Chapter – VIII

CONCLUSION
The Somavamsi rule in Orissa is an important epoch in the history and culture of Orissa. This period witnessed a great change in the political and religious life of the people of Orissa. The Somavamsis, originally known as Pāṇḍuvaṃśis, were ruling over South Kosala. In course of time the Pāṇḍuvaṃśis were driven out from their capital city of Sripura (Sripur) by the Kālachuris. At this moment one member of the family came to western part of Orissa and established a new kingdom with Suvarnapura (modern Sonpur) as the capital city. This branch became known as Somavamsis. In subsequent period the Somavamsis conquered coastal tract of Orissa from the Bhaumakaras and brought about the political unification of Orissa. In course of time other geographical units of ancient Orissa came under the administrative fold of Somavamsis. However due to a unified political and administrative structure the Somavamsis provided favourable condition for allround development of Orissa. The religious life of the people during the Somavamsis period forms an important aspect of the Somavamsis rule. The Somavamsi's inherited a religious policy which was based on religious toleration and eclecticism which flourished in Orissa since the time of Asoka.

Our deep and intensive study of the religious life of the Somavamsi period indicates that various religions like Śaivism, Vaishnavism and minor cults like Śakti worship, Buddhism, Jainism, Gānapataya, Surya and Hari-Hara etc were very much prevalent during this period. Monuments relating to the above mentioned religions and sects were also built during this period, which brought about harmonious existence of various religious cults.

However, during this period Śaivism reached the high watermark under the active patronage of the Somavamsi rulers Śaivism flourished as
a leading religion during this period. Rightly from the time of Bālārjuna, Śaivism received royal patronage. The Senakpat Inscription\(^1\) gives us ample reference about the role played by Mahaśivagupta Bālārjuna as well as by prominent Śaiva Ācharyas for the spread of Śaivism. Similarly Janamejaya I, who is the real founder of the Somavarnāśī rule in Orissa, also played a dominant role in the spread of Śaivism. Various traditions that developed around him also speak a lot about his positive role in the spread of Śaivism. When Somavarnāśīs shifted their sphere of activities to the coastal tract of Orissa, places like Bhubaneswar and Jajpur became important centres of Śaivite activities. Due to royal support Śaivism, Śaiva temples and Śaiva establishments grew in this area. Great Śaiva temples like Muktesvara, Rājārāṇi, Brahmeśvara, Liṅgarāja were constructed during this period. Various smaller temples like Kedareśvara, Śuresvara, Manibhadreśvara, Dākra-Bhimeśvara, Ekāmbreśvara, Valukeśvara temples were also constructed at Bhubaneswar during this period.

Except the above mentioned Śaiva temples, some more Śaiva temples of this period are also found in the valley of the river Dayā. The State Archaeology Department conducted a survey of this valley and brought to light important monuments of this period\(^2\). Important Śaiva temples of this period are Brahmeśvara temple at Berāboi, Kunteśvara temple at Arāgada, Arjuneśvara temple at village Haladi-Basanta and Jaleśvara temple in the village Golābai etc. Śaiva temples of this period are also found in Prāchi valley, Choudwar, Kusaleśvara in Keonjhar district and Boud, Sonpur, Kalāhanḍi districts. Further the sculptural representation of Pārśvadevatas like Kārtikeya, Gaţeşa, Pārvati, Bhairaba and various images of Lākulīsa and Śaiva Ācharyas in the niches of the temples and in various decorative panels prove that during the Somavarnāśī period Śaivism assumed the status of the state religion in Orissa.
Regarding the position of Vaiśnavism during this period we have observed that this religion had limited success. However, though the Somavaṃśīs were all devout worshippers of Śiva they had equal respect for other Brāhmanical religious faiths. Because they expressed their reverence to lord Viṣṇu along with Āditya, Varuna, Soma, Hutasana and Sulapāṇi. Their royal seals bear the emblem of Gajalakṣmi. Most of the rulers of this dynasty compare themselves with Viṣṇu or with any of his incarnations. The Narasimhapur Plates of Mahābhāvagupta Udyota Keśari mentions Yayāti as the representative of Madhusudana. The Pātāla Museum Plates of Mahāśivagupta Yayāti refer to the prince who was born like Viṣṇu. Further the Sonpur Plate of Mahābhāvagupta Janamejaya records the grant of a village to the Merchants Association and the immediate transfer of the same village to the temples of Āditya and Keśava. All these aspects clearly indicates that Somavaṃśī rulers had also respect for Viṣṇu. Further archaeological remains found at different places also prove the existence of Vaiśnavism during this period. The worship of Madhava image at different places in Prāchī valley indicates the existence of Vaiśnavism. The beautiful monolithic pillar of Jajpur, popularly known as Subhastambha, is identified by some scholars with Garuda Stambha. Similarly a beautiful Viṣṇu temple at Ganeśvarapur near Chhatia, in the Cuttack district with four subsidiary structures and the life size four-armed figure of the god with all its attributes are assigned to this period from stylistic ground. Further various temples dedicated to Viṣṇu in western Orissa the original seat of the Somavaṃśīs prove that Vaiśnavism was existing and was also getting royal support during this period.

During the time of Somavaṃśī Śakti worship in different forms is also found from the epigraphic sources. The Marañjamurā charter of Yayāti–II refers to Bhagavati Panchāmbari Bhadrāmbikā of Suvarnapur as
their family deity. The Brahmeśvara temple Inscription mentions Yayāti-II, as 'Chaṇḍiḥāra' which means Chaṇḍi (Sakti) and Hara (Śiva). Thus it has been suggested that Yayāti-II was a follower of both Śaktism and Śaivism. Like wise Śakti worship during this time is also proved by the fact that queen Vāsatā, the mother of Bālārjuna is compared with Pārvati and Kolāvati the mother of Udyota Keśari is compared with Durgā in their Inscriptions.

The sculptural representation of Śakti in the form of Mahisāmardini Durgā, Pārvati, Chaṇḍi, Sapta Mātrikā, Chamunḍā, Varāhi, Bhagavati are found during this period. The Mahisamardini Durgā in Virajā temple, two sets of Saptamātrikā at Jaipur, Mātrikās at Markendeśvara temple at Puri, are the glaring examples of Śakti worship during this period. Similarly Śakti worship in the form of Yogini in separate shrines at Rānipur-Jhariāl and Hirāpur also prove that Yogini worship was prevalent. Further sculptural representation of Śakti in the form of Pārvati are found in the Śaiva temples as Parśvadevatas. This clearly indicates that though the Somavaṁśi were Śaivite, they also gave equal importance to Śakti worship.

Religious faith beyond Brāhmincal Hinduism like Jainism and Buddhism also received patronage during this period. Jainism during this period got a new vigour due to Somavaṁśi royal patronage. Three short Inscriptions are found inside the Lalāteṇḍu Keśari cave and the Navamuni cave of the Khandagiri hill near Bhubaneswar which became the centres of Jaina activities during this period. The first of these Inscription found in the Lalāteṇḍu Keśari cave reads as follows:
“In the year 549 in the victorious reign of Sri Udyota Keśari the decayed wells and decayed tanks were shown (i.e. cleansed) for bathing and drinking and (the images of ) twenty four Tirthankaras were established (i.e. carved on the walls of the cave) on the auspicious Kumara parvata. If any heretic causes even damages (to them), such a cheat (will) excite the anger of Sri Pārśvanātha by his act.”

This clearly shows Somavaḍha kings charity for Jainism. Similarly other two Inscriptions of this cave also justifies the prevalence of Jaina activities during this period. During this period Jain activities were also found in different parts of Orissa, as various sculpture are found, which are assigned to this period. The important places of Jaina activities of this period are noticed at Narsinghpur, Kantabania, Jajpur town, Bhelong in Jajpur district, Charampa in Bhadrak district, Podasingidi in Keonjhar district and Nandapur, Chatua, Subei, Kachela, B. Singhpur, Charamala, Jamundā and Jeypore in Koraput district. Another interesting aspect of Jainsim i.e. Śāsanadevi the female consort of Jina Tirthankara, are also founding difficult places. Thus, Jainism, which was in a dormant position during the rule of Khāravela and had become weak, once again became prominent during the Somavaḍhas.

During the early Somavamśi period king Bālarjuna Mahaśivagupta was a patron of Buddhism. His Sirpur Inscription while praising the lotus feet of Sauguta or Buddha records the construction of a monastery by Bhikshu Ānanda Prabhā and the establishment of free kitchen for the monks. He is known to have donated a Vihāra for Buddhist nuns. Further he also granted village Kalaspur in Taradamsaka bhoga to the monks who were residing in the Taradamsaka Monastery.
When Somavamsi shifted their capital to the coastal tracts of Orissa, they patronized Śaivism in a vigorous manner and Buddhism due to lack of political patronage lost its grip in the society. Even Yayati-II, in order to establish Brāhmānic faith and to eliminate Tāntrism at Jajpur had destroyed Buddhist establishments. However towards the end of the 11th century A.D. when, Soma dynasty was in a stage of decline, king Karnadeva granted a village in favour of Rāni Karpuraśri of Solanapura Mahāvihāra. This Solanapur Mahāvihāra indicates that during this period Buddhist establishment was existing.

During this period we also notice the presence of Sūrya Cult at Pāliā, where we come across the Biranchi Nārāyan temple and at Kaupur of Bhadrak district. Further king Puranjaya also patronised Śūrya Cult during this period. The Gānapatya sect also existed particularly at Jajpur where a separate temple for Gāpeśa is found near Saptamātrikā images at Dasaśvamedha Ghat. Various Gāpeśa images of this period are found in various temples of subsequent period. Thus, during this period minor cults like Sūrya and Gānapatya also existed.

Another Interesting cult known as Hari-Hara cult also developed during this period. The Pāṇḍuvaṁśis, who were the predecessors of the Somavamśis, originally ruled over South Kosala. The Pāṇḍuvaṁśis were originally Śaivites but in course of time they also showed their interest for Vaiśnavism, Tivaradeva the first great king of this family and his son Mahānarāja declared themselves as “Parama vaiśpa” in their royal charters even though they were Śaivities. In the Senakpat Inscription Bālārjuna has been represented as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. This shows
their inclination towards Vaiśṇavism in the early period and also justifies the co-existence of Śaivism and Vaiśṇavism.

Mahābhāvagupta Janamejaya, the great ruler of this dynasty, was also a patron of both Śaivism and Vaiśṇavism. His Sonpur Plates mentions the grant of the village of Gottikela to Kamalavana Vanikasangsthāna (Merchants Association), who in its turn donated the village to the deities Keśava and Āditya, Janamejaya was succeeded to the Somavānśi throne by Mahāśivagupta–II alias Yayāti-I. According to Mādalāpānji Yayāti Keśari was the builder of the celebrated temple of Jagannath at Puri. This traditional account is corroborated by the remnants of early Somavānśi art in Puri. Thus Yayāti-I, though a Śaiva worshipper, was also patronizing Vaiśṇavism.

However, with the march of time Hari-Hara cult received royal attention, as a result of which a big and expensive temple for Hari-Hara (Lingarāja) was constructed during the time of Yayāti-II at Bhubaneswar. Here Hari and Hara or Viṣṇu and Śiva are worshipped in equal footing as the main deity of the temple. The temple Liṅgarāja contains all the feature of Śaiva and Vaiśṇava faiths, and marks the zenith of assimilation of both the cults into one i.e. Hari-Hara.

This period is also remarkable for a large number of monuments built in honour of various deities. These monuments are the great testimony of their deep love for different religions and culture. The great Śaiva temples like Mukteśvara, Rājārāpi, Brahmeśvara, Liṅgarāja and many other small shrines dedicated to Śiva were built during this period. Similarly Viṣṇu temples like Indralāta at Rānipur-Jhariāl, Panchupāṇḍaba temple near Chhatia, Gaṇeśa temple near Dhauli, Gaṇeśa temple at Jajpur near Saptamātrikā temple, Biranchi Nārāyana temple at Pāliā in Bhadrak
Mātrikās in the form of Saptamātrikās at Jajpur, Puri and Bhubaneswar justify their love for sculptures. The two temples for Yogini—one at Rānipur-Jhariāl and the other at Hirāpur near Bhubaneswar still exist to show the monumental achievements of Somavaṁśi rulers. The Jaina sculptures in the form of the image of Jaina Tirthankara at Kantabania, Jajpur town, Narasinghpur in Jajpur district and Buddhist establishment and images of Buddha in different places also justify the existence of Jaina and Buddhist monuments of the period.

On the whole an atmosphere of toleration created a congenial atmosphere during the entire Somavaṁśi period. With the establishment of political unity, Orissa witnessed peace, prosperity and cultural glow. The period witnessed great cultural activities in the form of construction of temples, which stand even to-day as silent witnesses to the glory of Orissa during the Somavaṁśi rule.
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