CHAPTER EIGHT
SÅKTISM IN JAGANNATHA CULT

Under the Bhauma-Karas and the Somavamsis, Såktism was extensively popular in UtkaJa & South-Kosala respectively. Tántric practices by propitiating the sixty-four Yoganīs for attaining psychic powers were invogue in the western and the eastern parts of Orissa. Ranipadra¹, identified with modern Ranipur-Jharial near Titilagarh was a stronghold of the Tántric form of Såktism and the Mattisayūra School of Saivisim during the rule of the Somavamsis. The Somavamsis, themselves had embraced Saivism under the influence of the great Saivite teachers like Pramathāchārya², Sadāsivāchārya³, and Gaganāsivāchārya⁴ of the line of Kadamabaguhāvāsī. The teachers of the Mattisayūra School like the followers of the School of Matsyendranātha had popularised the tántric rites and rituals. It is no wonder, therefore, at Ranipur-Jharial

which was a stronghold of the teachers of the Mattamayūra School of Saivism, the Yoginis were enshrined in different niches in the circular temple at Ranipur where Śiva is centrally located. Thus under the Somavāṃśis in South-Kosala tāntric form of Saivism and Sāktism existed together. The cult images of Belkhandi pertaining to the Sākta deities also refer to very peculiar Tāntric practices of the period. Tāntric form of Saivism and Sāktism gained wide popularity in various parts of South-Kosala. While the Somavāṃśis marched in the eastern direction and occupied Baud-Sonepur region, they continued to patronise the cause of Sāktism. The tāntric designs of the Ramesvara temple at Baud assigned to the 9th century A.D. indicate that Tantra was a popular cult in that locality even before the rise of the Somavāṃśis there. In fact, the Bhaṇjas who ruled over Baud-Sonepur region in the 9th century A.D. worshipped Bhairava as their tutelary deity and some of them considered that they prospered


due to the blessing and boons conferred on them by the goddess Stambhesvari. When the Somavamsi king Janmejaya killed Ranabhanja and occupied Khifalimandala (Baud-Sonepur region) the Somavamsis were further influenced by the cult of Stambhesvari. It seems that they identified Stambhesvari with Bhadrambika who was their tutelary deity and they declared in the Maranjumura charters that Panchambari Bhadrambika was the presiding deity of Suvarnapura or modern Sonepur.

From the time of Janamejaya Mahābhavagupta, the Somavamsis followed a policy of expansion towards the coastal tract of Orissa. His son Mahāsivagupta II alias Yayati I appears to have conquered the coastal tract of Utkala. His Cuttack plates of the regnal year 9 reveals that he donated the village Chandagrama situated in Dakṣiṇa Tosali. The

7. Vide the following plates and grants of Ranabhanja:
   b) Line 19 of the Phulbani plate (Regnal year 9), I.O., Vol. VI, p. 270.
   c) Line 16 (Singharā) Sonepur plate, JBORS, Vol. VI, pp. 481-486.
   d) Line 20 of the Patna Museum plates (Regnal year 22), E.I., Vol. XX, pp. 100-104.
   g) Lines 16-17 of the Baud grant (Regnal year 26), E.I., Vol. XII, pp. 325-328.
   h) Line 19 of the undated Baud grant, JBORS, Vol. XX, p. 147.


donation recorded in the charter very well indicates that Yayāti I having conquered Utkala obviously proceeded to pay a visit to the sacred shrine of Lord Jagannatha at Puri which is located in Dakṣiṇa Tosali. It seems that it was Yayāti I who built the magnificent temple of Muktesvāra at Bhubaneswar which is to be assigned to the 10th century A.D. on architectural ground. The depiction of Sapta-Matrkā figures on the ceiling of the Jagmohan of the Mukteswāra temple also reveals that the Somavāṁśis were devout worshippers of the Divine Mothers. As we have discussed earlier the Somavāṁśis were responsible for the installation of the images of Sapta-Matrkās in the compound of Mārkandēśvāra temple at Puri. Probably Bhīmaratha (Bhīma Kesāri of Mādalāpāṇji) of the Somavāṁś line was responsible for the installation of these images. According to Mādalāpāṇji Yayāti Kesāri built the temple of Jagannātha, Puri, the temple of Lingarāja, Bhubaneswar, and the temples of Vimalā and Lākṣmī in the compound of Jagannātha temple. We know from the Dasagobā copper plate grant of Rājārajadeva who built the colossal temple of Jagannātha, there was a shrine which was somewhat neglected by other rulers. It is quite

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possible that Yayāti I having conquered Daksīna Ṭoṣali visited Puri and constructed there shrines for Lord Jagannatha and Vimalā. In this connection it may be pointed out that by the 8th or 9th centuries A.D. Puri was well known as a significant Tantrapītha of India.

Rudra yāmala tantrā which was written by the 10th century A.D. glorifies Lord Jagannatha. A tantric text entitled Mahāpithanirupanam, refers to Jagannatha as Bhairava and Vimalā as Mahādevī. Hermann Kulke has drawn our attention to the representation of Jagannatha in the form of Ajaikpāda Bhairava on a sculptural panel of the temple of Konarka.

The above quoted literary and sculptural evidences very well indicate that Puri was a centre of Tantric form of Saivism and Saktism where Jagannatha was worshipped as Bhairava and Vimalā as his Saktī (Odresu Vimalā Sakti Jagannathas tu Bhairavah).

The image of Vimalā enshrined in the compound of the temple of Jagannatha can be assigned to the 8th century of the Christian era on the basis of the iconographic features.

14. Sarakar Gurudas- Mandirera Katha (Bengali), p. 139
15. Sircar, B.C.- The Saktapithas, p. 45.
17. The description is based on our personal observations. We are not able to produce the photograph of the icon as the Jagannatha temple authorities do not allow photograph inside the compound.
It is made of black chlorite stone. It is a Sthānaka Mūrti and it is 5' high. The deity is four-armed, holding Pāśa in the upper left hand, Kalasa or Madya Pātra in the lower left, Rosary in the upper right hand. The lower right hand of the deity is placed in Abhaya Mudrā with open palm. There is an emblem of Ankusa on the open palm of the lower left hand. The Ayudhas in the upper right hand and upper left hand are further represented by Ayudha Puruṣas. There are no heavenly bodies but there are female attendants on either side of the deity. The image is well dressed from the hip-joint to the ank-joint. The image is decorated by ornaments like ear-rings, necklaces, armlets, wristlets, breast-lets, girdle and anklets. The ornamentations in the image are not heavy.

The halo, round the image is plain and round with deep relief. The border of the halo is decorated with dots. The tiara is somewhat conical. The absence of tripholiate halo in the image makes it clear that the image is certainly earlier than the mediaeval period. There is ornamentation in the image at appropriate places but it has been sparingly used. Ornamentation over the thigh which is a characteristic feature of the sculpture of the Somavamsīs period is conspicuously absent in the image. In view of these iconographic features we are inclined to assign the image to the 8th century of the Christian era.
In the tantric lore, Jagannatha and Vimala were well-known as Bhairava and Mahadevi respectively by the 8th century AD. The Somavamsis, who had been deeply influenced by the tantric form of Saivism and Saktism, made endowments for the construction of the shrines of Jagannatha and Vimala when they conquered Dakśinā Tosali. It is known to us from Bhakti Bhāgavata Mahākavya of Kavi Dindima Jivadeva that the Somavamsi monarch Udyota Kesari was initiated by the great tantric teacher Bhavadeva.

Udyota Kesari's predecessor Yayāti II was also known as Chandihara, which indicates that his father was a devotee of both Chandi and Hara. If the traditions of Madalapāṇji is to be believed, Bhima Kesari or Bhimaratha was a devout worshipper of Devī and that he installed the images of Sapta-Matrās at Mārakandeśvara. In view of all these evidences, it seems that the Somavamsis brought with them their concept of Sakti worship to Puri which was already a famous center of tantric Saktism. As we have indicated above, the Stambhesvari cult was popular in the western part of Orissa particularly in the Tel Valley and the Mahanadi Valley. The Somavamsis were obviously influenced by the cult...

and identified Stambhesvari with their tutelary deity Ambika who is also called Bhadra in the Maranjamura charter. It is striking to note that in Vajasaneya Samhita of Sukla Yajurveda Ambika and Subhadrika are mentioned as synonymous terms. The Somavamsis who worshipped Pancharambhari Bhadrambika as their Istadevi at Sonepur, an important centre of Stambhesvari cult, thus seems to have brought forth the concept of Stambhesvari identified with their deity Bhadrambika to the great tantric center of Puri, where Vimala was well known as the Sakti of Purusottama (Vimala Purusottama). Iconographically Subhadra is a prototype of Khambesvari or Stambhesvari.

We agree with Eschmann, Kulke and Tripathy when they hold the view that the iconography of Subhadra resembles that of the iconography of the Goddess Khambesvari. So in our opinion Subhadra existed in the Jagannatha triad at least during the Somavamsi period. She was a Sakti deity and she was adored as Kātyāyani, Durga and Bhadrakali. The Sakti element in Subhadra is well indicated even to-day. The parsvadevatas in the Subhadra's car during the famous Rathayatra are Durga and Chāmundā. Subhadra is also daily worshipped in the mantra...


27. Brahma Purāṇa, Ch. 57, Vr. 57.
of Bhubaneswari and not in any Mantra of Lakshmi. Thus it seems that the central placement of Subhadra in the Jagannatha triad is an indication of the pivotal position of Sakti in the great Tantrapitha of Puri.

When Amantavarman Cholagangadeva ousted the Somavamsis from political power and occupied Utkala in the beginning of the 12th century A.D., he was obviously impressed by the synthesis of Vaishnavism, Saivism and Saktism in the Jagannatha cult. He belonged to a family which was devoted to the worship of Gokarnesvara Siva for some centuries in the past, but he himself was a student of a great tantric teacher called Nichiniskaraja. It has been mentioned in Bhakti-bhagavata Mahakavya that Cholaganga mastered mantras from Gourī Guru and that she was blessed by Sakti (Sakti Prasada Paramobhuvi Chodaganga). Ragolu Stone Inscription further reveals that Cholaganga’s son presented a lamp to Chandika. Madalā Pāṇji also seems to have recorded the correct traditions by referring to Cholaganga as well versed in tantra. He is known to have donated a village in the Varāha Vartini Vishoya to Goddess Bhagavati Jāthisri, the

presiding deity of the kingdom of Gaṅga dynasty (Gaṅganeṣa rajyādhidevata). But under the magnetic influence of Rāmānuja he embraced Vaiṣṇavism for sometime and declared himself as Parama Vaiṣṇava in his Korni and Vizagpatam plates. Rāmānuja, as we learn from Prapannamurtam made a frantic attempt to introduce the tenets and rituals of Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism. He failed there and he was advised to go back to Śri-Kurmam. However, from this time onwards there was consistent effort for the triumph of Vaiṣṇavism in the shrine of Jagannatha. Puri was certainly a great centre of Śaktism which was appropriated by the Vaiṣṇavites under the patronage of the Imperial Gaṅgas and the Suryavṃsi Gajapatis. When the Skanda Purāṇa was compiled in the late mediaeval period, attempt was made to identify Balabhadra with brother of Kṛṣṇa and Subhadrā with Lākṣmi, although, it was difficult on the part of the author of Skanda Purāṇa to ignore the fact that Subhadrā was no other than Gouri or Kātyāyanī. The same spirit is reflected in Brahma Purāṇa where Subhadrā is addressed as Padmapatrākṣi, Kātyāyanī and Siva. According to

33. JARS, Vol I, p.113.
35. Prapannamurtam, Chapters 35, 36 and 37, The Life and teachings of Śri Rāmānujacārya, Madras (1908), pp.175-81.
36. Skanda Purāṇa, Ch.57, Vr.57.
Hari-Vamsa (Ch. 58) the goddess Nidra or the Maya of Viṣṇu was born as the sister of Baldeva and when Kamsa attempted to kill her she escaped to the sky and assumed four arms holding trident, sword, wine-cup and lotus in them. Varāhamihira also records in Brhat Samhita that Ekanamsa is to be installed in between the two images of Kṛsna and Baladeva. The central figure of the Jagannatha triad seems to be identical with Ekanamsa or Goddess Nidra who assumed four hands and disappeared in the sky when she was dashed against a stone by Kamsa. We may point out here that the concept of Ekanamsa was not popular in Orissa in the 6th century A.D., when only Ananta and Vasudeva were worshipped. As we have discussed earlier there is no figure of Ekanamsa in between the figures of Ananta and Vasudeva on a sculptural panel noticed on the bank of Vindusoravara at Bhubaneswar assigned to the 6th century A.D. By the 8th century A.D. when Purusottama and Balabhadra became popular it was Vimalā who was recognised as the Sakti of Jagannatha. However, when the Somavamsis conquered Utkala, they popularised the concept of Bhadrāmbika and identified her with Stambhesvari. In view of the iconographic similarities of Stambhesvari and Subhadra we agree to the view endorsed by Stietencron.

38. Brhat Samhita, 58. 37
Eschmann and Kulke and conclude that Subhadra in the Jagannatha triad is a result of the synthesis of the tribal Stambhesvari and the Vedic Bhadrambi. Subhadra in the Somavamši period was essentially a Sakti deity. Under the Imperial Gangas particularly from the time of Anangabhimadeva III she was adored as the sister of Krisna and Baladeva and sometimes she was identified with Laksmi. In the words of the author of Skanda Purana "Tasya Sakti Svarupayam Bhagini Stri Pravartika".

In the early medieeval period Saktism, Saivism and Vaisnavism entered into the fold of Jagannatha. A later sculptural representation in the Bhogamandapa of the Jagannatha temple depicts the figures of Siva, Mahisamardini, Durga and Jagannatha in one panel. Almost a similar panel is also noticed in the Sun temple of Konarka. It is, no wonder, therefore, that in the Daksam temple inscription of 1216 A.D. Ananga Bhima III is described as Purusottamaputra, Rudraputra and Durgaputra. It is amply indicated in these

41. Ibid., p.94.
42. Ibid., p.197
43. Skanda Purana, Visnu Khanda, Ch.19, Vr.17.
44. South Indian Inscriptions, Vol.IV, No.1329.
apellation that Purusottama, Rudra and Durga were considered to be identical with Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra respectively. But under the Vaisnavite influence, as we learn from Pataleswar temple Inscription\textsuperscript{45} of 1237 A.D. Balabhadra and Purusottama were identified with Halin i.e. Balarama and Chakrin i.e. Krsna respectively and in that context there is first mention of Subhadra in Orissan epigraph. From the above evidences it is amply indicated that while Halin and Chakrin were identical with Rudra and Purusottama, Subhadra was identical with Durga. We, therefore, conclude that sometimes before the rise of the Imperial Gangas in Utkal under the Somavamsis Subhadra was veritable Ambika or Durga. That tradition still continued till the reign of Anangabhima III as indicated in the Daksaram temple Inscription of 1216 A.D. But under strong Vaisnavite influence during the same reign by 1230 A.D. as we learn from the Kanchipuram temple Inscription\textsuperscript{46} Anangabhima III dropped the epithets Rudraputra and Durgaputra and described himself only as Purusottamputra and Parama Vaisnava. With this background by 1237 A.D. Balabhadra and Purusottama were depicted as Halin and Chakrin while the goddess Subhadra obviously as the sister of Chakrin. When the Skanda Purana was compiled in late mediaeval period she was adored both as sister and Sakti of Krsna Purusottama. Saktism in Orissa began with the cult of Stambhesvari and was ultimately synthesized in the assimilative character of the Jagannatha Cult.