CHAPTER III

SCULPTURAL FEATURES
CHAPTER III

SCULPTURAL FEATURES

The profusion of sculptures on the body of the Orissan temples has evoked admiration of the critics of Indian art. According to Stella Kramrish, "the coherence of its monumental shape is enriched by its carvings; nowhere else in India are the walls of the temple as intimately connected with their sculptures... The temple here is a work of monumental sculpture of which the single carvings form the intricate surface".  

The outer surfaces of the Orissan temples have been lavishly decorated in contrast to their interiors which are severely plain. The silpa texts are silent as to why the interiors are to be left plain. The interior of the deula or sanctum is conceived as the garbha or womb of the Cosmic Being. In conformity with the idea of garbha the walls have been left plain. The plainness of the walls also emphasises the serene and solemn atmosphere which is required for the performance of the rituals of the deity.

2. V. Dahejia, Early Stone Temples of Orissa, p.31.
3. The interior walls of the Vaitāla temple are relieved with images of Saptamātrkas, Virabhadra, Ganeśa and Bhairava. These images do not serve the purpose of wall decoration, rather they are meant to be worshipped along with the presiding deity, Chāmunda.
The interior walls of the mukhaśālās of the earlier temples were also left plain. The interiors of the mukhaśālās of a few temples belonging to the later part of our period are found decorated with sculptures. But this practice could not become popular and therefore was not insisted upon. The interiors of both the mukhaśālā and vimāna have been kept plain as far as possible.

A perfect harmony between the architecture and sculpture has been achieved on the Orissan temples. After a period of tentative efforts the Orissan craftsmen succeeded in achieving an orderly arrangement of the sculptural motifs and cult icons on the body of the temple. They also succeeded in securing the balance between grandeur and beauty; between height and elegance. The work of effecting such a balance has been most successfully done on the Liṅgarāja temple at Bhubaneswar which represents the culmination of the evolution of the temple-architecture of our period.

Our main concern here is to study the pattern of arrangement of the sculptures on the body of the temples and their gradual evolution towards delicacy and gracefulness. It has been already pointed out that the sculptural art of Orissa had travelled a long way by the time the Śatrughnesvara

4. The ceilings of the mukhaśālās of the Muktesvara and Brahmesvara are carved with the design of inverted full-blown lotus. In the mukhaśālās of the Kośalesvara temple at Baidyanāth and Kapileśvara temple at Chardā the pillars and pilasters have been delicately carved.
The temple sculptures followed the tradition established by the earlier sculptors. 5 The sculptures on the early group of extant temples appear to be the work of what Fabri doubts "provincial artists". 6 The "Provincialism" is clearly manifested on the earliest sculptural art of Orissa, i.e., the forepart of an elephant carved out of a rock boulder at Dhauli. Though Asoka was responsible for the carving of the elephant, it does not betray the Mauryan characteristics. 7 The Dhauli elephant can be regarded as the ancestor of the numerous elephants found on body the Orissan temples.

Similarly the railing pillars and the lion capital discovered from the neighbourhood of the Bhāskaresvara temple and the bell-shaped lotus capital found in the vicinity of the Rāmesvara temple (now displayed in the Orissa State Museum compound) appear to be the works of the same artists. There is nothing Mauryan in them as supposed by Dr. Panigrahi. 8 The relief sculptures on the lotus capital

5. C. L. Fabri, History of the Art of Orissa, p.31.
6. Ibid.
bear affinities with those on the caves of Udayagiri. 9

The relief sculptures of the Udayagiri caves (1st cen. B.C.) show the definite sign of improvement over the ones discussed above. Since the caves were excavated for the use of Jain ānātas, the theme of the art here is predominantly Jain. The Jain bias did not prevent the sculptors from depicting the secular themes which mostly deal with royal pastimes like hunting, sword-duelling, dancing-performance, etc., where the royal personages have been prominently displayed.

In the relief sculptures of the caves a tendency for story-telling is explicit. The same panel has been repeated several times to depict the sequence of the events of a story. This tendency for story-telling can also be marked to a certain degree in the sculptures of the early temples, but with a difference in technique. The previous film-technique could not become convenient for the temple-architecture. On the temples the emphasis was on unity of space and action. This was necessitated by the exigency of space on the walls of the temples. A single panel or scene was made to convey

the story what the sculptors intended to tell. This is evident from the scenes like Śiva's marriage and marriage procession (Fig. 5), Rāvana shaking mount Kailāśa, Śiva begging alms to Annapūrṇa, Rāma killing the golden deer, the duel between Arjuna and Śiva in the guise of Kirṣṭa, conference between Rāma and Sugrīva, the death of Vāli in the hands of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa destroying the pride of Kāliya etc., depicted on the Bharatesvara, the Parasūramesvara, the Svarnajālesvara, the Simhanātha, and the Manikesvara temples. Thus it can be said that the temple sculptors borrowed the idea of story-telling from the sculptures of the Udayagiri.

The low-relief carving of the Udayagiri caves also characterises the sculptures of the temples of the Śatrughnesvara group, the Parasūramesvara and the Svarnajālesvara. In view of this the low-relief carving assumes a chronological significance. On the basis of this carving the above temples are to be grouped as the earliest in the long and continuous series of temples. The sculptures of the Udayagiri exhibit the sign of development and maturity and can be compared with the art of Bhārhat, Sānchi and Amarāvatī.10 ...So by the first century B.C. and first

century A.D., Orissa developed a tradition of vigorous art.

From the Udayagiri caves to the time of the earliest extant temples no noteworthy specimen of sculptor's art is available to us and this indicates a period of decline. The political instability appears to have been the cause of such decline. To this period belong a few Yakṣa and Naga images discovered from the vicinity of Bhubaneswar. These figures are carved in round and decorated with heavy ornaments. The workmanship is crude and primitive. The Yakṣa images bear the same characteristics as those of Sānchi. Similarly the two Naga images are closely affiliated to the Manibhadra Yakṣa of Pawāyā. The Yakṣa and Naga images of similar types are found carved on the temples. The Yakṣas on the temples also appear in the position of carrying weights. It has been mentioned in Chapter II that the present image of goddess Bhadrākāli of Bhadrak in Balasore district is as old as third century A.D. The Natarāja image of the Asanpat inscription is

14. As evident from the Bhadrākāli temple inscription the deity was called Pargadevati in the third century A.D. when the inscription was engraved. It is not known when and under what circumstance she became Bhadrākāli.
dated fourth century A.D.15

The Asanpat Nataraja is the earliest Nataraja image of Orissa. The eight-armed Nataraja with urdhvadhiṅga is holding a snake over his head with two upper hands and a vīṇā with the two lower hands. One of his left hands is in varada mudrā and in the rest of his hands he is holding trisūla, dambara and rosary. The legs are bent with the right heel raised upward to indicate the pose of dancing. He is flanked by his two attendants. He is wearing jaṭāmukuta. The hands do not appear to have been organically attached to the body and the fingers are in a very awkward position. The treatment of the muscles is not perfect. There is no charm in the facial expression. Thus, the image bears the characteristics similar to those of the images on the walls of the early temples.

Another important piece of sculpture is the Mukhalīṅga at Sitābhiṅji in the Keonjhar district.16 It can be placed in the fourth-fifth cen. A.D. It is a fine combination of the liṅga and anthropomorphic forms of Śiva. The purport

of the above descriptions is to establish a link between
the sculptures of the caves of Udayagiri and the temples
of Orissa of which the earliest one is dated seventh century
A.D. In the intervening period the artistic activity
continued, though not in a large scale as found on the
caves. So the Orissan sculptors had sufficient training
in their field by the time the temples came to be erected.

Before the seventh century A.D., the theme of the
sculptural art in Orissa was predominantly non-Brahmanical
i.e., either Buddhist or Jain. The Nāga images were, as
stated earlier, in close imitation of the Yakṣa figures
of Pāvāya. On the temples the sculptors were required
to deal with the Brahmanical theme in which they did not
have adequate experience. This accounts for the imperfect
treatment of the sculptures and their arrangement on the
temples belonging to the period of transition. The second
result was the representation of some of the Brahmanical
gods closely resembling with the gods of the Buddhist
pantheon. The image of Lakulīśa is the best example to

17. Fabri discusses at length the "Buddhist predominance"
in the period intervening the first century A.D. and the
sixth century A.D. and its influence on the early temples.
illustrate this point. Lakulīśa is usually depicted sitting in yogāsana on full-blown lotus with eyes half-closed and showing dharmachakra-pravartana-mudrā. This form of Lakulīśa is likely to be mistaken for that of Buddha, but for his attribute lakuta or staff he is differentiated from the latter.

The Gupta Age witnessed a tremendous development in the field of sculptural art of India. The Gupta art is remarkable for its elegance and balance. The images produced during the Gupta period exhibit a perfect balance between the physical beauty and a higher religious purpose. The tall and slender figures were treated in the most naturalistic manner. It was said in chapter I that Orissa came under the Gupta cultural influence in the wake of Samudragupta's southern campaign. As a result certain Gupta art-idioms were introduced into Orissa.

The Mukhaliṃga along with the tempera painting on the ceiling of a rock at Sitābhīṇji in Keonjhar district bears the characteristics of the Gupta art. The palaeography of the inscriptions found there also strengthens the above view.

18. A. L. Basham, The Wonder that was India, p.372.
The inscriptions are in the characters of the fourth century A.D. The present image of Viraja (two-armed Mahisamardini) at Jajpur betray Gupta characteristics and closely resembles with the same image at Bhūmāra with the exception that the Bhūmāra image has four hands. R. P. Chanda assigns the image of Viraja to the fifth century A.D. Thus the influence of Gupta style on the Orissan sculptures is unmistakable. The sculptures on the temples erected in Orissa during the period of the Gupta supremacy in Northern India (from A.D. 319 to middle of the fifth century A.D.), of which not a single specimen is available today for the reason stated in chapter II, must have been influenced by the Gupta style to some extent. This is evident from certain sculptural fragments bearing Gupta characteristics discovered from different parts of Bhubaneswar.

We have seen that Orissa had a long tradition of sculptural art by the time the earliest extant temples were erected. The temple sculptures can be taken as a

22. MASI, No.16.
23. MASI, No.44, p.4.
continuation of that tradition. It was because of this reason that the sculptures on the early Orissan temples was not a total imitation of the Gupta art. On the other hand the Orissan art was enriched itself by borrowing certain elements of the Gupta art. The Gupta features can be noticed in the doorway with overhanging lintel, the depiction of river goddesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā, the wig-like hair dress of the male figures, and certain low-cut decorative motifs, particularly the floral designs.

Vidya Dahejia's contention that the Gupta sculptural style did not influence the Orissan art idiom does not appear to be correct in view of the above discussion. She goes to the extent of saying, "One feature the early Orissans did not imbibe from the Gupta workshops was sculptural style". To her "the early Orissan sculptors were ignorant of the perfected art forms of the adjoining areas". It is far fetched to say that the Orissan sculptors were ignorant of the Gupta sculptural style. If the Śikhara, as evolved during the Gupta period, became

25. V. Dahejia, op. cit., p. 62.
26. Ibid., p. 65.
27. Ibid.
the dominant feature of the Orissan temples, how was it that the sculptures of the Gupta period could not come to the notice of the Orissan craftsmen? That the Orissan sculptors had a fair knowledge of the Gupta sculptural style is evident from their borrowing of certain Gupta features as shown in the preceding paragraph. Dahejia was fully aware of the weakness of her assertion for which she admits that the doorways and decorative motifs of the early temples "reveal a considerable indebtedness to and a continuation of Gupta traditions." In the conclusion it can be said that the Gupta sculptural style had its influence on the Orissan temple art, but the influence was limited to a few examples.

The temple-sculptures of Orissa was also influenced by the medieval art of India. The medieval art was "the final and inevitable development out of the maturity of the Gupta art." It is difficult to draw a line of demarcation between the Gupta art and the medieval art. In fact the medieval art is the elaboration of some of

28. Ibid., pp.182-183,
the elements of the Gupta art. The simplicity and refinement of the Gupta art did not find favour in the medieval art. "The refined and restrained conventions of the Gupta period were replaced by colossal creation and cosmic conception". No attempt was made to strike a synthesis between the physical beauty and the inner spiritual feeling as noticed in the Buddha images of the Gupta period. The images produced in the post-Gupta period became dry and lifeless.

An important development in the Gupta period was the canonisation of the iconographic norms that developed in the earlier period. Consequently the freedom of the sculptors was curtailed to a great extent. They were required to follow strictly the canonical rules while executing the images of gods and goddesses. So the emphasis was shifted to the technical aspect of the images. The medieval art is marked by a tendency towards perfection of the technical skill of the sculptors. Images of gods and goddesses were produced in profusion, but they all appear mechanical. In some cases deviations had been made, but they were not of great consequence.

30. V. S. agrawala, Studies in Indian Art, p.257.
The sculptors laid more stress on the details of the images. Therefore we notice more of ornamentation in the medieval art. Decorative details were more frequently used for the purpose of beautification. This also resulted in over-crowding of figures. In the descriptive panels on the Orissan temples we notice this over-crowdedness. The practice of minimising the figures, as found in the Udayagiri reliefs, was abandoned. The presence of too many figures, some of them being unnecessary, makes the panel clumsy. Sometimes the figures were squeezed into the space insufficient for the purpose. Consequently the figures used to become short in height compared to other figures on the body of the temple. This is clearly evident from the panels such as Rāvana shaking the mount Kailāśa, Siva's marriage with Pārvatī on the Parasurāmesvara temple and Rāma killing golden deer, the duel between Arjuna and Siva in the guise of Kirāta, etc., on the Svarṇajālesvara temple.

Thus, the sculptures on the temples of Orissa betray the characteristics of medieval art. But the Gupta influence continued to be seen in the areas as stated earlier. Due to the Gupta and the medieval influences the Orissan sculptures, which had a long evolution since the time of Aśokan elephant of Dhauli, took a distinct shape and on
the temples of the later part of our period such as, the Rājarāṇī, the Liṅgarāja, etc., it achieved its maturity.

The sculptures on the Orissan temples have not been treated in isolation from the architecture. What is most unique about the Orissan temples is the perfect balance between the architecture and sculptures. None appears dominating the other. The sculptures, apart from serving the purpose of decoration, accentuates the vertical and the horizontal effects of the structure. The arrangement and distribution of the sculptures on the temple, is so masterfully done that the whole structure bears a graceful appearance. "In fact, in the medieval conception architecture is but sculpture on a colossal scale and the whole temple begins to look like a giant carving with its surface covered and differentiated by ornamentation". 31

The sculptures on the Orissan temples can be divided into two broad categories—religious and secular. The religious sculptures include various cult icons, the panels depicting stories from the epics and the Purāṇas, and the semi-divine beings such as, Yaksas, Nāgas, Suparna,

31. Santi Swarup, 5000 Years of Arts and Crafts in India and Pakistan, p.51.
The sculptures on the temples of the earlier phase of our period are very poorly treated. They are carved in low relief. About the sculptures Dahejia says, "...proportions are poor, images stocky and figures generally in rigid postures. The human body has an awkward appearance with arms and legs seeming to be separate entities, flat and flabby, and attached to the body in an inorganic fashion without any depiction of underlying bone or muscular structure." 32 The fingers and toes look very awkward.

32. V. Dahejia, op. cit., p. 62.
Similarly the seated figures are also very uncomfortably placed. But the treatment of the Pārśvadevataś is slightly better than the other figures. Therefore Dahejia says that these were the works of "more advanced craftsmen". This explanation does not appear to be satisfactory. It is not known why the three Pārśvadevata images, were assigned to the "more advanced craftsmen" for execution and the rest were left to inexperienced ones.

The Pārśvadevata images do not form part of the temple wall as found in the Vaitāla and the Sisiresvara temples. Here they were carved separately and placed in the side-niches. The sculptors who worked on independent blocks of stone for Pārśvadevata images were more at ease compared to their counterparts working on the surface of the temple walls. Naturally the works of the former were bound to be slightly better than those of the latter. This seems to be the more plausible explanation for the difference noticed in the treatment of the Pārśvadevataś and other figures of the temple. Even then the Pārśvadevata images suffer from some serious defects in their execution. Their legs and

33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
arms are inorganically fitted into the bodies. The eyes are very oddly treated and devoid of expressions. 35

We have already said about the sculptural art of Orissa during the period prior to earliest extant temples. In spite of the long artistic tradition spanning over a period of about eight hundred years the sculptures of the early temples of Orissa are not so developed. These seem to the works of inexperienced craftsmen. Fabri finds in these sculptures 'a strong element of archaic clumsiness', 36 To him the clumsiness was due to a sudden change from the Buddhist art to Brahmanic art in the 7th-8th centuries A.D. He says, "whilst the architects were able craftsmen and could erect small but sturdy structures to house the sacred images of Hinduism, the sculptors were struggling with new problems, unknown to their Buddhist predecessors". 37 He also says, "Buddhist art was a lively, militant, intensely felt art....and it was widely alive when its practitioners turned away from the severer classic forms

35. Ibid. See also the photograph of Karttikeya of the Paraśurāmeśvara temple in page 63.
36. C. L. Fabri, op. cit., p.29.
37. Ibid., p.30.
to mannerism in the 6th and 7th centuries. The sculptors, who had experience in the flourishing Buddhist art of the preceding period, when required to deal with an altogether new theme, i.e., Brahmanical, flopped.

The theme was not an important factor so far as the plastic art was concerned. Once a sculptor acquired skill in the modelling of figures on stone there was no reason for him to fumble in the event of change of theme. For a skilled and trained sculptor the portrayal of Siva would have been as easy as the portrayal of the Buddha. If he was trained for making Buddhist images the problem for him at the time of switch over to Brahmanical pantheon would have been the iconography. At the time of switch over he could have made some confusions between the Buddhist and Brahmanical iconographies; or he would have represented Brahmanical gods in the Buddhist manner; or his inadequate knowledge of the new iconographical rules would have given a peculiar look to their Brahmanical creations. But he would not have created such ill-proportioned figures as noticed

38. Ibid., p. 29.

39. Here Lakulisa's images of the early temples may be cited as the example. Lakulisa resembles very much with the Dhyani Buddha.
in the early temples. The inorganic joining of hands and
legs with the body, odd-looking fingers and toes,
uncomfortable sitting posture, etc., would not have come
from the hands of the sculptors who, as supposed by Fabri,
were immensely successful in creating flawless Jain and
Buddhist images. Therefore the explanation of Fabri does
not seem plausible.

The reliefs of the Jain caves of Udayagiri represent
the last large-scale art-activity in Orissa before the
early group of temples. The architects and sculptors
received the state patronage during the Mahāmeghavāhana
rule. So it was through the state patronage and
encouragement that the craftsmen achieved perfection, if
not excellence, in their craft. This is evident from the
relief sculptures of the caves. Then there was a gap of
about five hundred years. During those years there was
no large-scale sculptor's work. There was no ruler like
Khāravela to undertake the construction of ambitious

40. Both the Hathigumpha inscription and the sculptural
representation support Khāravela's encouragement of various
arts like music, dance and theatrical performance. His love
for art must have created a congenial atmosphere for the
sculptors to pursue their craft.
monuments where the architects and sculptors would have been employed for some years. It would have been a kind of exercise for them. It was not that the sculptor's work was totally absent. We have already referred to the sculptural specimens which belong to this period, but they are very limited in number. It seems that the sculptor's work was carried on in an isolated manner. Due to lack of patronage and incentive the standard of sculptural art deteriorated to a great extent. Had the art been practised in a vigorous way all through the years since the time of Udayagiri caves the sculptures of the early temples would not have been of such quality.

In the next group of temples represented by the Vaitāl, the Śīśīresvara, the Mārkandeyesvara, the Simhanātha, etc., a marked improvement is noticed so far as the treatment of the sculptures is concerned. Here the sculptures have been carved in deeper relief and consequently the figures appear more round and delicate. The sculptors appear to have been successful to a great extent in rectifying the defects noticed in the treatment of the figures of the previous group of temples. The limbs are more accurately carved and joined more organically to the body. Thus these do not appear separate entities. The treatment of the eyes are better and the facial expression is graceful.
About the sculptures Debala Mitra says, "The dignified self-composed figures of the deities with the expression of absorption are mellowed with a warmth of spiritual grace and are elegant and refined." 41

The figures are no more stocky and a tendency for slenderness is discernable. The mithuna figures of this phase are particularly charming. But certain defects such as odd treatment of legs and awkward positioning of the legs of the seated figures, as noticed in the earlier phase, still continue in spite of the efforts at improvement. The decorative motifs are found skillfully executed. The mastery over skill also extends to the arrangement of sculptures within the available space. 42

The sculptures of the temples of this phase bear certain characteristics common with those of the Buddhist monastic remains at Ratnagiri in Cuttack district. 43 Ratnagiri along with Lalitgiri and Udayagiri of the Asia range of hills in Cuttack district was another important centre of Orissan art. It appears that the sculptures of both Ratnagiri and the temples of this phase were the products of the craftsmen trained in the same school.

42. C. L. Fabri, op. cit., p.135.
In the last phase of our period the sculptures exhibit the signs of further development. Figures are carved in alto-relievo. Temples belonging to this phase are seen lavishly decorated with sculptures which Fabri describes, "forest of ornamentation". The decorative motifs are treated in most delicate manner. The arrangement of sculptures on temples' surface reaches the stage of complete perfection. The figures are slender with elongated limbs. The facial expression of both divine and secular figures are charming.

The most important aspect of the sculptures of these temples is the profusion of exquisitely carved nāvikās or indolent damsels. They are seen engaged in various feminine pastimes like looking at the mirror, bending down the branch of the tree, putting an ornament in the parting of the hair, fondling a baby, opening the door, talking to her pet bird, kicking at the foot of the conventional Aśoka tree, dancing or playing on musical instruments, standing in a relaxed position, amorous in company with her beloved, allowing a peacock to remove pearls from the parting of the hair.\footnote{The nāvikā allowing a peacock to remove pearls from the parting of her hair is noticed only in the Rājarāṇī temple.}

\footnote{C. L. Fabri, op. cit., p.149.}
and so on. The sculptors borrowed the above ideas from ancient Sanskrit literature and therefore the figures are "more conventional than real".  

The nāyikās have been most artistically treated and are remarkable for their grace and elegance. They have been stylistically portrayed. The nāyikās of the Rājarāni, the Brahmesvara and the Liṅgarāja are the finest pieces of their kind. Here they are very much sensuous and sophisticated. Standing in either three or four times twisted poses with exquisite smile on the lips and bearing sweet glance, they have become masterpieces of Orissan art. Dr. Panigrahi describes them as "the most beautiful products of Orissan plastic art".  

The flowing outlines of their bodies show enough of movement in them. Thus through sustained efforts, spanning over some hundred years, the temple sculptures improved tremendously. The improvement was related to the technique of treatment as well as to the aesthetic character. It was a long travel from the crudity and ineptitude to refinement and maturity. We have divided

46. K. C. Panigrahi, Archaeological Remains at Bhubaneswar, p.112.

47. Ibid., p.109.
the process of improvement into three broad phases. In the subsequent chapters our efforts will be to place the temples of Orissa into these phases on the consideration of their sculptures. Of course, there is the possibility of minor adjustments. For example, a temple belonging to the last phase, may bear figures lacking in grace and elegance. This may be due to poor quality of stone or employment of less experienced craftsmen.

It is said earlier that the sculptures of the early temples of our period are predominantly religious in character. Secular sculptures are so limited in number that they are lost sight of in the first glance. The temple is itself a religious structure. It is erected to house a deity to whom the devotees offer their worship and prayer. In the beginning it might have been thought undesirable to portray anything which did not add to the religiosity of the structure. Therefore the sculptures were made to emphasise the religious character of the temple apart from decorating its surface. Decorative motifs such as lotus-medallions, scroll work creeper bands, floral motifs, etc., were mainly used in the early group of temples either to serve the purpose of horizontal and vertical lines or to create compartments for the placing of divine figures. In the earlier temples there was no
attempt to depict these motifs independently for the purpose of decoration.

Gods and goddesses, and various manifestations of the same god have been carved both on the vimāna and on the mukhasāla strictly according to the iconographic rules. It was intended to give representation to maximum number of gods and goddesses possible on the body of the temples. Gods and goddesses of the same cult to which the presiding deity of the temple belongs are generally given maximum representation and whereas other deities are rare in their occurrence. It is only in the Simhanātha temple that we find a good number of Vaisnavite deities even though the linga is the object of worship. In the earliest group of temples the secular sculptures have limited depiction. For the sculptors who worked under rigid rules framed by the priest for the surface decoration there was little scope for any secular carving except the decorative motifs stated earlier. Dahejia seems to be correct when she says, "In the spaces left to artists' imagination, we find portrayed the themes they knew and loved, prime among there being the seductively poised maiden and the mithuna or loving couple".48

48. V. Dahejia, op. cit., p.22.
Here we propose to underline the chronological sequence in the evolution of the individual sculptural items of both the categories.

**RELIGIOUS**

(i) Graha Slabs: A row of either eight or nine grahas or planets are depicted on the architraves above the door-lintel of the temples. The graha slabs are found in all the temples except the Vaitāl and the Sisirēsvāra of Bhubaneswar. According to the Hindu belief, the propitiation of grahas leads to annihilation of evils. It is perhaps because of this reason that the grahas have been associated with the temples.

The graha slabs bear a chronological significance. In the earlier temples of our period only eight grahas are found depicted on the panel (Fig. 18). These grahas are, Ravi (Sub), Soma (Moon), Maṅgala (Mars), Budha (Mercury), Brhaspati (Jupiter), Śukra (Venus), Sani (Saturn), and Rāhu (ascending node of moon). In the later temples, starting with the Muktesvara, the number increases to nine with the addition of Ketu (descending node of moon). It is difficult to explain the occurrence of eight grahas in the earlier temples even though the idea of navagraha or nine planets was known to Varāhamihira, the famous astronomer of the
sixth century A.D. Dahejia is of the view that the preference to astottari system of Indian astronomy was adopted by the Jainas even though they were aware of the existence of nine grahas.49 This proposition may hold good for the Hindus, but we can't be on sure ground without any evidence.

All the grahas are depicted as youthful figures except Rāhu and Ketu. Rāhu is depicted half bust in terrific form. The lower part of Ketu is in the form a reptile. Except the last two all are in sitting position and shown holding rosary in their right hands and water jars in the left. But Ravi or Sun holds a lotus flower. Soma or Moon has a crescent behind his head. Brhaspati is shown bearded. Sometimes they have haloes behind their heads.

In the Parasurāmesvara temple the eight grahas have been identified by inscribed labels50 above their heads. Another such inscribed graha lintel was preserved in the Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar. This particular panel

49. Ibid., p.66.
was collected from the ruins of the Satrughnesvara temple and therefore it must have belonged to that temple. No other temple in Orissa bears such inscribed graha label. Even among the multitude of sculptures not a single item in any temple in Orissa bears an identifying label. It is difficult to study the motive of the craftsmen for identifying the grahas only. At this stage we can say this much that probably the practice of depicting grahas on a religious structure was unknown in Orissa and it was for the first time introduced in the above two temples. Therefore there was the necessity of identification.

(ii) Pārśvadevatās: In all the temples the central niches of the bada on three sides house Pārśvadevatās. The fourth side, i.e., the front is pierced by the doorway. The Pārśvadevatās are closely related to the presiding deity of the temple. For example, the Pārśvadevatās in a Saiva temple are Ganesa, Kārttikeya and Pārvatī. In a Vaisnava temple the Pārśvadevatās are three incarnations of Visnu, i.e., Varāha, Narasimha and Trivikrama. While in a Sakta temple they are three forms of Devi. In the majority

51. Ibid.
of the temples they were carved out of separate stones and then inserted into the niches prepared for the purpose. This has resulted in the loss of Pārśvadevatas in some of the temples, because they are liable to be removed easily. But in temples like the Vaitāl, the Sisiresvara, the Mohini, all at Bhubaneswar, the Bhūrgesvara at Bajrakot, the Svapnesvara at Kualo, and the Manikesvara at Suklesvara the Pārśvadevatas are carved out of the stones that form the outer walls of the temples. They are carved out of several blocks of stone and the joints are clearly visible on the images. For this the images have not been removed from the niches. Dr. Panigrahi finds this technique of carving in the monastic ruins at Ratnagiri and assigns it to the Bhauma epoch.\textsuperscript{52}

We can notice certain variations in the iconography of the Pārśvadevata images by which they can be assigned either to early or later phases of our period. For example, Ganesa in the earlier temples does not have mouse as his mount but in later temples mouse is found with him. Similarly Kārttikeya is shown with only peacock in the early temples, but in later temples he is shown with both peacock and

\textsuperscript{52} K. C. Panigrahi, \textit{Archaeological Remains at Bhubaneswar}, p.40.
cock. The flower Ketaka, shown in one of the hands of Pārvatī in the early temples, changes to lotus in the later temples. Dr. Panigrahi points out other variations, but they are of very minor nature and do not strictly confirm to the chronology.

In the place of Pārvatī Mahiśamardini appears as Pārvadevatā in some temples. Apart from appearing as Pārvadevatā this image also occurs separately on the walls of the temples. These images have chronological significance so far as the treatment of the buffalo-demon is concerned. In the earlier temples the goddess is shown killing the demon which is a buffalo-headed human figure (Fig. 32). In the later temples of our period the demon is depicted as issuing out of the decapitated body of the buffalo. In the most cases the goddess has eight hands. The other variations noticed in Mahiśamardini images on the temples have no chronological significance.

(iii) Dikpālas: The eight Dikpālas are the guardian deities of the eight quarters. They are Indra, the lord of the east; Agni, the lord of the south-east; Yama, the lord of the south; Nairṛta, the lord of the south-west; Varuṇa, the lord of the west; Vāyu, the lord of the north-west; Kubera, the lord of the north; and Īśāna, the lord
of the north-east. Indra holds a thunderbolt and sits on his mount elephant. Sometimes his mount is shown below him. Agni is a pot-bellied bearded figure with flames rising from either sides. He is shown with his mount ram. Yama holds a staff and a noose and his mount is buffalo. Nairrta stands on a prostrate figure with a sword and a severed head in his hands. Varuna stands on his mount makara (crocodile) and holds a noose. Vāyu is identified by his banner. His mount is a stag. Kubera is shown with astañidhi or eight jars of gems and Īsāna has the attributes of Śiva.

In the later temples of our period the Dikpālas are depicted in their respective quarters with all their attributes and mounts. In the Rājarāni temple there are finest representations of the Dikpālas (Fig. 44). The representation of the Dikpālas in their respective places does not appear to be a regular features with the earlier temples. They are absent in the Vaitāl and the Sisirēsvara temples. They appear in a row on the rectangular mukhasālā of the Parasurāmesvara. The empty intermediary niches of some of the early temples contained, in all probability, Dikpālas.

(iv) Lakulīsa: It is believed that the pāṣupata sect of Saivism found its way to Orissa during the 6th-7th
century A.D. The organiser of Pasupata sect was Lakulisa, who was considered to be the last incarnation of Siva. With the growing popularity of the Pasupata cult, the image of Lakulisa began to be carved on the Saiva temples of Orissa. He has been frequently depicted in the earlier temples, but in later ones he has not been given so much importance. In the earliest ones like, the Bharatesvara and the Parasuramesvara Lakulisa has been depicted without his disciples. In the subsequent temples he has been associated with either four or six of his disciples. The disciples sit on full-blown lotuses on both sides of the teacher and the stalks of the lotuses rise from a common lotus on which sits the teacher.

It has been said earlier that the Lakulisa images are remarkable for their close similarity with the images of Dhyani Buddha. Lakulisa is shown sitting in yogasana on double-petalled lotus with eyes half-closed and hands in dharma-chakra-pravartana mudra. The treatment of his hair


54. J. N. Banerjee, "Lakulisa, the founder or systematiser of the Pasupata System", Proceedings of the Jaipur Session of the Indian History Congress, pp.32 ff.
is similar to that of the Buddha. Because of these features he is likely to be mistaken for that of the Buddha, but his attribute *lakuta* or staff, that rest on his left shoulder, distinguishes him from the latter.

(v) *Saptamātrkās*: The images of the *Saptamātrkās* are found on the temples through our period. According to the *Saiva Āgama* texts, they are *Brahmani*, *Māheśvarī*, *Kaumārī*, *Vaisnavī*, *Vārāhī*, *Indrānī*, and *Chāmundā*. In the temples they are shown, seated with their respective mounts at the bottom, the respective mounts being swan, bull, peacock, *garuda*, buffalo, elephant, and owl. In the later temples deadbody eaten by jackel takes the place of owl for *Chāmundā*. The row of *mātrkās* are flanked by *Virabhadra* and *Ganēśa* on either side.

Of the *mātrkās* *Chāmundā* is the most terrific in appearance. She has four arms, emaciated body with shrunken belly. In the body the veins and ribs are prominently displayed. With drooping breasts, sunken eyes having protruding eye-balls, bald head she wears a skull garland. In *Chāmundā* "the Orissan artists has skilfully produced one of the most terror-striking images, not a lifeless fetish of uncultured people, but a concrete representation of the esoteric symbolism underlying one
aspect of the Tantric faith". 55

An important development in the iconography of the Saptamātrkās, as noticed for the first time in the Pāṭālesvara temple at Paikapada, is the depiction of babies on their laps except Chāmunda. In the temples earlier to the Pāṭālesvara the babies are conspicuous by their absence. The earliest temple where the Saptamātrkās occur is the Parasurāmeśvara. Here they are depicted in a row flanked by Virbhadra and Ganesā on the mukhāsāla wall. In the Simhanātha temple they occur around the mukhāsāla doorway. In the Vaitāl temple they are depicted on the inner walls of the vimāna. A separate shrine has been erected at the Pāṭālesvara for the Saptamātrkās. The Mukteśvara temple at Bhubaneshwar is the only temple where the Saptamātrkās are carved with the babies on the mukhāsāla ceiling. The ceiling is carved in the form of a full-blown lotus having eight petals. Each petal contains a mātrkā and the remaining one Virabhadra. The omission of Ganesā is obviously due to lack of space. 56

(vi) Natarāja: The multi-armed Natarāja in chatura pose of dance (Figs. 23, 26 & 30) is noticed on the temples of Orissa throughout our period. Even there are several representations of Natarāja in a single temple. Sometimes they occur within elaborately carved medallions on the facades of the temples. The Natarāja images of all the temples belong to one broad type, though there are minor variations in their poses and attributes. Even variations are noticed in different representations in the same temple. Therefore the images bear no chronological significance.57

Normally the Natarāja is eight or ten-armed. His two uppermost hands hold a snake over the head. Of the main pair of hands, the left is turned horizontally towards the right. In most of the cases he is shown in association with Ganeśa but in the Bharatesvara temple Kārttikeya takes the place of Ganeśa. In the Vaitāl, the Sīsiresvara and the Markandeyesvara temples he is shown with one of

57. Dr. Panigrahi has tried to put the different varieties of Natarāja images on the temples into approximate chronological groupings (See, K. C. Panigrahi, Archaeological Remains at Bhubaneswar, pp.137-141). But to us the variations, as pointed out by him, are of very minor nature and no chronological bearing.
his left hands placed on the chin of a female figure (Fig. 23). This is a unique type, not noticed in other temples. In the Rajarāṇi temple a female counterpart of Natarāja is found depicted with all the usual attributes. Even though the images are imparted the feeling of vigorous movement caused due to the dance, their faces remain calm as if deeply engaged in meditation.

(vii) Other manifestations of Siva: Since Saiva temples constitute the overwhelming majority in our period the images of Siva and his various manifestations are prolific in their appearance. In all the examples he is depicted with urdhalīnga or phallus erect. Individual Siva images with usual attributes are found depicted on the temples throughout the period and these images do not relate to the chronology of the temples. Secondly, they do not present variety.

Siva is also depicted in company with his consort Pārvatī. The combined form is called Hara-Pārvatī or Umā-Mahesvara mūrtti. On the basis of the sitting arrangement the images can be grouped into two categories. In the first category Siva and Pārvatī are seated close to each other on a common platform - Pārvatī being on the left of Siva. Siva has four hands. Pārvatī's left hand firmly rests on the
pedestal and the right on the shoulder of her husband whom, she casts a sweet glance. Their respective mounts, Nandi and lion, are shown on the pedestal. In the second category Parvati sits on the lap of Siva. In her left hand she holds a mirror while the right hand encircles the neck of her husband, Siva throws her right hand round his consort. As usual their mounts are shown on the pedestal. This category of Hara-Parvati images are found in later temples. The first specimen of this type is represented by a chlorite image (about six feet in height), now preserved in the site museum at Khiching.

Hara-Parvati image of the first category is noticed in the earliest of our temples. In the Bharatesvara temple it is depicted on the lintel above the doorway. Here Siva and Parvati are seated on the Kailasa with their attendants on either sides and their mounts below. This is a slightly different type. In the Parasuramesvara temple the image is depicted on the mukhasāla. The positioning of the legs of the seated Siva and Parvati appears most awkward. The same

58. For details see V. Dahejia, op. cit., pp.64, 153 and the photograph in p.186.
awkward positioning is noticed in the new Bhavanī-Saṅkar temple at Bhubaneswar. Here the image is placed in one of the Pārśvadevata niches (Fig.14), an uncommon feature not found in any other temple of Orissa.

Ardhanārisvara, Ekapāda, Andhakasuravaddha, Gaṅgādhara and Harihar are other manifestations of Śiva, the images of which frequently occur on the temples from the beginning to the end of our period. These images are stereotyped and bear no chronological significance. Besides, the awe-inspiring images of Bhairava are occasionally depicted. Among these the terrific Bhairava images of the Vaitāl temple are noteworthy. One of them, depicted on the inner northern wall along with the Saptamātrkās, is represented by a skeletal figure wearing a garland of skulls. He is shown with hollow eyes, open mouth, protruding tongue, shrunken belly and a prominent urdhvalīṅga. He holds a large knife in his right hand and in the left probably a skull-cap showing flames coming out of it. His left knee is bent down to touch the ground and the right one is raised. On a tripod below him are placed two human heads and just close to it a corpse eaten by a jackel. Thus the sculptors were immensely successful in imparting fearsome quality into the image. The presiding deity Chāmunda has also been similarly represented.

(viii) Visnu and his incarnations: Two Visnu temples belong to our period. They are, the Nilamādhava temple at

\[59\] Bhairava is the ghora or ugra aspect of Siva (J. N. Banerjea, op.cit., p.465).
Gandharādi in Phulbani district and the Pancha-Pāndava temple at Ganeswarapur near Chhatia in Cuttack district. Besides, one of the corner shrines of the Panchāyatana temple at Kualo in Dhenkanal district is dedicated to Visnu. From this it appears that Vaisnavism did not have that much importance as Saivism had. Therefore the images of Visnu and his incarnations have not received prominence on the temples. These images rarely occur on the Saiva temples of our period. It is only on the Simhanath Saiva temple that we notice substantial number of Vaisnavite sculptures. The northern wall of the mukhasāla is embellished with the images of various forms of Visnu. It is difficult to explain this unusual feature of temple sculptures.

The Visnu images are shown in static position and the treatment of the body does not suggest any movement. All the forms of Visnu are shown in soumya or calm form. Even the Narasimha image is not shown in the ugra or terrific form. Visnu is always depicted with four hands, though the attributes in the hands vary from one example to another.

---

60. Visnu is primarily a god of love. The deeds of destruction that are associated with some of his forms are considered as acts of grace and deliverance. (J. N. Banarjrea, op. cit., p. 416).
He is flanked by two female attendants. The Varāha and Narasiṁha forms of Visnu occur more frequently than the other forms. There is an image of Varāha carved on the inner wall of the vimāna of the Vaitāl temple. He holds an axe in one hand and a pot in another. Long back R. D. Banerjea came across images of Vāmana, Matsya, Kurma and Varāha forms of Visnu at Gandharādi, but now the whereabouts of these images are not known. It was not unlikely that these images belonged to the present temples of that place.

The images of Krisna are very rare in their occurrence in the temple sculptures of Orissa. Panels depicting the scene of Krisna killing Kāliya are found in the Simhanatha and the Manikesvara temples. Identical reliefs showing Krisna standing before his mother Yasodā who is engaged churning the curd are found in one of the corner shrines of the Brahmesvara temple and the Līṅgarāja temple. Dr. Panigrahi gives much importance to these reliefs in order to establish the contemporaneity of both the

temples. The identity of sculptural panels does not presuppose the contemporaneity of the structures. It might have so happened that the sculptors imitated, which was not unusual, a particular panel depicted in an earlier temple.

(ix) Other deities: The river goddesses, Gāṅgā and Yamunā appear on the door-jambs of the mukhasālās or the vimānas with their respective vehicles, makara (crocodile) and tortoise. They also appear on the walls of antarāla of the Simhanātha temple. The depiction of river goddesses on the door-jambs is a Gupta legacy. In the later temples they are conspicuous by their absence. In many of the temples the image of Gajalakṣmī is carved on the lintel of the doorways. She is shown seated gracefully on a lotus with two elephants pouring water over her head from upturned jārs on two sides.

Among other deities Surya (Sun) is prominent. The earliest representation of Sūrya is found on the northern wall of the mukhasālā of the Parasurāmesvara temple. It is also noticed in the Īśvara temple at Paikapada and the Muktesvara temple at Bhubaneswar. A beautiful image of

Sūrya is depicted within a chaitya-medallian on the façade above the mukhasāla of the Vaitāl temple (Fig. 30). He is shown riding on a chariot drawn by seven horses. His charioteer is sitting on the front with the reins of the horses in his hands. Sūrya is holding lotuses in both the hands. He is flanked by Usā and Pratyusā shown in the position of shooting arrows. The image is remarkable for its sensitive modelling. A similar image, carved out of a separate block of stone, is placed inside a Pārvadevata niche of the vimāna of the Vārahī temple at Chaurāśī. The association of Sūrya with the Devī temples has led Dahejia to think that it had something to do with the kaula cult. The image of Chandra (moon) does not appear on the temples independent of the graha slab. An attempt has been made to identify one of the images on the mukhasāla of the Parasurameśvara as Chandra. But the identification does not seem to be convincing.

(x) Semi-divine figures: Among the semi-divine figures mention may be made of flying Vidyādharas. Yakṣas

---

63. V. Dahejia, op. cit., p. 127.
64. K. C. Panigrahi, Archaeological Remains at Bhubaneswar, p. 72.
Yaksinis and Suparnnas (bird with human head). They have been occasionally depicted on the walls of the temples and bear no chronological significance. In the later temples, the Yaksas are represented with their hands uplifted as if raising heavy structures. The knees are bent with the weight of the raised structures. But Nāga and Nāgini figures have an important place in the temple sculptures. Individual figures of Nāga are rare in the temple sculptures. Detached stone blocks containing figures of Nāga are noticed in different parts of Bhubaneswar of which two from the compound of the Muktesvara temple and one from the Sisirēsvara appear to have belonged to temples. It is not known to which temples they originally belonged. It is definite that they cannot be fitted into any of the existing temples of Bhubaneswar. All these examples are the products of the tradition to which belonged the Nāga images referred to earlier as belonging to the early centuries of the Christian era. The Nāga figures of the Muktesvara and the Sisirēsvara compounds are represented as human figures with canopies of snake hoods and holding foliated vases in their hands.

Nāgas appear as dvārapālas flanking the doorway of the Sisirēsvara temple. The Nāgas are standing figures, each with a canopy of snake hoods over the head and holding
a foliated vase. After the Sisiresvara the Nagas do not appear in purely human form. In the later temples they are found entwined with the pillars. Such Naga pillars appear for the first time in the twin temples of Gandharadi and the Vārāhi temple at Chaurāsi. These massive pillars, entwined by the Nāgas and the Nāginīs flank the doorway and the windows of the mukhasāla. Here the Nāgas and the Nāginīs are represented combining both their human and reptile forms. The upper portion is in human form with a canopy of hoods over the head and the lower portion is in the form a reptile. They are twisted round the pillars in such a way that both the faces with hoods and the tails remain on the front. Such pillars are also found in the entrance to the Pancha-Pāndava temple at Ganeswarapur and the Rājarāni temple at Bhubaneswar. In the latter they flank the doorway of the mukhasāla.

Apart from the above pillars, Nāga pilasters are found in the recesses formed by the pages in the vimānas of Chaurāsi and the Tīrthesvara, the Gaurī temples of Bhubaneswar, and of both vimāna and mukhasāla of the Muktesvara temple at Bhubaneswar (Fig. 35). At the base of these pilasters two lions are depicted crouching on two elephants. The objects in the hands of the Nāgas vary from temple to temple. A difference is also noticed in the manner how they are shown on the pillars. At Gandharādi
and Chaurāsī the Nāgas are shown ascending the pillars with their tails at the bottom, whereas in the rest of the temples they are shown descending the pillars with their tails at the top. The treatment of Nāgas in the Nāga pilasters of the mukhasālā of the Kosalesvara temple at Baidyanath is different from the others. Here the Nāgas are purely in reptile form.

(i) Mythological Stories: The tendency for storytelling is a feature of the art of the early Orissan temples. The theme always remained the Hindu mythology. We have said earlier that the technique was different from the one adopted by the sculptors of the Udayagiri caves of Bhubaneswar. In the temples attempt has been made to narrate a story by a single panel unlike that of the caves where it has been accomplished by continuous friezes depicting the sequences of the story.

In the Parasurāmesvara temple the story of Siva curbing the pride of Rāvana has been depicted in a panel on the front raha of the vimāna (Fig. 6). The same panel has been repeated in the same position of the Satrughnesvara temple. In the Parasurāmesvara temple the rāhā paga of the vimāna on the southern side bears the panel depicting Siva begging food from his consort. The recessed kānṭhi of the Svarnajālesvara temple is relieved with scenes
from the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata such as, the meeting between Rāma and Sugrīva, Rāma killing the golden deer, Rāma killing Valī and the fight between Arjuna and Sīva, in the guise of Kirāta (Fig. 12). Mythological scenes have also been carved in the recessed kānṭhī of the Satrughnesvara temple.

The edges of the lower eaves of the mukhasāla roof of the Sisūr̥sevara temple are relieved with reliefs from the epics (Fig. 25). We also notice scenes from the Rāmāyaṇa on the lowest eaves of the mukhasāla of the Simhanātha temple (Fig. 57). Some of the loose slabs found near the Manikesvara temple at Suklesvara are relieved with scenes from the Rāmāyaṇa. The practice of narrating stories from the epics and Purāṇas did not find favour with the sculptors of the later temples.

(xii) Buddhist and Jain figures: The sculptors were under no obligation to depict Buddhist and Jain themes on the Brahmanical temples. There was a great flourishing of Buddhist art in Orissa during the period of Bhauma-kāra rule. The discovery of a large number of Buddhist images from different parts of Orissa and the remains at Ratnagiri and Lalitagiri in Cuttack district bear its evidence. Therefore it was natural that the Brahmanical art would have been influenced by the Buddhist art tradition. We
have said about the Lakulisa images found on the temples of Orissa which is almost a replica of the Buddha in the dharmachakra-pravartana-mudrā. It was not unusual on the part of the sculptors, who had previous experience of executing Buddhist images, to attribute Buddhist characteristics to the Brahmanical images when their services were requisitioned for the decoration of Brahmanical temples. It was also from their hands that the Buddhist images found their entry into the temple walls. Dr. Panigrahi identifies such Buddhist images on the mukhasālā of the Sisireśvara temple. They are Amoghasiddhi, Jambhāla and Avalokitesvara. It could be made possible under the atmosphere of religious toleration which prevailed at that time. The carving of so many Buddhist images on the Sisireśvara temple make it belonging to Bhauma epoch which witnessed the glorious days of Buddhism and to which belonged some of the finest Buddhist images, now preserved in the Orissa State Museum and when the Buddhist Vihāra at Ratnagiri acquired prominence.

It is quite natural to expect Jain images on the Jain temple at Subei. The subsidiary shrines contain the

images of the tirthankaras with their respective identifying animals carved on the pedestals. Dahejia identifies a twelve-armed deity as Chakresvara, the Sasanadevi of the first tirthankara. Jain images are not found in any other temple of our period. Because of their limited occurrence the Buddhist and Jain images have no bearing on the chronology of the temples.

SECULAR

The secular sculptures cover a wide variety of subjects. The predominance of the religious theme over the secular theme appear to have lessened towards the close of our period.

66, V. Dahejia, op. cit., p.103.

67. The low courtyard wall of the Muktesvara temple contains in small niches images which Panigrahi identifies as Jain tirthankaras (K. C. Panigrahi, Archaeological Remains at Bhubaneswar, p.93, pl. 60). The kāyotsarga position of the images is the only consideration for their identification. Had it been the purpose of the sculptors to portray the tirthankaras, they would have definitely invested them with other characteristic attributes peculiar to the age. Hence we are reluctant to accept them as the tirthankaras only on the basis of their kāyotsarga pose. It was likely that while depicting these images the sculptors took inspiration from the tirthankaras.
(i) Sex-inspiring figures: The sex-inspiring figures constitute an important part of the Orissan temple sculptures. We can divide such sculptures into two broad categories: amorous couples (mithunas) and male and figures engaged in sexual acts. The first type is a sober one. It does not look vulgar in spite of its sex appeal. In this type the couple stand close to each other with a feeling of love. In some examples they place their hands on each other's shoulder and in other the male is found fondling the female. In the second type both are found directly engaged in various sexual acts. The perversion has gone to such an extent that in one example from the Sisireśvara temple the sexual intercourse between a man and an animal has been depicted. In the early temples the mithuna figures occur on the walls and recessed kānṭhi and sometimes on the door-jambs. But they are not so prominently displayed as found on the later temples. The second type of figures are rarely found on the temples prior to the Vaitāl-Sisireśvara. But from these temples onward they are found in increasing number.68 In the temples which are towards the close of our period such as,

---

68. The Muktesvara is the only temple after the Vaitāl-Sisireśvara where such figures do not occur.
the Rājarāni, the Brahmesvara, the Lingaśāja, etc., they appear on the upper jāṇcha of the bāḍa.

The occurrence of such sex-inspiring sculptures on the body of the religious shrines goes against the sense of morality. Even though sex forms an important aspect of Tāntricism, a cult of Brahmanism and Vajrayāna cult of Buddhism, its public display is revolting to general Indian mind. The silpa texts, discovered so far, are not specific about the purpose of their carvings on the temples. Therefore it is a wonder how such carvings were allowed and given prominence on the walls of the temples.

Dr. Panigrahi traces the origin of the sex-inspiring sculptures to the Tāntricism and the form of Mahāyāna Buddhism which prevailed during the rule of the early Bhāuma-kāras. In these cults sex is considered as the means to attain the spiritual merit. He writes, "Having once been allowed to exist in the temples of a particular period they acquired the force of a convention". To Banerjea the sexual scenes on the walls of the Vārāhī temple at Chaurāsī are the visual representation of some


70. Ibid., p.105.
aspects of kaula-kāpālika cult\textsuperscript{71} and this has been agreed to by Dahejia.\textsuperscript{72}

If Tāntricism was responsible for the appearance of such sculptures on the temple walls they would have been limited to the Sakti temples only but they are found carved on the temples of other cults—Saiva, Vaiśnava and Saura. The temples belonging to the Gaṅga period, which are beyond the scope of our discussion, bear these sculptures in greater number. On the celebrated Sun temple at Konark they have been lavishly displayed. It appears that after their introduction into the temples of a particular period, whatever may be the reason, they were used as the elements of surface decoration of the subsequent temples irrespective of the cult to which they belonged. They were treated in the same manner as other decorative motifs were treated and had no special significance. Here we would like to mention that except the Pārśvadevatās no other divinity depicted on the temples shares the honour accorded to and rituals of the presiding deity. The increase in the importance of the

\textsuperscript{71} J. N. Banerjea, "The Vārāhi Temple at Chaurāsī" V. V. Mirashi Felicitation Volume, pp. 349–354.

\textsuperscript{72} V. Dahejia, op. cit., p. 71.
Parsvadevatās led to the construction of separate structures for them as found in the temples of the post-Somavānśī period. Even it was not imperative to portray only the divinities of the same cult to which the temple belonged. Divinities of other cults were liberally allowed to be carved with, of course, the divinities of the same cult constituting the overwhelming majority. It has been said earlier that the Saivite temple of Śimhanātha contains a good number of Vaiṣṇavite images. On the basis of the above considerations it can be reasonably concluded that the sex-inspiring sculptures were not necessarily the outcome of Tāntricism or Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Dr. Panigrahi says, as quoted earlier, that once allowed to be carved on the temples at a particular time they acquired the force of convention to be followed by the subsequent sculptors. It was said earlier and will be discussed in the subsequent pages that many motifs were introduced and then abandoned at different times in the course of the evolution of the temple-architecture. For example, Natarāja image is shown enclosed in a chaitya-

73. The present structures in front of the Parsvadevata niches of the Liṅgarāja temple are later additions.
medallion on the front rāhā of the vimānas of the early group of temples, but this convention has not been followed on the temples belonging to the later part of our period.
The depiction of episodes from the epics is noticed in a few early temples, but totally absent in the later temples.
In this way the examples can be multiplied. Thus the view of Dr. Panigrahi does not seem correct.

Such sculptures did not occur, as supposed by Dr. Panigrahi, for the first time on the Vaitāl-Śisiresvara temples. They are found in the Satrughnesvara group of temples wherein some scenes the act of intercourse is being watched by a third person.\(^74\) So it cannot be said that such sculptures had their first appearance on the Vaitāl-Śisiresvara temples, nor it can be said they had special association with the Vaitāl temple, a temple of Kāpālikas.

The practice of depicting mithuna figures on the doors is very ancient in India. The mithuna figures were considered an auspicious symbol and therefore placed at

\(^74\). A photograph of this scene has been produced by Dahejia in her book. (V. Dahejia, op. cit., photograph in page 73).
the entrance to the house. Perhaps it was for the same purpose that the mithuna figures were carved on the walls of the temples. In India sex occupied an important position in the scheme of life as decided by ancient sages. In this connection A. L. Basham writes, "Of all legitimate pleasures sexual pleasure was thought to be the best". Therefore sex has been glorified in the ancient literatures both secular and religious. Even treatises on the sexual life of man were composed of which the Kāmasūtra by sage Vātsyayana is noteworthy. Some of the religious sects, of which mention has been made earlier, adopted sex as the means to achieve spiritual merit. Kṛṣṇa's sexual exploits captivated the minds of not only the followers of the medieval Vaiṣṇavism but also millions of others. Kṛṣṇa's amorous play with the wives of the cowherds has produced a large volume of literature.

It seems that sex constituted an important aspect of man's activities all through the ages. It was not considered as an outlet of animal passion but, what Basham says, "as a


76. A. L. Basham, The Wonder that was India, p.172.
positive religious duty". Therefore it was natural that the sexual preoccupations of men also manifested in the temple-sculptures. It was not expected on the part of the sculptors, who tried to depict the life in all its realities, to ignore such an important aspect of human life. It is wrong to say that the sex-inspiring sculptures are noticed on the Orissan temples only. They are noticed on the temples spread all over India, the most notable being the Hindu and Jain temples of Khajuraho in Central India. In short they occur on the temples of different cults situated all over India and covering a wide-range of time. In the conclusion it can be said that the sex-inspiring sculptures in all its forms found their place on the temples as a result of man's preoccupation in sexual activities which was then an important aspect of social life. Tāntricism, or for that matter any other cult, cannot be considered as responsible for their carvings on the temples. This much we can say that these cults might have helped their proliferation. It was likely that the sculptors, while depicting such scenes, followed the technique of love-making as described in the texts like Kāmasūtra or prescribed by Tāntric or kāpālika cults.

77. Ibid.
(ii) Nayikās: We have said about the nayikās or indolent damsels earlier in this chapter. The nayikās, as was said, found in profusion in the latest group of our temples, represent faithfully the ultimate perfection and refinement attained by the sculptor's art in course of its evolution. These images are remarkable for their beauty and elegance and belong to the realm of sophisticated art (Figs. 37, 43 & 51). The sculptors, while depicting such figures on the walls of the temples, were mainly concerned with their aesthetic aspect. Their very presence add to the beauty of the temples and at the same time provide, along with the sex-inspiring sculptures, a relief to the visitors from the atmosphere of religiosity caused due to depiction of so many cult icons and religious scenes on the temples.

The nayikās are found on the temples right from the beginning of our period. On the early temples they are not so conspicuously displayed as on the later temples. They are of poor workmanship that characterise the temple sculptures of that period. They are not found systematically placed on the walls. On the whole at the first sight these figures do not attract the attention of the visitors which is the case with the temples like the Rājarāṇi, the Lingarāja the Brahmesvara, etc. In the next group of temples they
are better proportioned and slightly larger than their counterparts in the previous temples. The nāyikās in the Vaitāl temple are characterised by naturalism and vigour (Fig. 31). They are not found standing in sinuous positions which mark the nāyikās of the subsequent period. In the last phase the positioning of the nāyikās on the temple walls have been more or less standardised. They are found in the recesses formed by the pilaster or in the intermediary rathas. Unlike the earlier temples they are carved in greater number. These tall and slender nāyikās, standing in the most delicately curved position, are found engaged in various feminine pastimes. In most cases they stand on pedestals formed by full-blown lotuses, a feature conspicuous by its absence in earlier temples. With their well-built breast, gentle hip, narrow waist, and ineffable smile on the lips these figures possess a powerful sensuous appeal. The sculptors, it seems, had put their best to make these nāyikās most attractive and charming of all the figures on the temple walls.

(iii) Kīrtimukha: Kīrtimukha or the 'Face of Glory' is an important decorative motif which occurs on the temples throughout our period. Originally it meant a hideous mask. It is a fierce-looking lion's head with bulging eyes and open mouth (Fig. 33). On the religious shrines it has been
used as an auspicious symbol to ward off the evils. The upper chaitya-medallions of the Vajramastakas, on the rāhā pagas of the vimāna of the earlier temples are formed by the strings of pearls issuing from the mouths of the Kīrttimukhas (Figs. 23, 26 & 30). Here the Kīrttimukhas appear very prominently. The elaborate bho motifs on the rāhā pagas of the temples like the Muktesvara and the Gaurī are also surmounted by Kīrttimukhas flanked by Yakṣas holding in their hands chains that interesects the chain with a bell that hangs down from the mouth of the former. Kīrttimukhas also occur in panels on the pilasters forming parts of the wall of the Vaitāl temple. In this example, the Kīrttimukhas are flanked by vyālas with riders on their backs (Fig. 33). Strings of pearls drip from the mouths of both Kīrttimukha and the flanking lions. Kīrttimukhas decorating the pilasters on the walls are also found in the temples of the later period. The only difference that can be marked with the Kīrttimukhas on the later temples is the enlargement of the hanging strings of pearls.

(iv) Vyāla figures: The figures of Vyālas or vidālas have been frequently used as the decoration of the temple walls of Orissa. The word Vyāla is a distortion of vikata which means grotesque. Therefore V. S. Agrawala terms it "Grotesque in Indian Art". It is nothing but the deformed human and animal figures. M. A. Dhaky describes several kinds of Vyālas in his scholarly monograph, The Vyala figures on the medieval Temples of India. In the Vaitāl temple the Vyālas are found flanking the Kīrttimukhas on the pilasters and have riders on their back. They are conspicuous by their absence in the temples earlier to the Vaitāl. In the Muktesvara temple the side faces of the central projections are carved with Vyālas with female warriors on their backs.

In the temples of the later period the occurrence of the Vyālas becomes a regular feature. They are placed in the recesses of the pilasters in the tala-jāṅgha portion of the bāḍa. They are found either on elephant mount or trampling an elephant and belong to different types described in the vastu texts. Commenting on the Vyāla figures of the

79. V. S. Agrawala, Foreword in M. A. Dhaky, The Vyāla figures on the Medieval Temples of India, p.5.

80. M. A. Dhaky terms them Meṣavyālas. (M. A. Dhaky, op. cit., p.23, Fig. 20).
Orissan temple Dhaky says, "The Vyālas on the Kalinga temples such as Rājarāni, Brahmesvara and Liṅgarāja temple at Bhubaneswar are composed, dignified and seem startlingly alive, a specific Kalinga trait not paralleled (except with a difference in early Pallava sculptures) anywhere else in India". 81

(v) Chaitya-Medallions: The chaitya-medallions are important decorative motifs of the temples of Orissa. These motifs resemble with the window on the facade of the rock-cut chaitya-hall. In the early temple small size chaitya-medallions have been used for the purpose of decoration. Appearing on the bada and on the Sikhara of the temples they are found enclosing mostly cult images. We do not notice the chaitya-medallions in such large number in the temples belonging to the later part of our period.

The Vajramastakas on the rāhā pagas of the earlier temples are formed by two super-imposed large-size chaitya-medallions. In the centres of the medallions are depicted cult-icons and scenes from mythology. The chaitya-medallions on the rāhā pagas become most ornate in the bho motifs of the later temples. These bho motifs are flanked by Yakṣas.

81. Ibid., p.19.
(vi) Haloes: All the cult images on the temples of the early period invariably have haloes behind their heads. Even the dvarapālas have haloes. In the Kośalesvara temple at Baidyanath the haloes are encircled by dotted outline. It is interesting to note that the nāvikās of the Vaital temple are provided with haloes and so also the non-divine figures of the Kośalesvara temple at Baidyanath. But in later temples we do not notice haloes even behind the heads of divinities.

(vii) Animals and birds: Apart from occurring in association with the gods and goddesses as their mounts the animals and birds have also found place on the surface of the temples as elements of decoration. They are found on all the temples of our period and have no chronological significance. Of them lions and elephants are very common in their occurrence. The elephants on the temples have been most realistically treated. In the Orissan art the elephants occupy an important place. In fact the Orissan lithic art begins with the elephant figure of Dhauli. Lion on elephants is a very common motif found in the temples. Lions, called udyatās, are projected from the rāhā pagas just above the Kīrttimukhas, in all the later temples.

The Muktesvara temple is the only example where we find animal figures in plenty. These include, apart from lions and elephants, crocodiles, tortoise, bull, deer, crab,
and boar. The tortoise being carried away in the sky by two swans is perhaps based on a story of the \textit{Panchatantra}. The outermost frame of the window of the \textit{mukhasālā} are relieved with figures of monkeys engaged in various acts (Fig. 36). In the Brahmesvara and the Liṅgarāja temples figures of animals and birds are found within medallions which form part of the vertical band of creepers decorating the \textit{kanika} pagas.

(viii) Secular figures and Scenes: In the early temples the percentage of secular figures and scenes is very low. They are completely lost in the vast multitude of divine figures. As we have said, with the evolution of temple-architecture more and more secular figures were included into the scheme of decoration and on the temples belonging towards the end of our period they constitute a considerable number. These include mostly royal persons, ascetics, preachers, musicians and worshippers. The royal persons and ascetics are conspicuous by their absence in the early temples. The royal persons appears on the temples like the Brahmesvara and the Liṅgarāja at Bhubaneswar. In the Vārāhī temple at Chaurāsī figures of nobility are carved on the bands which form the lowest level of sloping roofs of the \textit{mukhasālā}. On the southern facade of \textit{mukhasālā} of the Brahmesvara temple a panel depicts a scene of, what
Dr. Panigrahi calls, a king with his courtiers. The **Vimāna** and the **mukhaśālā** of the **Lingarāja** temple contains more than one panel depicting royal figures. One of them, i.e., on the southern facade of the **vimāna**, depicts a royal figure with a sword in the right hand and what supposed to be a copper-plate in the left. The royalty of these figures are indicated by the parasols held over their heads. It seems, the practice of carving figures of kings and the members of the royal family started with the advent of the **Somavamsis** and this practice was followed by the **Gangas**.

The figures of ascetics were introduced for the first time in the **Muktesvara** temple and followed in the other notable temples thereafter. The ascetics are generally depicted in the act of teaching (Fig. 52). Sometimes they are shown in emaciated bodies. In the **Brahmesvara** and the **Lingarāja** temples the ascetics are found seated against the pillows. Scenes of musical performance are not confined to a particular group of temples. In these scenes one can discern the legacy of the reliefs of the **Udayagiri** caves. The musicians and dancers decorating the latticed windows on the western

---

side of the mukhasāla of the Parasūrāmesvara (Fig. 7), remarkably designed and skilfully executed, are infused with life and vigour like the similar figures in the Rāṇigumpha of the Udayagiri. The dancing scene in the recessed kānṭhi of the Muktesvara vimāna has been most delicately carved. In the Brahmāsvara mukhasāla a panel above the northern balustraded window depicts a female dancer accompanied by musicians. Some of the loose blocks of stone found near the Manikesvara temple are depicted with figures of dancers and musicians. Most probably these figures once adorned the temple which is now in ruins. The worshippers, with or without offerings, bear no significance so far as chronology and treatment are concerned.

Among the secular scenes the scene of elephant-capture (Fig. 8) is very common and occurs mostly in earlier temples. Hunting scenes occur in the temples like the Laksmanesvara, the Vaitāl, the Muktesvara, etc. In the northern facade of the Parasūrāmesvara temple there occurs a scene which has been described as Lion-hunt. In this scene the lion, unlike the elephants found in the scene of elephant-capture in the same temple, has not been realistically treated. In the opinion of Dr. Panigrahi it is a fabulous

83. M. M. Ganguly, Orissa and Her Remains, p. 305.
animal. Scenes of battle and war-procession occur in greater number in the later temples. Previously it was said that the scenes from popular animal stories occur in the Muktesvara temple.

(ix) Other Decorative Designs: Besides chaitya-medallions, other designs have also been used for the purpose of the decoration of the walls of the Orissan temples. Of these, the architectural designs such as Khākhara-mundis (miniature representation of Khākhara temples) and pidha-mundis (miniature representation of pidha temples) decorate the subsidiary pagas on the lower and upper jāṅghas respectively of both the rekha deulas and pidha deulas. These are the standard decorations for the later temples. The niches of these designs house pārvadevatās, various cult images, mithunas, couples in sexual positions, and other figures.

Lotus medallions and bands of lotus petals shown in triangular and wavy pattern are prominently shown in the early, but in later temples these are absent. The bottom and top portions of the pillars and pilasters of the early temples are carved with purnaghata designs. The bases of central pillars of the mukhasālās of the Kośalesāvara temple

84. K. C. Panigrahi, Archaeological Remains at Bhubaneswar, p.120.
at Baidyanath and Kapilesvara temple at Charda are also relieved with the pūrnaghatas. The motif is not found in the later temples. Pot-bellied yaksas with uplifted hands and bent knees rarely occur in the early temples. In the Muktesvara and the succeeding temples they have been frequently used for the purpose of decoration. The low plinth of the Gaurī temple is relieved with the sitting yaksas with uplifted hands. They are shown as if supporting the entire temple structure. Scrolls of different types are found in almost all the temple of our period. Generally the pillars and pilasters are decorated with scroll works, but in later temples narrow bands of scroll work also decorate the Sikharas. The gelbāi design occurs on the temples throughout our period. Fabri describes these design as "the most attractive and original speciality of Orissan decorative art". The temples belonging to earlier phase also contain some other decorative designs such as, jāli and jharāvati which are rarely found in later temples.

Decoration with large rounded dots is very popular with the earlier temples like the Paraśurāmeśvara, the Satrughnesvara, the Svarnajālesvara, the Mārkandeyesvara, the Sisireśvara, the Vaitāl (Fig. 33), the Simhanātha, Kualo and Suklesvara. Even if the dots occur in later

85. C. L. Fabri, op. cit., p. 39.
temples, these are not so large in size as found in the above-mentioned temples.

(x) Door-frame decoration: The door-frames of the Orissan temples are elaborately ornamented. Even the door-frames of the earliest of the temples is not an exception to it. On them one can discern the influence of Gupta art tradition. The jambs consist of either three or four bands of decorative designs (Fig. 2) which include various floral and creeper motifs, scroll work, gilai, flying figures and occasionally mithuna figures. At Baidyanath and Charda the innermost jambs are relieved with entwined nāgas, but in some later temples like the Rājarājī massive nāga pillars flank the door-jambs. In the mukhasāla of the Simhanātha temple figures of Saptāmātrkās and Vīrabhadra in vertical alignment are depicted on either side of the door-jambs. The absence of Ganesa in association with the Saptāmātrkās is mainly due to the lack of space as four figures are arranged on each side.

In the lower portion of the jambs we generally find dvārapālas and dvārapālikās, sometimes above double vyālas. In the temples of the earlier phase the figures of Gaṅgā and Yamunā with their respective mounts are shown beyond the dvārapalas. But in later temples the figures of these river goddesses do not appear in the same places. The nāga figures
holding foliated vases with canopies of snake hoods are depicted by side of the dvarapalas in the mukhasalā of the Śisirēśvara. This feature seems to have been borrowed from the Lalitagiri door-frame. Sometimes in later temples male and female figures are depicted within niches at the bottom of the jambs.

The figure of Gajalakṣmī normally occupies the centre of the lintel above the doorway, but in some temples either Ganeśa or Lakulīśa takes the place of Gajalakṣmī. Stories from Saivite mythology are depicted on the lintels of the door-jambs of the temples like the Satrughnesvara at Bhubaneswar and the Kapileśvara at Charda. Image of Anantāśayī Viśnu surmounts the lintels of the Kœaleśvara temple at Baidyanath and Kapileśvara temple at Charda. This feature not found in any other temple of Orissa.

****

86. MASI, Vol. XLIV, p.11, plate III, 3.