in the territory of Bhavadattavarman, seem to be identical with Kadamabaguha, where the first Saiva Acharya or propounder of the Saiva Siddhanta system was a resident. The representation of bull in the coins of Nala dedication of Kingdom to Mahasena and Mahesvara in the Kesaribeda and Rithapur plates that in 5th & 6th Century A.D. The Vaishnavite Vakatale. The territory of ancient South Koshal not far from Sonapur stands the Kopsalesvara temple Baidyanath.

Podagarh stone inscription reveals that Bhavadatta belonged to the early part of the 6th Century A.D. His son Skandavarman. Bhavadutta was a worshipper of Mahesvara and Mahasena, after whom he named his son. The sculpture evidence of the Kosalesvara temple at Baidyanath reveals the iconographic features of Mahasena Skanda of the Six Century

A.D. No doubt, Baidyanath was a famous Saivite centre under the patronage of Nalal King Bhavadattavarman. The image of Mahesvara Kartikeya was enshrined (Panda, 1985) [26].

The excavation of the Trisula is a mound of Maraguda valley of Kalahandi district of Odisha that has unearthed the ruin of a Saina Monastery. This was a Saiva monastery link with Saktism. The mound, where excavation was conducted, is famous as the Trisula model Trisula means a trident closely associated with Lord Siva. Very close to the excavated site of Maraguda Lingam of black granite amidst the debris. Again a gigantic Siva Lingam is collected from Maraguda valley.

They were placed at Nuapara district. The Saiva monastery of Maraguda valley was very likely founded by the Nalas, who ruled in the 3rd Century A.D. Thus the representation of bull and crescent moon in the Nala gold coins and inscriptions shows the dedication of the Kingdom to Mahesvara and Mahasena in their copper plates and unearthed Siva Monastery with Lingam in Maraguda valley indicate without any doubt in the 4th Middle of 6th Century A.D. there was a sudden decline of Saivism in South Koshala (Sahu, 1986) [37].

The Sarabhapuriyas who came after the Nalas, who were devout Vaisnavite as known from their coins and inscriptions while the Sarabhapuriyas and the Vakataks were ruling over Sripura and Vidarbha, respectively, there emerged in the limelight of the history of powerful kings culled Nalas, who ruled over the Koraput and the ex-State of Bastar in M.P. During the period of Sarabhapuriya the Acharyas of Pancharastra School of Vaisnavism came in the large number of Kishula and Kalinga and played the dominant rule. Though the Sarabhapuriyas were Sadevraja purchased the village of Sanagrama from Vaisya of South Kosala and donated it to the deity Jageswara Bhattaraka. The Kurud Charter of Maharaja Narendra was issued from Tilakeswar (Modern Tala), where we found the ruins of two Saiva temples. So it may not be biased to say that one of the temples was dedicated to Tilakeswara Siva by Maharaja Narendra. After Sarabhapuriyas, Somavamsis came into power Tivaradeva, who possibly defeated Mahasudev-rajya of the Sarabhapuriya dynasty and occupied the entire Kosala, professed Vaisnavism. However, early rulers of the Somavamsis dynasty' were Saivites (Behera, 2018) [4]. Thus it is evident that there was a strong Vaisnavite movement to undo the work of the Saiva Acharyas. Baloda plates of Tivaradeva indicate that there also developed a sort of cult criticism Trivaradeva has expanded their territory in the coastal tract of Odisha or Utkala. The Adhabhar plates of Maha Nannaraja that Tivardev was not merely the lord of entire Koshals but also the lord of Utkala (Pratapa Sakdle Kasolotkalo Mandaladhi Pattaya).

In the process of expansion of territory, the Vaaisnavite monarch Tivaradeva was involved in a war against Bhumakar King Dharamaraja Srimanabhita, the Saivite ruler of Kangoda. Tinardeva was seriously defeated in the hands of Dharamaraja. After the defeat, there was a turning point in the history of the religious movement of South Kosala. From the time of Tivara Deva to Balarjuna, Somavamsis were the followers of Vaisnavism. Once again, Saivism emerged as a triumphant faith enjoying royal patronage from Mahasivagupta Balarjuna for an unbroken period of four centuries found. After Balarjuna, almost all the Somavamsis monarchs assumed the title "Parama Mahesvara". Saivism

emerged as a triumphant faith enjoying royal patronage from the time of Mahasivagupta. The triumph of Saivism in South Kosala in the eighth century A.D. was probably due to the rise of Rudra Siva, the lord of Amardakathirtha of that region identified with Amarda on the border of Balasore district of Odisha or Anuda Nagnath in Maharashtra. Rudra Siva was fourth in descent from Kadambaguhavasin, and he was a shining star in the galaxy of the master of this time. He seems to be identical with Sivacharya or Amardaka fame, mentioned in lines 13 & 14 of Semakpat inscription of Siragupta Balarjuna. It appears that he has a reputation of a stalwart preacher of Saina Siddhanta School. During the period of Balarjuna, he paid a visit to South Kosala with his coming to South Koshala, Kadambaguha or Kadumbagiri (Koraput district) of hoary Saivite tradition once again became the centre of Saiva Siddhanta System and reputed acharyas for the spread of the tantric form of Saivism. His great displays Sadasiva Acharya was also known to have come to South Koshala and extended his influence over Balarjuna. It looks pretty likely that Balarjuna was overwhelmingly influenced by this Saiva Acharya and embraced Saivism as the state religion for the first in Orissa epigraphs (Dora, 2012) [13].

We noticed in the Senakapat Inscription open with Siddham Namah Sivayah, and from the beginning, it praises Lord Siva and his consort Parvati. These verses 22 and 23 of the same inscription state that under the guidance of Sadasivacharya, the Saiva ascetics had to arrange for a sacrificial ceremony and the initiation of the people in Saiva Faith to exposition to the Saiva doctrine. The object of the inscription was to eulogize the construction of the temple of Sambhu and its dedication to Sadasivacharya. Balarjuna was also known to have constructed the Gandhasvara temple of Sirpu. In Lodhia plates of Balarjuna, he was known to have made rich endowments for Isaneswar a Bhattaraka and celebrated Saivita teachers like Bhagaban Pramathacharya and his disciple Sulapani. Again from Senakapat inscription, we knew that Durgaraksita, after constructing the temple of Sambhu donated lands in the village Gadasarkara in favour of God Madanarati (Siva). The Siva ascetics also received lands in the village of Kodasima. In the Sirpur stone inscription queen, Basata compares herself and her son Balarjuna with Parvati and Kartikeya, respectively (Ratha, 2020) [32].

In another stone inscription of Sivagupta, the very first line runs, "may the hue of the body of Sambhu who covered himself with ashes guards you, which darkens as it were by a shadow encircle as if be dark blue lustre of his neck. The Vakratentuli grant of Mahabhavagupta declares himself as the devout worshipper of Mahasvara. Kolabati Devi, the mother of Udyotakesari erected a temple god Brahmesvara at Siddharkshatra in Ekamra Kshetra. The Somavamsi period marked the Zenith the glory of Saivism in Odisha. The Samavansi rulers were staunch Saivites and assumed titles like Prama-Mahesvara. Some of their rulers also had surnames such as Mahasivagupta. The Somavansis were influenced by the Mattamayura sect of Saivism, which was prevalent in central India. During their reign, the Mattamayura School of Saivism had considerably advanced in western Odisha. Ganga Siva, the famous ascetic of this sect, is known from his inscription in the old Somesvara temple at Ranipur-Jharial, established here. He received the patronage of the Somavansi King, Mahabhavagupta

Janmejaya-I, possibly at Ranipadraka (Ranipur) and named it as the temple of Somesvara. Ranipadraka(Ranipur Jharial) became an essential centre of the Mattamayura sect. Acharya Ganga Siva played an essential role in the development of Saivism in Odisha (Panda, 1999) [27]. At Ranipur Jharial Saivism, Saktism was synthesized in the background of Tantricism, which gave rise to the cult of the sixty-four Yoginis. Consequently, there was an outburst of temple architecture about Saivism, Saktism and tantrism on the side of Ranipur Jharial. Belgar. Serving the Sita of Ranipur, he noticed fifty-seven temples on the spot of Ranipur. Originally there were one hundred and twenty temples at that place. At present, about forty temples have survived. The most significant of the Ranipur Jharial group is the Somesvar Siva temple which was constructed by famous Saivite teacher Gaganasivacharya is known from the inscription on the lintel of the temple, Gaganasivacharya may be identified with Gaganasiva, the disciple of Isanasambu, assigned to the early Part of the tenth Century A.D. (Senapati, 1968) [40]. The text of Somesvara temple inscription runs as follows:- Om Namah Sivaya Sri Somesvaradeva Bhattaraka Parameswar Varaparasidhi Sri Uttara-terambagrha Vinirgata-GaranaSiva. Western Odisha was studded with Saiva temples of artistic significance during the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries A.D. It is known from lines four & five of the Sirpur stone inscription of Sivagupta-Nannadeva, son of Indrabala, filled the earth with temples of Lord Siva. By the 10th Century, several significant Saivite temples were constructed in South Koshala. The temples of Kosalesvara, Charda and Belkhandi, are the considerable contribution of Saivism to Orissan art & culture. In fact the Somavansis had to initiate the construction of the Saivite temples at Sirpur & Rajim. The earliest grant of the Somavamsis to the Saivite Grachitich is probably the Lakshmanesava temple at Sirpur. When the Somavamsis moved to Suvarnapur, they extended their Lavish Patronage to construct the Koshalesvara temple of Baidyanath and the monuments of Ranipur Jharial. They also contributed their might to construct the Saivite monuments of Belkhandi and Charda (Pasayat, 2009) [29].

Koshalesvara temple of Baidyanath has initially been a Buddhist structure of the fifth century A.D. By the Sixth Century A.D., Saivites took it up for the reconstruction of the ruins of the Buddhist Structure. If that is so, we may reasonably infer that the Somavamsis contributed to the expansion of Saivism at the expense of Buddhism. It is difficult to assign the temple of Koshalesvara to the Sixth Century A.D. However, there are a few significant sculptures inside the temple, particularly the exciting sculpture of Kartikeya, which may be assigned to the Sixth Century A.D. when Somavamsis extended their territory on Mahanadi valley, they constructed their capital called Yagatinage which may be identified with the village Jagati near Baud on the bank of river Mahanadi. Several Saivite temples were built at Baud under the patronage of Somavansis in the compound of Ramesvara temple; three Shrines are star-shaped in the plan. The peculiarity of the temple is that the Shivalinga is placed here on a star-shaped Yonipitha, and each of the Shrines is raised on a high plinth. Thus Saivism under the patronage of Bhavadattavarman flourished in South Koshala with its simple rational philosophy evolved under the guidance of the teachers of Saiva Siddhanta school with various ramifications,

which led to the rise of several tantric cults of the medieval period (Bhuyan, 2019) ^[10].

After Somavansi, the Teluguchodas came in power in Suvarnapura. They were also great devout worshippers of Lord Shiva. Somesvara, the Teluguchoda King of Suvarnapura, is described as a bee at the feet of Sri Baidyanath (Siva) (Agrawal, 1970) ^[11]. There is controversy regarding the period of Baidyanath temples construction. Many scholars have different views about the Baidyanath temple. After some years, it was converted into a Saiva temple. Further, Sahu view that Teluguchodas probably constructed the Baidyanath temple. It is said that the Koshalesvar temple of Patnagarh was also built during the time of Telluguchodas. The Gangas were also ardent worshippers of Lord Siva. During their rule, they must have patronized the growth and development of Saivism in South Koshala. The tutelary deity of Gangas was Gokarneswara Siva, for whom they constructed the temple at the top of mount Mahendra (Sahu, 1981) ^[38].

The Chauhans established their rule at Patnagarh and Sambalpur. Though their family deity was Goddess Samalai, they still patronized Gods and Goddess of the Hindu Pantheon. During the reign of Chauhans eight famous Siva temples were built and, popularly called Astasambhus, besides many other temples of Lord Siva, were constructed. In different periods of history, the people of South Kosala worshipped Siva in different forms and manifestations, worshipping many other deities associated with Siva like Ardhanarisvara, Uma Maheswara, Parvati Ganesh, Kali, Kartikeya, Bhairava, Birabhadra, Gajantaka, etc. Among the various names of Siva worshipped in South Koshala, the famous are Sambhu, Madanarati, Isaneswara, Gandheswara, Baidyanath, Dhurjyoti, Bankeswara, Pinakipati, Sankara, etc. The people of Kosala so much loved Lord Siva that many temples of the lord were called Kosaleswara, and we find temples having the same name of Sonepur, Patnagarh, Sorda, and many other places (Ratha, 2020) ^[32]. Different Schools of Saivism like Pasupata, Kapalika, Kalamukha and Matumayura seems to have been prevalent in South Koshala. The founder of Pasupata schools is Lakulisa. His figures are found in the Rajiv Lochan temple and the Baidyanath temple. Up to 6th and 7th Century A.D., the Pasupata School could not make much headway in South Kosala though it has been firmly rooted at Bhubaneswar. The Molhar plates of Balarjuna are known for his donation in favor of Kapileswara Siva. Based on this, we can safely say that the Kapilaka School was prevalent in South Koshala. Besides this, the presence of Bhairava in the Siva temple of Ranipur-Jhariel points out the prevalence of Kapalika and Kalamukha school of Saivism in South Kosala.

The Mattamayura School of Saivism was the most popular sect among the different schools of Saivism. The Mattamayur School worshipped Siva as Kapali. Gangadhar, with his matted hair adorned with Naga and crescent (Mishra, 1999) ^[18]. The Acharya of this school probably came from central India to South Kosala. The Ranod inscription says about the Acharyas of the Mattamayur clan. The fifth Acharya of this school is popularly known as Matta-Mayuranatha. The name of the four spiritual predecessors is found in the Ranod inscription. They were Kadamba guhavasi, Sanakhamathkadhpati, Terabipata, rudra Siva and Purandara.

Scholars widely differ in their opinion regarding the identification of Kadambaguha, Sankhamatha, Termbi, and Arardaka. The Righapur copper plates Charter of Bhavadattavarman from the Ranod Inscription, it is known that Mattamayaranatha had visited Ranipadar Tapovana identified with Ranipur-Jhariel. He and his disciple tried their best to spread Mattamayura sect of Saivism in South Koshala. From the Lodhie copper plate of Balarjuna we knew that the Prathamacharya came from Panchayatra Tapovana. During his time, Balarjuna donated villages and necessities to Lord Isaneswara Battarka. Balarjuna patronized Mattamayura sect of Saivism, which became more popular in South Kosala during the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries A.D. Western Part of Odisha was studded with Saiva temples of artistic significance. Ranipur-Jhariel was the most celebrity among them. Even from an earlier period, as we learn from lines four and five of the Sripur stone inscription of Sivagupta, Nannadeva filled the earth with the temples of Lord Siva (Senapati, 1968a) ^[40].

Somesvara Siva temple of Ranipur Jhariel is one of Western Odisha's most famous Siva temples. It was built in the 9th century A.D. Lakshmaneswar Siva temple of Sirpur is the earliest Saiva monument of Somavansis. It is believed that about sixty Siva temples of the Somavansis period are present in Patnagarh of Bolangir district. Many Siva temples are found in Binka and Sonepur. The Kosaleswar temple of Patnagarh and Baidyant temple of Sonepur are probably constructed by Telugu Chodas. Twin temples of Gandharadi are the best example of synthetic of Saivism, and Vaisnavism Siddheswar Siva temple of Gandharadi is one of the famous Siva temples of Boud. By the tenth century A.D., we found several significant Saivite temples like Kosaleswara of Chanda and Belkhandi, which played an essential role in the Saivite culture of Odisha. With lavish patronization of different royal families and the teacher's effort of various sects, especially of the Mattamayur sect of Saivism, was very deeply rooted in the soil of South Koshala. Baijalya Deva built the Harishankar temple at the feet of Gandhamardan Mountain of 15th Century A.D. It is the assimilation of the Saiva and Vaisnava cult. It is a famous temple of western Odisha (Senapati, 1968b) ^[40].

During the Chauhans period, many Saivite, Vaishavite, and Sakta monuments were built in different parts of western Odisha. The Chauhan monuments no doubt get impetus from the Orissan architectural style. Many Siva temples were built in the Sambalpur district during the Chauhan period. The most important among them were the Asta Sambhu temples as Bimaleswar Siva temple of Huma Kedarnath of Ambabhana, Baidyanath of Deogaon, Balunkeswar of Gaisama, Mandhata of Maneswar, Sarneswar of Sorna, Visweswar of Saranda, and Nilakantheswar of Niljee. The Bimaleswar Siva temple of Huma on the Mahanadi, which is in learning condition, was built by Maharaja Bailar Singh. The rest of the temples were constructed by Dakshina Ray, the Dewan of Raja Jit Singh. Somanath temple, Budharaja temple, Bhubaneswar temple, Lokanath Siva temple, Balunkeswar temple, and Siddheswar temple are the Chauhan temples of Sambalpur. The Chauhan rulers were devout of Saivism along with Vaisnavism and Saktism. Some Siva temples built during the Chauhans period exhibit a strong synthesis of both Saivism and Vaisnavism (Pasayat, 2009) ^[29].

Conclusion

Saivism is a great religion; many Siva temples have been constructed in western Odisha by different persons. The customs and traditions of Saivism have been reflected in society. Many Saivite fairs and festivals are celebrated in Western Odisha. Sital Sasthi of Sambalpur is one of the famous festivals of Odisha. The sixth day of the month of Jyestha of every year of the Oriya calendar is organized as the day of Sital Sasthi and the marriage of Siva and Parvati. The marriage of Siva and Sakti is celebrated in most of the Siva temples of western Odisha in Sambalpur, Sonepur, Binka, Barpali, and many other places. Sambalpur is very famous for the Sital Sasthi festival. It is believed that the earth and the nature around are cooled from this day, thereby suggesting the nearest approach of the rainy season to Odisha.

Sivaratri is one of the prominent festivals widely observed in India and Odisha. This festival is also observed in all Siva temples of western Odisha. It is celebrated with pomp on the 14th day of the dark fortnight of Phalgun (in the month of February-March) in honor of Lord Siva. The Sivaratri of Bimalasvara temple of Huma, Siva temple of Belkhandi, and Kumudapahad Siva Temple of Titlagarh is the most famous in western Odisha, and a large number of people gather during Sivaratri. It attracts the most significant number of pilgrims. At Huma, a prominent fair takes place for seven days, and the good transaction takes place; commodities from different parts of Odisha are brought to the fair for sale.

It is believed that Lord Siva is the supreme begin of the Universe; he is creator, destroyer, and protector. So many Borata and fasting are kept on behalf of Siva for happy and prosperous family life. Sambar (Monday) is the auspicious day in Saivism. Some peoples keep fasting in Monday and going Siva temple to fulfilling their desires. Kartika Purnima and Chandan Yatri are famous festival of Huma. Chandan Yatri is celebrated on Baishaka Vasu (April-May). Jalabhiseka and Rudrabhiseka are the homage of Lord Siva. Another Saivite ritual of western Odisha is Somanath Brata. It is observed on the Sukla Paksha Dasami (10th of bright fortnight) of Asvina. This Brata is kept for a peaceful life in the family. Many fairs and festivals of Lord Siva are celebrated for a peaceful life in the family. Many fairs and festivals of Lord Siva are observed in honor of Lord Siva. The fairs and festivals of Lord Siva are a product of primitive religious beliefs.

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