

CHAPTER-VII

RELIGIOUS CONDITION OF ORISSA DURING THE REIGN OF ANANGABHIMADEVA III AND NARASIMHADEVA I

The reign period of Anangabhimadeva III and Narasimhadeva I spans over a little more than half a century. During this period Orissa witnessed a strange harmony between different Brāhamanical cults like Saivism, Saktism and Vaisnavism.¹ The harmony among the followers of the above Brāhamanical cults fostered a spirit of synthesis which culminated in the cult of Jagannātha. The adoration for Jagannātha by the two rulers of our period was so total that they offered the rulership of Orissa to Jagannātha and considered themselves as rāutas or deputies² of the deity. The open proclamation of the rulers as the fervant devotees of Jagannātha and the dedication of the kingdom to the deity had a salutary effect on the religious beliefs of the people. Jagannātha was now considered as the lord of the universe and all other deities of Hindu pantheon were taken to be either his subordinates or associates.³ Such a religious belief resulted in the emergence of the cult of Jagannātha as the predominating faith of Orissa and the gradual merger of different Brāhamanical cults in the Jagannātha faith. "Of this religious syncretism", writes Hunter, "Jagannātha forms the ultimate result. He has assimilated to himself a wider range of attributes than any of the Gods of Rome and Greece".⁴

1. I.O., Vol.V, Part 1, pp. 67-68, No.37; pp.136-137, No.90 and S.I.I., Vol.,IV, No.1329.

2. OHRJ, Vol.V, Nos. 1 & 2, pp. 66-67.

3. Mukharji, P., History of Medieval Vaisnavism in Orissa, p.1.

4. Sahu, op.cit., Vol. 1, p.300.

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The synthesis of religious ideas and practices was not entirely unknown in Orissa before our period. A spirit of tolerance and harmony was noticed among the adherents of Saivism, Saktism, Vaisnavism, Buddhism and the Vajrāyana cult during the Bhaumakara period in Orissa. This is suggested by the presence of a Buddhist Amogāsīdhi image in a Saiva temple or scenes depicting episodes from Rāmāyana on the walls of a Saiva shrine. Also it is to be noticed that some tantric rites were depicted in the Saiva temples of this period. The religious harmony thus noticed in the Bhaumakara period got strengthened during the rule of the Somavāmsis. Saivism and Vaisnavism established such a rapport between themselves that a new cult named the Hari-Hara cult emerged during this period. The Līngarāja temple built in honour of Tribhubaneśvara combined Saiva and Vaisnavite aspects of Brāhmanism to such an extent that the deity came to be regarded as Hari-Hara or a composite deity representing both Vishnu and Śiva. The āyudha on the top of the Līngarāja temple is a chakra and a trident joined in one. Similarly the Vaisnavite symbols like the conch, the disc, the mace and the lotus were also associated with Śiva. The assimilation of Saiva and Vaisnavite principles brought an end to the differences between the followers of the two faiths and created in them a spirit of understanding for each other's religious views and practices.

1. Subuddhi, U, The Bhaumakaras of Orissa, pp. 118-123.

2. Ibid., pp. 129-141.

3. Panigrahi, K.C., Archaeological Remains at Bhubanesvar, p. 190.

Anantavarman Codagāṅgadeva occupied Orissa by ousting the Somavāṁsis and shifted his imperial headquarters to the Chudāṅga Kāṭaka or Gaṅga Kāṭaka in the beginning of the 12th century A.D. In the earlier part of his reign he was a devotee of Śiva and claimed the epithet Paramamāheśvara or a devout worshipper of Śiva. But gradually he was drawn towards the Vaisnava faith and claimed the epithet parama-vaiṣṇava or an ardent devotee of Lord Viṣṇu. In his Korni plates he calls himself both a paramamāheśvara and a parama-vaiṣṇava which suggests his regard for both Śaivism and Vaisnavism. It is believed that Codagāṅga came under the influence of famous Vaisnava saint Rāmānuja of the South who was an advocate of the dvaita philosophy, and having come under his influence he was inclined towards Vaisnavism. It could also be that Codagāṅgadeva imbibed the syncretic religious spirit of Orissa symbolised in the Jagannātha cult after occupying this region. This is attested by his Korni plates dated 1112 A.D. where he demonstrates his Catholicity by assuming the titles of paramamāheśvara, parama-vaiṣṇava and parama Brāhmaṇya. As already stated above, it was under the impact of the preaching of Rāmānuja, Codagāṅgadeva gradually turned towards the Vaisnava faith and at the time of issuing his Viśākhapatana plates in 1118 A.D., he omitted the title paramamāheśvara and preferred to

1. I.A., XVIII, pp. 106 ff.

2. I.O., Vol.III, Part 1, p.26, No.20 and p.28, No.22

3. Ibid.

4. Eschmann, Kulke and Tripathi, op.cit., pp. 22, 144.

5. JAHRS, 1, Part III, pp. 106ff.

6. I.A., XVIII, pp. 106ff.

call himself a paramavaishnava. Even one of the contemporaries of Codagaṅgadeva, Jayabhanja of Khijīṅga Kota, also accepted Vaisṇavism although he was originally a follower of Śiva. Thus by 1118 A.D. the religious policy of Codagaṅgadeva was in favour of Vaisṇavism, although his private devotion to Śiva was not affected. He continued to make donations to the Śaiva shrines of Madhukesvara at Mukhalingam Nilakanthesvara at Bobili and at Krittivāsa at Bhubaneswar. Thus he brought about a peaceful coexistence of Śaivism and Vaisṇavism which in turn influenced the religious trends of his time. He constructed the present Jagannātha temple at Puri towards the later part of his reign and the temple was probably completed during his time. The construction of such a majestic temple immortalised Codagaṅgadeva in Orissan traditions and made Jagannātha the most important deity of Orissa.

The presence of ten incarnations of Vishnu on the bāda of the temple and the depiction of episodes from the gopalīlā of Bhāgabat purāna on the pābhāga associate the shrine of Jagannātha with Vishnu, the primeval purusha or purushottama. Further the pārsvadevatās like varāha, Narasiṁha and Vāmana trivikrama are found on the southern, western and northern side niches of the temple as is the case in a Vishnu temple. An unique image of Krishna Vishnu found in the upper janghā of the bāda on the northern side

1. E.I., Vol. XIX, p.41.

2. OHRJ, Vol. 1, p.2.

3. I.O., Vol. II, p.15; Eschmann, Kulke and Tripathi, op.cit., pp. 22ff.

4. The Eternal Pursuit, pp. 85-89.

5. Thid.

of the temple pointedly suggests the association of the shrine with Krishna cult of the Vaisṇavas. The predominating Vaisṇavite sculptural features in the walls of the Jagannātha temple undoubtedly associates the shrine with Vaisṇavism. Hence, it would not be wrong to suggest that the shrine of purushottama Jagannātha had already attained the Vaisṇava character at the time of construction of present Jagannātha temple by Codagaṅgadeva.¹ The construction of present Jagannātha temple at Puri during Codagaṅgadeva's reign marked the development of Vaisṇavism in Orissa. It was during this time the Emār Matha was established at Puri by govinda, a desciple of Rāmānuja. The word Emār seems to have been derived from the Tamil term Empurmaner, one of the attributes of Rāmānuja, who visited Puri sometime during the early part of 12th century. Rāmānuja's visit to Puri is attested by the 'Rāmānuja divya charital', 'praparnāmrita', and 'totādrimatha guruparamparā' and is corroborated by the Mādalāpāñji, the temple chronicle of Lord Jagannātha at Puri. Rāmānuja's visit to Puri gave a new turn to Orissan Vaisṇavism which acquired certain elements from the Śrīvaisṇava faith.² The gopichandana or the sacred mark of Śrīvaisṇavas was adopted in Orissa during this time and even this mark was given to Śrī Jagannātha and Balabhadra on festive occasions.

1. OHRJ, Vol.1, p.2 and Dasgoba Copper Plates of Rājarāja III, E.I., XXXI, pp. 225ff.

2. Mishra, K.C., Cult of Jagannātha, pp. 40-41.

The development of Vaisnavism in Orissa centring round the Jagannātha shrine at Puri during the time of Coḍagaṅgadeva and his successors through out the 12th century created a new religious fervour in Orissa. Śaivism which was the most dominant faith in Orissa during the rule of the Bhaumakaras and Somavaṁsis, was now receded to the background and gave way to Vaisnavism to dominate. However, the harmony between Śaivism and Vaisnavism noticed throughout the 12th century created a new spirit of eclecticism in Orissa in the form of the Jagannātha cult which began to assimilate the principles of Śaivism, Vaisnavism and Śaktism, the three leading cults of Brāhmanism. Such an eclectic spirit is noticed in the attitude of Coḍagaṅgadeva and his successors. Although Coḍagaṅga's personal devotion to Śaivism remained unaffected, his open patronage of Vaisnavism marked a shift in his religious attitude and in the religious policy of Imperial Gaṅgas. His sons continued to be Śaivas by faith but patronised the neo-vaisnavite faith which dominated the religious scene of Orissa during the 12th century. They continued to donate perpetual lamps to different Śaiva shrines as a mark of their respect for Śiva and never divorced themselves from Vaisnavism centring round the Jagannātha shrine at Puri. Rājarāja III, the grandson of

1. OHRJ, Vol.1, p.2; I.O., Vol.III, part 1, p.63, No.54 and No.206, p.231.

2. Mishra, K.C., op.cit., p.41.

3. S.I.I., Vol.V, 1947; I.O., Vol.III, Part II, No.293 and Banerjee, History of Orissa, I, pp. 245-55.

Codagaṅgadeva continued the religious policy of his predecessors. By this time the famous Vaisṇava poet Jayadeva had already composed his 'geetagoṅdam'¹ in fine lyrical style. The 'geetagoṅdam' proclaimed Jagannātha as one of the incarnations of Viṣṇu and associated him with Kṛiṣṇa. Towards the beginning of 13th century Jagannātha was universally accepted as a Vaisṇavite deity, who assimilated in him Śaiva, Śākta and Vaisṇava principles.

Anaṅgabhimadeva III who succeeded his father Rājarāja III was a devout worshipper of Viṣṇu and called himself a purushottamaputra, Rudraputra and Durgāputra in his Drākṣārama inscription.² By calling himself a son of purushottama or Viṣṇu, Rudra or Śiva and Durgā or Śakti, Anaṅgabhimadeva made it a declared state policy to bring harmony between the three Brāhmanical cults. The outcome of this state policy was the dedication of the kingdom to purushottama³ Jagannātha, who was the symbol of this harmony.

Anaṅgabhimadeva called himself a rāuta⁴ or a deputy of Lord Jagannātha and constructed a Jagannātha temple at Abhināva Vārāṇasi Kaṭaka⁵ which he founded as his new capital city on the southern bank of river Mahānadi. Probably for this reason Anaṅgabhimadeva is given the credit of constructing the Jagannātha temple at Puri in the Mādalāpāñji.⁶ Scholars

1. I.O., Vol.III, Part II, (1961), p.294.
2. S.I.I., Vol.IV, 1329 and I.O., Vol.V, Part I, pp.67-68; also see; D.C.Sircar, Studies in the Religious Life of Ancient and Medieval India, pp. 71ff.
3. I.O., Vol.V, Part I, p.96 and E.I., Vol.XXX, (1954), p.255 and OHRJ, Vol.V, Nos. 1 and 2, pp. 66-67.
4. Ibid.
5. E.I., XXVIII, pp. 244-56.
6. Mādalāpāñji, Prāchi edition, Oriya, pp.27-35ff.

agree on the point that Anāṅgabhimadeva's Jagannātha temple at Abhināva Vārāṇasi Kāṭaka was mistaken by the composers of the Mādalāpāñji for Jagannātha temple at Puri. The rāuta concept as established by Anāṅgabhimadeva III gradually gained ground in Orissa and contributed its considerable share in strengthening the position of the kings of Orissa as the deputies of Lord Jagannātha.

After dedicating the kingdom of Jagannātha and calling himself only a rāuta Anāṅgabhima started a new Srāhi or reckoning. His inscriptions¹ at Pātālesvara temple at Puri introduced the Srāhi year of Purushottama Jagannātha instead of his own. The use of Srāhi perhaps began after he issued his Nāgari plates in 1230 A.D. It may be noted that prior to the dedication of the empire to Purushottama the inscriptions of Anāṅgabhimadeva were used to begin with. "Svasti, Srī Anāṅgabhimadevasya Vijaya rājye" meaning the 'prosperous and victorious reign of king Anāṅgabhima'. But after the dedication of the empire to Purushottama the Srāhi reckoning began, "Svasti Srī Purushottamsya vijaya rājye" or in the prosperous and victorious reign of God Purushottama. The Mādalāpāñji² mentions that Anāṅgabhima introduced the chhatisāniyoga³ or 36 types of services for the Jagannātha shrine at Puri.

1. E.I., Vol. XXX, (1964), p. 202.

2. Mādalāpāñji, pp. 32-33.

3. See: Appendix.

It also informs us that Anāṅgabhima created the paṇḍā system at Puri which was a famous centre of pilgrimage for the Hindus.¹ The main functions of the paṇḍās was not only to look after the comforts of the visiting pilgrims but also to act as their tourist guides. Besides they also rendered some kind of diplomatic service for the state which was dedicated to Lord Jagannātha. The Paṇḍās picked up different languages of India for their professional purposes and worked as a coordinating link between Jagannātha and the varying multitude of visiting pilgrims. The Nāgari plates of Anāṅgabhimadeva III mentioned that he discharged his religious duties in accordance with the religious texts like the Mahābhārata, the vāmanapurāna, Adityapurāna and Vishnudharmaottara. The religious duties of the king obviously included the supervision of daily rituals of Jagannātha who had by now become a state deity.

Anāṅgabhima is mentioned in the Srikurman inscription as to have been intoxicated by the lotus feet of Lord Purushottama. A Drākṣārama inscription describes him as one who is deeply attached to the lotus feet of Hari. From the Allālnath Perumal inscription at Kānchipuram of Somāladevi it is known that Anāṅgabhima III

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1. Mishra, K.C., op.cit., p.44.
 2. E.I., XXVIII, pp. 240-55.
 3. S.I.I., V, 1284.
 4. Ibid., IV, 1252.
 5. E.I., XXXI, pp. 94-98.

was son of Purushottama and he observed the Ekādasibrata¹ in order to attain the supreme bliss. The Ekādasibrata² is generally observed among the Vaisnavas and, hence, we can suggest that Anāṅgabhima was a staunch Viṣṇava by faith. In spite of his devotion to Viṣṇu he continued the family practice of making donations to various Śaiva shrines.

Narasimhadeva I, the son and successor of Anāṅgabhimadeva III, and in fact the greatest and most powerful of the Gaṅga monarchs, followed the religious policy of his illustrious father. In the Sikhareśvara temple inscription³ on the Kapilās hill, he describes himself a Paramamāheśvara, purushottama putra, and Durgāputra. His military successes against the Muslim Nawab of Bengal and the Kākatiya ruler Gaṅapati of Warrangal made him one of the greatest rulers of his time. Under him the Gaṅga empire reached its zenith and the power of the dynasty was at its height. Befitting to his position Narasimha claimed the title of 'gajapati' or the overlord of the (invincible) elephant force. This military title was adopted by all the Gaṅga rulers who followed Narasimha, and by the Suryavāṁsi monarchs. The title became so popular with the Orissan monarchs that they were commonly addressed as 'gajapati', which became a biruda or appellation to the names of the rulers. By calling himself a Paramamahesvara purushottama putra, and

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. I.O., Vol.V, Part I, pp. 136-37 No.90 and E.I., XXXIII, pp.41ff.

Durgāputra, Narasiṃha adopted the eclectic religious spirit of his father. He also called himself a rāuta¹ like his father and dedicated the kingdom to Lord Purushottama. In the 'Sikhareśvara inscription it is emphatically stated that he could humble the pride of his enemies at the command of Lord Purushottama.² Thus Narasiṃha not only became the deputy to Lord Purushottama but also became his military general. Like Anāṅgabhima he had combined the three important deities of Orissa, i.e., Purushottama Jagannātha, Liṅgarāja Śiva and Virāja Durgā. A sculpture found in the Sun temple at Koṅārka built during his time depict king Narasiṃha worshipping the triad consisting of a Śiva Liṅga, Purushottama Jagannātha and Mahishamardini Durgā (pl.30). Similar sculptures from Koṅārka are preserved at the Koṅārka Museum and the National Museum at New Delhi. Yet another sculpture of a later date depicting Purushottama, Śiva Liṅga, Mahishamardini Durgā on a common altar is noticed on the bhogamandapa of the Jagannātha temple at Puri. It is obvious that these sculptures represent a triad comprising three most important shrines of Orissa combining Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Śaktism in one fold. Of these three deities Narasiṃha acknowledged Purushottama as the principal deity and he seems to have had a special relationship with him, like his father. A sculpture in Koṅārka depicting Narasiṃha and his courtiers worshipping Purushottama (pl.30) bear out this fact.

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Thomas E Donaldson, Hindu Temple Art of Orissa Vol.II
Plates.....

Several other sculptures at Koṇārka depict king Narasiṃha worshipping the sun god in kneeling position (pl. 3A). This obviously suggests that the devotion of Narasiṃha to sun god for whom he constructed the biggest temple. Tradition avers that Narasiṃha was afflicted with some dreaded disease and he was cured after propitiating the sun god. Hence, he built the Sun temple at Koṇārka. Another heresay account has it that Narasiṃha desired a son and he was blessed with one by the Sun God. So he built a temple for the Sun God and named his son Bhānudeva.

Narasiṃha's personal devotion to Lord Purushottama and his regard for the Sun God, goddess Durgā and Lord Śiva make him a catholic in religious outlook. Although he dedicated his kingdom to Lord Purushottama and built a temple in honour of the Sun God at Koṇārka, he continued the family tradition of making donations to different Śaiva shrines. From the Liṅgarāja temple inscription it is known that one Sadāsivaguru as the preceptor of Narasiṃha I. Sadāsivaguru, who was probably a Śaiva pontiff, founded a monastery at Ekāmra called Sadāsiva maṭha where many ascetics from Rāḍha and Gauḍa were permanently settled. Narasiṃha's affiliation to Śaivism continued inspite of his deep attachment to the cults of Purushottama Viṣṇu and the Sun God. Similarly Narasiṃha was also devoted to the Śākta faith which attaches considerable importance to the preceptor, who is capable of explaining the tantric symbols

1. Mitra, Koṇārka, pp. 7-8.

2. Mahtab, H.K., gives this information on the basis of Liṅgarāja temple inscription. H.O.I. p.33.

and rites to his pupils. The 'Bhakti Bhāgavata' of Jivadevācharya¹ informs that one Brāhmana Achārya Raja of Vatsagotra and a preceptor of the Śākta faith was the guru of Narasiṃha I. Achārya Raja was probably a yogi who acquired occult power and perfected kundalini yoga. He probably initiated Narasiṃha into Śaktism.

The worship of Purushottama Jagannātha, Śiva and Mahisamardini Durgā on a single altar probably led to the formation of the holy triad: Jagannātha, Balabhadra and Subhadrā, worshipped inside the Jagannātha temple. It is very difficult to determine the probable time of the formation of the triad and their installation in the Jagannātha temple, although there is a suggestion by some scholars that the triad might have been formed during the 13th century.² The Pātālesvara temple inscription of Anāṅgabhimadeva referring to Hali (Balabhadra), Chakra (Jagannātha), and Subhadrā strengthens the above suggestion. But there is no doubt about the fact that the triad brought about a synthesis of Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Śaktism, respectively represented by Purushottama, Śivaliṅgam and Mahisamardini Durgā and the forms of worship of the three cults. The sculptural representation of Purushottama in the Koṅārka temple is almost like the wooden image of the God

1. Woodroffe, J., Śakti and Śakta, (1965), p.524.

2. Eschmann Kulke and Tripathi, The Jagannātha Cult and the Regional Tradition of Orissa, pp. 190-191.

3. I.O., V, i, p.112, l.5.

installed in the Jagannātha temple. The Śivaliṅgam and Mahisamardini Durgā found by the side of Purushottama in the said sculptural panel were probably transformed into Balabhadra and Subhadra¹. During the time of Bhānudeva I, Purushottama came to be identified as Jagannātha and by this name he became more popular.

The period under review brought the culmination of all the Brāhmanical cults including Śaiva, Śakta, Vaiṣṇava and Saura into a common platform. This definitely unfolded a new approach to the posterity to understand the value of the mechanics of our socio-religious and socio-cultural heritage.²

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1. See: Jaiswal, S., The Origin and Development of Vaisnavism, p.53 and Eschmann, Kulke, Tripathi, op.cit., p.188.
 2. Saundra Rajan, K.V., Early Kalinga Art and Architecture, (Delhi, 1984), p.6.