

## Tantra Manuscripts in the Collection of State Museum

*Dr. C.B. Patel*

India has a rich legacy of Tantra and Mantra culture since remote past. Buddhist and Brahmanical literature are replete with this mystic cult which had great impact on social life, literature, music, art and architecture.

Orissa as one of the adipitha of Tantra has produced a series of Tantric literature. Orissa State Museum alone has nearly 200 Tantric manuscripts both in Sanskrit and Oriya. These manuscripts highlight various Buddhistic and Brahmanical religious and ritualistic order. Interestingly some of the tantric doctrines and ritualistic systems are still in vogue in the State. The script used generally Oriya. However some manuscripts written in Bengali and Devanagiri are found as well. Mostly these manuscripts are written in palmleaf. Early and original manuscripts are few as most of the Tantra manuscripts are copies of 18th, 19th and 20th century.

Tantra is derived from the root word 'Tan' which means to pervade or spread. It is believed that there are two types of scripture

namely Vaidika and Tantrika. The Tantra is generally regarded as the spiritual authority for the Kali age. For this it is also called the 5th Veda. But in common sense, it is a creed connected with Sakti and Fertility cults.



CHAMUNDA

The origin of Tantra is shrouded in mystery. It seems to have been gradually evolved through centuries. Many scholars opine that by 7th century A.D. Tantrism witnessed fuller efflorescence and got connected intimately with the Saiva and Sakti cults.

In Orissa however Tantra vidya was known to have been popular from 6th century A.D. which marked the beginning of decline of Buddhism. Many Tantric texts connected with Sakti worship were composed during this period. Many Sakti temples like Mohini, Vaital and Gauri at Bhubaneswar,

Vimala at Puri, Kichakeswari at Khiching, Viraja at Jajpur, Mangala at Kakatpur, Charchika at Banki, Harachandi near Puri, Varahi at Chaurasi, Sarala at Jhankada, Bhadrakali at Bhadrak, Sameleswari at Sambalpur and Pataneswari at Bolangir were constructed and deities were worshipped in their



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myriads of forms. Side by side the cults of Matrikas and Yoginis also evolved in various parts of Orissa.

From stratified deposit, a two handed Durga image in archer's pose with her vehicle Lion has been excavated from Maragud valley by Dr.

N.K.Sahu. There is an inscription in it which reads *Mahesvari Bhavada*. The excavator has assigned this deity to 5th century A.D. on palaeographic ground. This image may be identified as the earliest image of Durga in Orissa.

Another temple of Durga found on the top of a small hill near Patiakila has been assigned to the Gupta period by Dr.M.P.Das. The deity is carved out of a single stone. The religious history of Orissa has been eclectic through ages. The Pancha devatas were worshiped in the State with great religious fervour. The concept of *Gane narayane rudre ambike bhaskare tatha, bhinna bhinnana nakartavyam panchadeva namasute* was popular here. Ganesa was worshipped in his traditional pitha at Mahavinayaka, Visnu at Puri, Siva at Bhubaneswar, Ambika at Jajpur and Surya at Konarka. In fact, the worship of Ambika initially symbolizes Sakti worship which was popular in Orissa along with

worship of other divinities. We find epigraphic reference of Sakti worship in the Terasinga copperplate grant of Maharaja Tustikara who was known to have been worshipper of Stambhesvari. She is represented in the form of a pillar which is interpreted by D.C.Sarkar as the composite emblem of Siva and Sakti. This type of pillar worship is popular in the hilly tribal areas which has often Tantrik association.

### Tantric Authors of Orissa

Orissa State Museum has seven Tantric palmleaf manuscripts which have been written by Oriya authors. In recent times, more such works have been reported from other collection of Orissa by Manuscript Resource Centre, Orissa State Museum, National Mission for Manuscripts Cell Mundamalini Bhairava Tantra has been discovered at Bada Odiya Matha of Puri. Durgajanana dipika has been written by one Jagannath Acharya. He belongs to the 17th century A.D. He was known to have born at Purusttama Kshetra of Utkaladesa as evident from his Tantric literary work. The text is dedicated to goddess Durga. The manuscript was known to have been copied by one Maguni Mahapatra. On the basis of its script it has been assigned to 17th century A.D. It also refers to an earlier work known as



MAHINSA MARDINI DURGA, STATE MUSEUM

Samatasara Pradipa which is a dated work of Harihara Bhattacharya of Bengal dated to 16th century A.D.

The 2nd Tantra pothi ascribed to Oriya writer is Tarinikulasudha Tarangini. Ramachandra Udgata was its author. In the Mangalacharana and Colophon there is reference about Lord Lingaraj of Ekamrakshetra. From the colophon, we know that the book has been copied by one Kesava Ratha. It has been dated in Amka year which is equivalent to 18th October 1770, Monday Mahanavami in the lunar month of Aswina.

The next Tantric text of Oriya origin is the Saradasaradarchanapadhatti. It is written by Godavara Misra who flourished in the 15th/16th century A.D. From the text, it is evident that the writer was a great scholar. He was the son of Balabhadra Misra of Kautsa gotra. His mother was Arnapurna. He was a devotee of Ambika Durga and Prime Minister of Prataparudra Deva (1447-1534). He was also known to have scribed some other Tantric works like Tantrachintamani. He was also worshipper of Lord Jagannath. The 4th work is Durgosava Chandrika written by Vardhana Mahapatra, the son of Kavidindima Jivadevacharya. He flourished during the rule of Ramachandra Deva I (1668-1700) of Bhoi dynasty. In the text it is mentioned that he has written this on the orders of the king. The Tantric text

Bhubaneswari Prakas was known to have been scribed by one Vasudeva Ratha. He was a native of Bira Harekrusnapur Sasana near Puri. He belonged to 18th century A.D. The manuscript Vidyapradipa has been written by Krisna Misra who flourished in the 18th century A.D. The 7th Tantric text known to have been written by Oriya author Raghunath Dasa was Banadurga puja. He was a native of Gadagada on the Prachi valley.



MAHINSA MARDINI DURGA, STATE MUSEUM

Recently a series of other Tantrik texts ascribable to Oriya writers has been identified by the author while taking up the survey and documentation of nitherto unknown palmleaf manuscripts of Orissa in the National Mission for Manuscripts Project.

The large find of Tantric works in Orissa speaks of the popularity of Tantra Culture since remote past. This fact is further corroborated by discovery of wide and varied Tantric figures especially of

Vajrajana Buddhism in different parts of the State. Celebrated Siddhas and authors like Indrabhuti (writer of Jnanasiddhi, 8th century A.D.) his sister Laxmikara and Padmasambhava who flourished in Orissa have also significantly contributed to the Tantric Heritage of the State.

### Early Tantric Pithas of Orissa

Hevajra Tantra known to have been compiled in 7th century A.D. mentioned four important Tantra pithas of India namely



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epigraphic records. Similarly Puspagir i.e. present Chatus pitha complex of Ratnagiri, Lalitgiri, Udayagiri and Alatigiri is also popularly mentioned. This place is described as Polomolokili in the travel account of Hieun Tsang. This contention is also supported by recent excavated materials of ASI and OIMSEAS. These two centres were intimately associated with early Buddhist Tantricism since 5th century A.D.

### Yogini Pithas

The four early pithas of Tantricism proliferated into one hundred and eight pithas later on. Few epigraphic references are found in this connection in all India perspective. In an inscription of 12th century A.D. of Maharashtra there is mention about Mahayogesvari Ugrachamunda as the presiding deity of the sixtyfour Yoga pithas. Similarly in

Jalandhara, Oddiyana, Purnagri and Kamarupa. Of these four, two pithas have been assigned to Orissa. Oddiyana pitha of Orissa was the fountain head of all Tr an t r i c knowledge since early time. This word finds mention in v a r i o u s

Chakukya record and Halagondi epigraph of Andhrapradesh we find mention of sixtyfour Yoga pithas. But such epigraphic evidences are singularly absent in Orissa, although we find innumerable sculptural pantheons of Yogini deities. Yoginis are mother goddess. They were associated with fertility cult as malevolent deities. Their number was initially seven or eight but subsequently their number increased to sixty four and got mingled with Tantric cult and rituals. The Markandeya Purana refers to seven Matrukas.

At present there are four existing 64 yogini temples in India. Two are located in Madhya Pradesh one at Bherghat and the other one at Khajuraho. In Orissa one is located at Ranipur Jharial in Bolangir district and the other one at Hirapur in Khurda district. The existence of the two Yogini temples in Orissa, one in western part and the other one is eastern part speak of the popularity of the cult in the State. The Ranipur Jharial circular Yogini temple can be assigned to 7th Century A.D. on stylistic consideration while the Hirapur specimen may be dated to 8th/9th century A.D. This Yogini cult was known to have reached coastal belt from the upper Mahanadi valley.

Rudrajamqala Tantra, Kularnava Tantra. Astadasa pitha and Kubjika Tantra etc. refer to a number of other Tantric pithas of Orissa like Viraja , Ekamra, Udissa, Jaleswar and Srikshetra, Puri etc.

### Jajpur

Jajpur is situated on the bank of the holy river Baitarani which finds mention in the Mohabharata. Vishnu Purana calls it Nabhigaya while the Brahma Purana , Kapila Samhita describe the place as a sacred centre. It is mentioned as one of the 42 Siddhapithas of Kubjika Tantra, one of the 50 pithas of

Jhanarnava Jantra, Sakapitha of Brahmanila Tantra and astadasa pithas of Sankaracharya and Pithanirnaya. It also finds mention in the Paralakhemundi copper plate of Prithvi Maharaja who flourished in the 6th century A.D.. The plate of Bhanudatta of 7th century A.D. also refers to Viraja. Unmatta Keshari had established his capital at Viraja. In a grant of Bhaumakara king Shantikara Deva an inhabitant of Viraja has been mentioned. The place was also identified as the capital city of Bhaumakaras. Initially they were Buddhist. But later one Brahmanic system of Sakti worship entered in here.

After the decline of the Bhaumakaras the Somavamshis under the hagemony of Yayati II, Mahasivagupta made Jajpur (ancient Guhesvara patak) his capital. Muslim records like Tabaquat-I-Nasir, Tarika-I-Firozsahi called this Jajatinagar as Jajnagar from which the present name Jajpur is known to have been derived.

Viraja was the popular deity of this town. She is said to have originated from the altar of Brahma in course of the celebration of ten aswamedha sacrifice. The deity is a two armed Durga mounting on her vehicle Simha. The image is assigned to pre-gupta era by R.P.Chanda.

The place was also a famous centre of Vajrayana Buddhism. Figures of Tara, Heruka, Kurukulla and Aparajita etc. found here testify to the contention.

### **Puri**

Tantric texts identify Puri as a pitha of Jagannath Bhairava and Vimala-Bhairavi. She is also called Kshetrasakti. Subhadra of the Jagannath triad is identified as Ekanamsa or Katyayan a form of Durga. By about 12th

century A.D. with the popularity of Vaishnavism. She was incorporated as Subhadra in the cult of Jagannath.

The influence of Tantric rituals is discernible in the worship of Jagannath. This Tantric traditions evolved various Vyasas such as Matruka vyasa etc Sri Jantra, Bhubaneswari Jantra, various mudras and Vijamantra are introduced in the system of Jagannath worship. Many believe that Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarsan have originated from Yogic tantrik system for which the deities are worshipped as one by the mantras of the priests.

Thus vedic and tantric mode of worship of Jagannath clearly indicates tantra influence. The panchamakara which is a tantric conception is vividly noticed in the worship of Jagannath. Fish is substituted by green vegetables mixed with Hingu, meat by adapachedi (ginger) wine by green coconut water, grain by Kanti, a preparation of flour and sugar and Mithuna is substituted by the dance of Devadasis and offering of flowers. Animal sacrifice has been substituted by fish offering to Vimala as well. The Madala panji, the temple chronicle of Puri speaks of the knowledge of Tantra and Mantra by the builder of the temple of Lord Jagannath Chodaganga Deva. In Rudrajamala Tantra datable to 10th century A.D. amply reflects that Tantric system of worship was in vogue in the worship of Jagannath at Puri. Since early time this was a Tantrik pitha.

Balarama Dasa in his Bata Avakasa (16th century A.D.) has described that Jagannath was attended by the sixtyfour Yoginis Katyayinis, Sapta Matrikas, Vimala and Viraja. The same work also says that seventy six mother goddess like Sakambari,

Durgeswari, Kali, Ramachandi, Kothesvari, Bhayavati, Vaseli, Hadimai, Kotambachandi Brahmani, Savitri, Sarla Chandi, Aparajita Pingala, Sasakama, Marakarama, Heryula, Kalapati, Kalijai, Kalaratri, Kalika, Pateli, Kalasuni, Charchika, Chhayamaya, Vijaya, Chandraghanta, Kalashanta, Kalamukhi, Trutikhai, Hemasanti, Sarpamukhi, Jagulai, Hadabai, Samalai, Mangala, Karunai, Barunai, Terasuni, Tareni, Jareni, Mareni, Sapanacheti and Kanakesvari etc. The Prachi Mahatmya also mentions deities like Chandaghanta, Ramachandi and Bhagavati. Sarala Das describes Ugratara, Chachesvari, Baseli, Mahesvari, Kalika, Konkali, Abhimukhi, Janguli and Sarla in his work Arka Kshetra to have been incorporated into the fold of Jagannath Triad

### Bhubaneswar

Sanskrit texts like Ekamra Purana, Ekamra Chandrika, Kapila Samhita and Tirtha Chintamani etc describe Bhubaneswar as EkamraKshetra. The place is called a Saktapitha in the works like Namostottrasata and Brahama Nilatantra. Find of innumerable archaeological remains of Tantra Pantheon amply hints at the Tantric heritage of the place. The temple of Vaital or Kapalini built in 7th century A.D. bears Tantric figures with central figure of a terrific emaciated Chamunda. The name of the temple seems to have been derived from the tantric word Vetala or spirit who were invoked by the Kapalikas and Tantriks to attain

siddhi. Ardhanariswara, Mahisa Mardini Durga and Saptamatrikas are also found in this temple complex. We find tantric deities in the Gauri temple, Ananta Vasudeva temple, Sisiresvar Markandeswar, Dvaravasini, Uttaresvara and Mohini temples etc. The large variety of erotic figures in various temples of Bhubaneswar are reminiscence of tantric practices of Kapalikas and Tantrikas who profess various philosophies about sex and mokshya through sexual mahasukha.

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Dr. C.B. Patel is the Superintendent of Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar.