PREFACE:

The Somavamsis, originally known as the Pāṇḍuvaṁśis, were a powerful ruling dynasty of medieval Orissa. When the Pāṇḍuvaṁśis were driven out from the south, west and north part of South Kosala, a branch of the family took shelter in the eastern region of South Kosala, comprising of Sambalpur – Sonpur region of Orissa and came to be known as the Somavamsis. With the advent of the Somavamsis in the political horizon of Orissa about second half or the ninth century A.D., a new chapter was added to the history and culture of Orissa. In course of their rule, they supplanted the Bhauma Karas of Utkala, occupied Kalinga and gave Orissa a geographical unity and a homogenous culture. In fact the Somavamsis may be considered as the makers of modern Orissa and the present day Orissa is greatly indebted to the Somavamsis.

More than two hundred years rule of the Somavamsis is a significant period in the social, cultural & religion history of Orissa. However, till this date no detailed study in the history of religion of Somavamsis has been taken up by any scholar Dr. K.C. Panigrahi in his Chronology of the Bhauma Kara and the Somavamsi of Orissa", Dr. D.K. Ganguly in his "Historical Geography and Dynastic History of Orissa", Dr. B.K. Rath in his "Cultural History of Orissa", Dr. (Mrs.) Bina Kumari Sharma in her "Somavamsis rule in Orissan History", and Dr. S.R. Nema in his "The Political History of Somavamsis Kings of South Kosala and Orissa" have dealt exhaustively with the political History or the problems of Somavamsi Chronology. The above mentioned Scholars and others like Dr. S.N. Rajguru, Dr. N.K. Sahu, Prof. R.D. Banerjee, Dr. H.K. Mohatab, Thomase E. Donaldson, Dr. Satyendranath Patnaik, Dr. L.K. Panda, Dr. B.C. Pradhan, Dr. Niranjan Satapathy, Dr. Ekadasi Padhi, Prof.
Karunasagar Behera have done some work in different aspects of the
cultural life of the Somavamsis. However none have dealt exhaustively
with religious life during the Somavamsis period.

The present work entitled “Religion under the Somavamsis of
Orissa” (Circa 9th century A.D. to 1110 A.D.) has been divided into eight
chapters. In Chapter-I the political history of Somavamsis from the
inception till the conquest by the Gaṅgas has been narrated. The
achievements of the rulers, the circumstances during which they shifted
their capital from western Orissa to Coastal Orissa, construction of
temples and monuments and the conflict in the family have been
discussed.

The Chapter-II rise and growth of different religious cults like
Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, Śaktism, Buddhism and Jainism under the
patronage of different dynasties right from Asoka’s conquest in 261 B.C to
the fall of the Bhaumakaras, the immediate predecessors of the
Somavamsis, has been dealt with.

In the Chapter-III the role played by the Somavamsis for the spread
of Śaivism has been dealt with. How the Somavamsis, who were the
devotees of Viṣṇu in their earlier phase, were converted to Śaivism after
the conquest of coastal region of Orissa has been dealt with in detail.
Under their patronage how a large number of Śaiva temples were built has
been critically dealt with.

In Chapter-IV the spread of Vaiṣṇavism under the Somavamsis has
been examined. The early Somavamsi rulers were Vaiṣṇavas but after the
conquest of coastal region of Orissa they became Śaivities and patronised
Śaivism and Śaiva monuments.
In the Chapter V steps have been taken to highlight the role of other cults like Śaktism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sūrya and Gānapataye etc. under the patronage of the Somavāṁśis. In this chapter an extensive analysis has been made about the presence of Śaktiworship in the form of Yogini at Rānipur-Jhariāl, Hirāpur and Mātrikās worship at Jajpur, Puri etc. Similarly the existence of Buddhism, the royal support extended to it by king Karnadeva and Buddhist establishment of Ratnagiri, Solampur, Achutrājpur etc. have been discussed. The position of Jainasim and role played by Udyota Keśari for protection of Jaina monks are also dealt with. The position of Sūrya Cult and Gānapataye cult are also discussed in this chapter.

The cult of Hari-Hara, being one of the most important and interesting composite religious cults, its origin and growth in Orissa and how this cult reached its climax during the Somavāṁśis period with the construction of the great temple of Liṅgarāja at Bhubaneswar is dealt with in Chapter VI.

In Chapter VII a detailed description about monuments of the period like temples belonging to Śaiva, Śakta and Vaiṣṇava cults have been discussed. In this chapter the temple architecture, their construction style, the position of main shrine, Pārśvadevatās are discussed. Similarly Buddhist and Jaina establishment and Stūpas and Vihārās belonging to these faiths has been described. In the concluding Chapter VIII an attempt has been made to show how the existence of different religious cult was possible because of the tolerant nature and patronage of the Somavāṁśis rulers.