CHAPTER - VII

RELIGIOUS CONDITION
VAISNAVISM IN KALINGA

South Indian campaign of Samudragupta is a landmark in the political and cultural history of Orissa. Circa 350 A.D. the Gupta emperor not only conquered the independent chiefs of Kosala, Mahākāntāra, Korāla, Koṭṭura, Errandapalla and Devarāṣṭhra, but also paved the path for re-establishment of the Hindu social system in Orissa. The kings were very much influenced by the cultural efflorescence of the Gupta period. For about six centuries before the Gupta conquest socio-cultural life of Orissa was powerfully dominated by Buddhism and Jainism, particularly under the patronage of Aśhoka and Khāravela respectively. The Dakshiṇāpatha campaign of Samudragupta did not lead to any annexation, and was of the nature of a Dharmavijaya. The kings of Kosala and Kaliṅga who submitted to Samudragupta led the way for acceptance of a powerful Brahmanical system of the Gangetic valley.

Closely following the South Indian campaign of Samudragupta the Māṭharas in Kaliṅga and the Nalas in South Kosala are known to have established their political powers

in the Southern and Western parts of Orissa respectively. They do not appear to be subservient to the Guptas in any way. The Orissan people soon forgot the storm of the Gupta invasion under the benevolent rule of the mighty Matharas and the Nalas. The Matharas who reorganized the territories of Kalinga in the last part of the 4th century A.D. established their political headquarters at Pistaṭhapura² and Simhapura³. But, Mahendragiri occupied the pivotal position in the cultural life of the people of Kalinga during this period. Mahendragiri has been recognised in the Puranic⁴ lore as one of the Kulagiris of the ancient India. The Mahābhārata⁵ describes this religious centre being connected with Paraśurāma, one of the incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu. Kālidāsa⁶, the celebrated poet of the Gupta Age is of the opinion that Kaliṅganātha and Mahendranātha were identical, and he further describes the heroic battle of Raghu with the king of Kalinga on the summit of Mahendragiri. The poetic description reflects the truth

2. Śaktivarman issued his Rogulu plates from Pistaṭhapura, line I of the plate.
4. Mahendra Malaya Sohyah
Śaktiman rksa parvataḥ
Vindhyāśaḥca paripatraścha
Saptatra Kulaparvataḥ.
The Vāmana Purāṇa, Canto-XIII, Vr.14.
Also Mārkendēya Purāṇa, 5710, F.E. Pargiter, Calcutta (1904).
5. Mahābhārata, Vana Parva, I, 64.
R.Nandavgikar, 3rd Ed. Bombay (1897).
that Mahendragiri was the most important hillfort of Kaliṅga and the nerve centre of the cultural life of the country in the 5th century A.D. The kingdom of Koṭṭura\textsuperscript{8} conquered by Samudragupta is rightly identified with the place of the same name located at the foot of Mahendragiri. A comparative study of the Allahabad Pillar Inscription and Kālidāsa's Raghuvāṁsa would doubtlessly reveal that Mahendragiri which was one of the religious centres of Orissa, was conquered by Samudragupta. As noticed in the foregoing lines, the conquest itself had no political effect because the Gupta monarch came and passed by like a storm. But along with the military campaign the current of the Gupta culture swept over Kośala and Kaliṅga and reached a definite stage in Mahendragiri. The Māṭharas, as we learn from the Dhavalapetta copper plate grant of Umā-varman\textsuperscript{9}, organised an administrative unit called Mahendra-bhoga-visaya, with Mahendragiri at its centre.

\begin{itemize}
\item[7.] Raghuvāṁsa, Canto IV, 32, 38-43. R.Nandavgikar, 3rd Ed. Bombay (1897).
\item[8.] Sahu,N.K. UUHO, p.436.
\end{itemize}
The origin of the Māṭharas is somewhat shrouded in considerable mistry. We find reference to one Virapurūṣa-datta as Māṭhariputra and Vasīsthiputra in the Nagarjunikonda inscription of South India. We further learn from the Märkenḍeya Purāṇa that originally they lived on the bank of the river Śatadru in the North-western part of India. In the course of their migration from the north, it seems, one section of the family settled in Kaliṅga and seized political powers in the later half of 4th century A.D. Except Anantavarman, who is known to us from the Sripuram and Sṛṅgavarapukota plates, all other rulers of the family were more or less connected with the worship of Viṣṇu. They described themselves as Paramabhāgavata, Paramādaivata and Bhācavatāswāmi-Nārāyaṇa-Pādānuḍhyāta in their copper plate grants. Brahmanical religion appears to have been triumphant

over the length and breadth of Kāliṅga under the mighty Māṭharas. The Māṭhara monarchs granted bhaṭṭabṛttis to the Brāhmaṇas who were well versed in the Vedic lore. Viṣṇusarmā, the celebrated author of Panchatantra who was an adept in the Vedic studies, seems to have been patronised by Śaktivarman, father of Anantasaktivarman of the Māṭhara family. The name itself of the renowned scholar indicates that the name of the Lord Viṣṇu was popular in Kāliṅga. In the Barang copper plate grant of Nandapravaṇjanavarman the name of the scribe is given as Kṛṣana Chandra. In the Tekkāli charter of Umāvarman the name of the scribe is Keśava Deva. It seems that during this period in Kāliṅga Kṛṣṇa was worshipped as the supreme Being, identical with Viṣṇu, and this concept influenced the people to name their children after the various names of Viṣṇu. The Māṭharas had embraced Vaiṣṇavism as their religious faith in the course of their rise to political power. It may be pointed out here that though the Māṭharas were not subordinate to the imperial Guptas in the political sphere, they were culturally influenced

by the Gupta heritage. It is known that the Guptas used the Garuḍa emblem as their seal and coin device. Samuḍragupta himself was likened to God Viṣṇu as the epithets like Achintyapurūṣa and Sadhvasādhuḍhayāpralayahetu were attributed to his inscription. This undoubtedly proves his affiliation to the cult. The Chakravikrama type of gold coins of Chandragupta II Vikramāditya as well as the epithet Paramabhāgavata attributed to him in his coins and inscriptions prove that he was a great devotee of Viṣṇu. If king Chandra of the Mehrauli Iron Pillar Inscription can be correctly identified with Chandragupta II, we find a reference in this inscription to his having erected a lofty pillar in honour of Lord Viṣṇu in the Viṣṇupāda hill near Delhi. The religious activities of their feudatories, their officials and private individuals also testify to the prevalence of Vaiṣṇavism in different parts of India during the Gupta Age. The Khoh Copper Plate grant of Parivṛṣajaka

21. Vr.25, ibid, p.266.
chief Samksobha of the Gupta Era 209 (528-29 A.D.) mentions the twelve syllabled Bhāgavata mantra "Oṃ Namo Bhāgavate
Vāsudevāya". This is probably one of the earliest mentions of the mantra. Such was its deep influence that it was adopted by a number of families whose ancestors as well as successors were usually adherents of Śaivism. The Vākātaka ruler Rudrasena II under the influence of his wife Pravābatigupta, daughter of Chandragupta II, became a convert to Vaiśnavaism though he belonged to a dynasty of Śaivite affiliation. Her Poona and Rithāpur copper plate grants begin with words - "Jitaṁbhāgavata". The Sālankāyanas of the Kṛṣna Godavari region also embraced Vaiśnavaism in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. The popularity of Vaiśnavaism in the same period can also be supported by names like Viṣṇugopa, the Pallava king of Kanchi in South India, mentioned in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta. Under such circumstances Kaliṅga under the Māṭharas could not remain isolated without being influenced by the Vaiśnavaite creed. Infact strong Gupta influences are discernible in the

27. Line I of the inscription, ibid, p.439.
phraseology of the Sumandala copper plate grant dated 250 G.E. (569 A.D.), the Kanasa plate dated the G.E. 280 (599 A.D.) and the Ganjam copper plate dated the G.E. 300 (619 A.D.) as well as the monuments of Mahendragiri. The temple situated on the summit of Mahendragiri, popularly called Bhima deula, is essentially a square temple with a flat roof of the typical Gupta style. This earliest temple of Orissa undoubtedly betrays strong Gupta influence.

The Mātharas, like the Guptas, were worshippers of Kṛṣna-Vāsudeva and, Nārāyaṇa. They styled themselves as 'pitrībhaktas' in their inscription. During their rule the vedic concept 'tad viṣṇoh paramapādam' seems to have gained stronghold in Kalinga. We learn from the Khorasanda plates that Viśākhāvarman was a 'Paramādaivata'; and the name of the donee of the grant was a Brāhmaṇa name Viṣṇu. In the Tekkali plates of Umāvarman the name of the scribe is Kesāvadeva. It is interesting to note that Keśava or Kṛṣna

34. ibid.
was accepted as a God in Kaliṅga during this period.

Umāvarman also refers to himself as a Paramadaivata in his Dhavalapetta copper plate grant 37. It may be noted that the phrase Paramadaivata indicates that Umāvarman was a devout worshipper of Viṣṇu. In the Anuśāsanaparva 38 of The Mahābhārata we find the expression "Daivatam Devatanamcha". In this expression it is indicated that Viṣṇu is Devatā among the Gods. In the Brhatprostha copper plate grant 39 the name of the donee appears as Haridatta, i.e. one who is a gift of Hari. The nomenclature also indicates that the people of Kaliṅga had accepted Hari or Viṣṇu as their popular deity for worship. In the line 15 of the same epigraph one Vāsudeva features as an Officer. The information also gives us the clue that Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva was a very popular deity worshipped by the people of the country. In the Andhavaran copper plate grant Ananta Śaktivarman 40 describes himself as the devotee at the feet of Nārāyaṇaśvāmi whose chest is Kamalanilaya i.e.

38. Mahābhārata, vol.XIII, 149-
the abode of Sri or Laksmi. It may be noted in this context that according to the Pancharātra doctrine Vāsudeva Viṣṇu does not apparently take any active part in the beginning of the creation but projects His will to his Śakti Śri-Laksmī. In the Bobbili plates Chandravarman calls himself a Paramabhāgavata. Nanda-Prabhaṇjanavarman, lord of the entire Kaliṅga, also refers to himself as Parama-Bhāgavata and Parama-Daivata in his Chicakol and Bāraṅg Plates respectively. As mentioned earlier the names of Keśava, Vāsudeva and Kṛṣṇa-Chandra are noticed in the charters of Umāvarman and Nanda Prabhaṇjanavarman. Like Keśava and Vāsudeva as mentioned above, Kṛṣṇa Chandra was also popularly accepted by the people as their beloved deity of the Bhāgavata cult. In the Ningondi copper plate grant Prabhaṇjanavarman, who was the lord of the entire Kaliṅga from the Mahānadi to the Kṛṣnāveni, describes himself as a devotee at the feet of Lord Nārāyaṇa.

From the aforesaid sources of information it is clear that closely following the conquest of Samudragupta there emerged the Māṭhara line of Kālīṅga, who not only brought about the political unity of the considerable part of Orissa but also played a significant role in establishing the cult of Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu identical with Kṛṣna-Vāsudeva. In this religious revival of a significant aspect of the Brahmanical form of Hinduism, the Māṭharas seem to have inherited the tradition from the Guptas. As discussed earlier the Māṭharas who originally dwelt along the river Śatadru (Sutleg), migrated to the South in course of time and influenced the socio-religious life of Kālīṅga and sowed the seeds of Vaiṣṇavism in this part of the country.

In this context reference may be made to an extract from the Chinese Tripitaka. In this extract from the Lankāvatāra Sutra placed under the Abhidharma section of the Chinese Tripitaka one Master Māṭhara has been referred to as the twelfth heretic, who held the view that Nārāyaṇa created all things and was Supreme among all living beings. He further pointed out that the same Lord lovingly accepted water, herbs, flowers and fruits offered to Him and He never missed his devotee, nor His devotee missed Him. From the

above expression it is clear that Mathara was referring to the concept preached by Vasudeva Kṛṣṇa in the ninth chapter of the Bhagavad-Gītā. This reference seems to be very important in tracing the spread of the concept of Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu, identified with Vasudeva-Kṛṣṇa, from the North-West part of India to the South-East of Kaliṅga. Mathara, who is designated as the Twelfth heretic in the Chinese Tripitaka was the minister of Kaniska II (2nd century A.D.) and he seems to have been closely associated with the people called the Matharas, who according to the Markendeya Purāṇa, dwelt along the river Satadru. The Matharas were obviously influenced by the concept of Nārāyaṇa as the Supreme being, identified with Vasudeva of the Bhagavad-Gītā. In course of time when a branch of the family migrated to the South and settled in Kaliṅga in the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. they carried with them the same concept and professed to be Parama-Bhāgavata and Bhāgavataśvāmi Nārāyaṇa Pādāṇudhyāta. This trend very well reveals that by the second century A.D. the Bhāgavata Cult was spread in South-India and this transformed cult of the Pancharātra evolved in Kaliṅga under the patronage of the Matharas in the fifth century A.D. It seems that the same concept travelled further beyond the high

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seas as far as Jāvā where in an inscription of the fifth century A.D. containing the foot-print carving of the king Puranavarman it is recorded that the feet of the king resembled those of Lord Viṣṇu. The maritime relation of Kaliṅga with Jāvā in this period also obviously helped this movement.

From the epigraphic evidences we understand that the Māṭhara kings, who were the upholders of Vaiṣṇavism, performed charities on occasions which are typically sacred in the Vaiṣṇava pantheon. They are known to have issued copper plate grants to devotees and learned Brahmans on Vaiśākha Purnimā, Kārtika Purnimā, Mōgha Purnimā and Kārtika-Sukla dvādaśī which are recognised as very auspicious occasions in Vaiṣṇava literature. Prabhaṅjanavarman the lord of entire Kaliṅga who was a devotee of Lord Nārāyaṇa is known to have donated the agrahāra of Ningondi

49. Line 4 of the Ciamton Rock Inscription, EI, vol.XXII, No.2.

50. Kālidāsa gives a veiled allusion to the maritime activities of Kaliṅga in Jāvā and other islands in his Rāghuvaṃsā and he refers to the Lord of Kaliṅga as the Lord of Mahodadhi, Rāghuvaṃsā, VI, 54.


to the Brāhmaṇas of various gotras and charanas on the occasion of Kārtikasukla-Dvādaśī. This lunar reckoning is also known as Mahādvādaśī, Devotsava-dvādaśī and Devasnāna dvādaśī. In the Vaiṣṇavite traditions it is narrated that God Viṣṇu goes to sleep on the eleventh of the bright fortnight of the month of Āsāḍha for four months and wakes up again in the bright fortnight of the month of Kārtika. The Meghaduta, Mudrārākshya and Brhadāsmītā refer to this legend which was evidently very popular in the Gupta period. According to the Jayakshya Samhitā the twelfth day of a lunar-fortnight (dvādaśī) is the most auspicious date for the Pancharātra initiation (dikṣā). According to the Skandapurāṇa the month of Kārtika is most suitable for the initiation. According to the same text, after the initiation ceremony gifts could be distributed among the Pancharātra Vaiṣṇava. We think that according to this tradition PrabhaṅjanavARRIERAN observed the fast after the

57. Meghadūta, Uttara-megha, Vr.53.
59. Brhadāsmītā, 43, 1.2.
60. Jayakshya Samhitā - XVI, 89.
festival of Chaturmāsya on Kārttika-sukla-ekādaśi (Kārttika-ekādaśi-vrata) and was initiated by a Vaiṣṇava achārya of the Pancharātra cult on the Kārttika-sukla-avādaśi. After the most sacred ritual was over, the monarch donated the village of Ningondi situated on the sea-shore of Kaliṅga to various Brāhmaṇas who were obviously devout worshippers of Viṣṇu.

The Pancharātra tradition adopted by the Guptas seems to have been followed by the Māṭhara kings of Kaliṅga. Some of the donees of the Dhanaidaha copper plate grant, patronised by Kumara-Gupta I in Gupta Era 113 (432 A.D.), seem to have migrated to Kaliṅga. Brāhmaṇa Śivasarmā and Nāgasarmā mentioned in line three of the same grant appear to be identical with Nāgasarmā and Śivasarmā in Karosanda copper plate grant of Viṣākhāvarman. This identification is, of course, hypothetical, and if the hypothesis is accepted, we may say that brāhmaṇas who migrated from the Gupta empire to the Māṭhara territory, carried with them the concept of Pancharātra systems which influenced the socio-religious life of Kaliṅga. Infact, the conventional sloka of Dharmaśāstra cited in Dhanaidaha inscription is also quoted for the first time in the Karosandha inscription of Viṣākhāvarman.

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During the fifth century A.D. in Kalinga the concept of incarnation of Viṣṇu seems to have gained a stronghold in the socio-religious life of the people. We learn from the Gupta inscription and monuments that the various incarnations of Viṣṇu were worshipped throughout the length and breadth of Gupta empire. Among the various incarnations of Viṣṇu Varāha was indeed very popular. From the Damodar copper plate grant of 543 A.D. it is learnt that in the eastern part of the Gupta empire in Bengal Sveta-varāhaśvāmi\textsuperscript{64} was worshipped as the incarnation of Viṣṇu.

During this period the Chālukyas of South India\textsuperscript{65} were the worshippers of the Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu. A king of the Kadamba dynasty\textsuperscript{66} of Goa has referred to the same God. It seems that this cult was also popular in Kalinga, where Anantaśaktivarman is known to have donated to some Brahmins the village called Sākanaka in the Varāhavarttini Visaya\textsuperscript{67}. The Visaya seems to have been so named because of its association with Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu. We are inclined to identify Varāhavarttini Visaya of the inscription with the region surrounding the Kshetra of Varāha-Narasimha

\textsuperscript{65} Indian Culture, vol.II, pp.131ff.
\textsuperscript{66} Sircar, D.C. Successors of Satavahana, Calcutta(1939), p.304.
\textsuperscript{67} Line 3-4 of his Sakunaka grant, Inscriptions of Orissa, vol.I, Pt.II, p.17.
at Simachalam, where a river Varāha flows. The name of the river seems to have been derived from the name of the God Varāha-Narasimha. It further strengthens our identification. The present temple of Varāha-Narasimha at Simachalam is assigned to the thirteenth century A.D. but the image of the presiding deity is Varāha-Narasimha, a combination Man-Lion (Nara-Simha) and Boar (Varāha). The deity is covered with an unguent of Sandal paste and appears in the shape of a big sandal wood linga in his Nitya-rupa. Only on Aksyaya tritiyā day i.e. the third day of the month of Vaiśākha, the sandal paste is removed and the real appearance (Najasya rupa) of the Lord is exposed to the devotees. We think that Prthimahārāja of Śrīrāmakasyapa gotra, who occupied Kaliṅga towards the later part of the sixth century A.D. carried the concept of the cult of Varāha as far as Virajā wherefrom he is known to have issued the Parlakhemundi copper plate grant. It is interesting to note that in the Angul copper plate inscription of the Bhauma-Kara king Śāntikaradeva of circa 9th century A.D., there is the mention of Varāha-tirtha, which has been identified with Virajā or modern Jajpur in the Cuttack district of Orissa.

69. Ibid.
In Kalinga, Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu, identified with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣna, seems to have been worshipped in all the important religious centres. On the Mahendragiri itself, which was the most important religious centre under the Māṭharas, we notice a beautiful image of Viṣṇu. The iconographic features clearly show that it was an artistic creation of the sixth century A.D. when Prabhāṇjanavārman was ruling from the Mahānadi to the Kṛṣnaveni.

It is interesting to note that there is a beautiful image of Viṣṇu on the bank of Vīṇḍusāravāra at Bhubaneswar which is a place of Saivite importance. The iconographic feature and the ornamentation which we find in this image are typical of the later part of the Gupta period. We know that the Māṭhara Prabhāṇjanavārman had extended his territory as far as the Mahānadi in the north. He was a worshipper of Nārāyaṇa and in all probability he was initiated into the Pancharātra system. As a mark of his political triumph, almost at the north extremity of his empire he seems to have ordered for the establishment of a temple, where the aforesaid Viṣṇu image was possibly installed. The temple seems to have been destroyed. But the image is still intact in a later votive temple on the bank of Vīṇḍusāravāra at Bhubaneswar.

73. Please see the Chapter VIII.
Thus Vaiṣṇavism in Orissa received a great impetus under the influence of Gupta culture and the Pancharātra school during the Māṭhara rule. In the fourth and fifth centuries of the Christian era, when the Māṭharas occupied Kaliṅga, the cult of Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu was popularised. Under the influence of the Pancharātra school Kṛṣna Vāsudeva, identified with Nārāyaṇa Viṣṇu, occupied the pivotal position in the religious faith of the princes and the people of Kaliṅga. The royal patronage of Vaiṣṇavism considerably influenced the people of the country who worshipped Viṣṇu in his various aspects as Nārāyaṇa, Hari, Keśava, Kṛṣna, Vāsudeva etc. In fact, such names of Viṣṇu became very popular among the people of Orissa at large.

The Age of the Māṭharas is the first glorious epoch in the history of Vaiṣṇavism in Orissa. When the Māṭharas fell from political power in the middle of the sixth century A.D. there was the rise of a new political power which emerged from the tribal obscurity to all India importance. The Pulindas or the Šailajas of Mahendragiri, the earliest inhabitants of Kaliṅga launched a bid for supremacy and set up the illustrious Šailodbhava family which carved out the territory of Kaṅgoḍa. Simultaneously, there was the rise of the Early Gaṅgas, who also refer to

Mahendragiri as their homeland and seat of their tutelary deity. Both the Sailodbhavas and the Gaṅgas came forward as the devout worshippers of Gokarnēśwar-Śiva declaimed as Parama-Māheśwara. The rise of the Sailodbhavas 75 and the Early Gaṅgas 76 led to the triumph of Śaivism in the middle of the sixth century A.D. Yet it is striking that Vaiśṇavism continued to influence the socio-religious life of Orissa in the 7th century A.D.

VAIŚNAVISM IN SOUTH KOSALA

In the history of Vaiśṇavism in Orissa the Pancharātra form which emerged as a vibrant faith in Kaliṅga under the patronage of the Māṭharas flourished with all its ramifications under the Sailodbhavas, the Bhauṃa-Karas and the Bhāṅjas. While the Pancharātra creed developed in the coastal tracts of Kaliṅga, Koṅgoda, Utkala and Khinjali, the Bhāgavata cult developed as a dominant faith in South Kosala. An inscribed image of Viṣṇu noticed at Burhikhar near Malhār

indicates that the Bhāgavata cult in South Kosala emerged as early as the second century B.C. It is also significant to note that the earliest epigraphic evidence for the rise of the Bhāgavata cult in India is to be noticed in the vicinity of South Kosala at Besnagar near Bhilsā in the Gwalior region of Madhaya Pradesh. The well known Garuḍa Pillar inscription also belongs to the second century B.C. when Bhāgavata Cult of Vaiśṇavism had already been triumphant in South Kosala. It reveals that the Pillar Garuḍadhvaja was erected in honour of Devadeva Vāsudeva by Bhāgavata Heliodorous, son of Dion and an inheritant of Takṣyasilā, who came as the Yavana ambassador from Antialkidas, the Greek king of Takṣyasilā, to the court of the king Kāsiputra Bhāgavadra of Vidisā. This is of great importance as it reveals the overwhelming influence of the Bhāgavata cult centering round the worship of Vāsudeva, the god of gods, to such an extent that even an intelligent foreigner of high social standing and culture was tempted to embrace the faith and to erect the column. The Bhāgavata Cult, however, became universally popular in the age of the imperial Guptas. The conquest of


Samudragupta not only contributed to the imperial unity but also resulted in the expansion of the Bhāgavata Cult of Vaiṣṇavism all over the country. Chandragupta II professed to be Paramabhāgavata and the well-known Mehrauli Pillar inscription, usually attributed to him, reveals that he set up a Garuḍa Pillar of Viṣṇu on a hill called Viṣṇupāda. The rock-cut cave temple at Udayagiri near Bhilsā of the time of Chandragupta II was also a Bhāgavata temple. It bears the reliefs of a four-armed Viṣṇu and a huge figure of Varāha. The Bhāgavata cult which was embraced and patronised by the Gupta monarchs, influenced deeply the princes and people of South Kosala obviously from the time of Samudragupta. His conquest of South Kosala in the middle of the fourth century A.D. led to the flow of the current of Bhāgavata cult from Áryavarta to Dakshināpatha through the gateway of South Kosala. The inscriptive and numismatic sources indicate that the Guptas as well as the Vākātakas extended their political hegemony over South Kosala for a considerable period.

81. CII, vol.III, p.141 also the Select Inscription, Vr.6, p.285.
84. Coins of Kumaragupta II have been found in different part of South Kosala.
Poona\(^85\) and Rithapur\(^86\) copper plate grants of Pravābatigupta begin with two words 'Jitam Bhāgavata' which is a significant Vaiṣṇavite expression noticed in the preamble of many charters of the period\(^87\). Such was the popularity of the Bhāgavata cult that the twelve syllabled Bhāgavata mantra, 'Om namo bhāgavate Vāsudeva' was recorded in an epigraph of a Parivajaka king Samksobha\(^88\) of Madhya Bhārata by 529 A.D.

The Bhāgavata cult with Vāsudeva as the Supreme deity gained a stronghold in South Kosala under the Nalas who ruled there in the fifth century A.D. with Puṣkari as their capital which is located in the Korapat district of Orissa. Some of the Nala kings were devotees of Mahēśvara and Mahāsenā Kārttikeya\(^89\). But in the course of the expansion of their territory the Nalas are known to have marched as far as Nandivarāhana and subjugated the Vākātaka for a temporary period. Nala king Bhavadattaavarman is also known to have


\(^{86}\) ibid.

\(^{87}\) Jitam bhāgavata tena Viṣṇusna yasya vaksasi/
Śri Svayam bhati devaschā nāvipadme pitāmahah//


proceeded as far as Prayāg, where he is known to have donated land on the occasion of his sacred bath in the confluence of the Ganga and Yamuna. These facts known to us from the Rithapur copper plate grant indicate that the Nalas, who emerged as a great power in the fifth century A.D. were face to face with Vākātaka and the imperial Guptas in the political field. It is no wonder, therefore, that they were greatly influenced by them at the cultural level. It was obviously under the influence of the Vākātakas and the Guptas that the Bhāgavata cult of Vaiṣṇavism, which was their main creed, penetrated into the territory of the Nalas. We know from the Bhilā seal that the twelve syllabled Bhāgavata mantra was popular in the heart of the Gupta territory.

Presumably, Bhavadattavarman was influenced by the Bhāgavata cult at Nandivardhana and Prayāg and he came back to his homeland with his deep faith in Vaiṣṇavism. Very near to the place where Bhavadattavarman took his sacred bath at Bhilā near Allahabad, we have not only some seals bearing the inscription 'Oṁ namo Bhāgavate Vāsu-devaya' but also a significant seal of Vṛṣadhvaja with the epithet 'Maheśvara-Mahāsenātisṛstaraśjasya', which is identical with the epithet of the Nalas. These references very well indicate that the

Nalas had a close contact with Prayag which was a centre of Bhāgavata cult in the Gupta period. When Bhavadattavarman took his sacred bath in the confluence of the Ganga and the Yamuna, he was obviously inspired by the Bhāgavata cult, and presumably some brāhmaṇas of the Bhāgavata cult migrated to Puṣkari in the course of his return journey from Prayāg. It may be pointed out in this connection that 'Chulla' was the writer of the Riṭhāpur charter which was issued on the occasion of the sacred bath at Prayāg, and the Podāgaḍa Stone inscription of his son Bhavadattavarman was written by Janturadāsa the son of Chauli who is probably the same as 'Chulla'. Possibly Chulla was a follower of the Bhāgavata cult, and like Chanalāśvāmin in the case of Pravābatigupta, he might have influenced the Nalas to embrace Vaiṣṇavism. This is, however, a hypothesis. In any case, it is striking to note that under Skandavarman, the son and successor of Bhavadattavarman, Puṣkari became a stronghold of the Bhāgavata cult and Vāsudeva was accepted as the presiding deity in the Nala territory.

The Podāgada stone inscription is a significant epigraph which throws light on the rise of Bhāgavata cult in South Kosala in the fifth century A.D. The inscription is engraved on a stone pillar located near Nawrangpur in the Umarkot Police Station of the Koraput district of Orissa. The record opens with glorification of Hari. In the words of the royal panegyrist:

Harina jitaṁ jayati jesyatyesa gunastutirnannahima/ Nanu Bhāgavaneva j ayetavyaṁ Chadhijetacha// 96

The praise of His qualities in such words as "Hari was victorious, is victorious and will be victorious" is not appropriate; for, "verily, the Divine Hari is himself the conquest, the object to be conquered and the conqueror." This invocatory verse is identical in spirit with the Viṣṇu-Śahasra-Nāma in the Mahābhārata where Viṣṇu, identical with Vāsudeva, is described as Viṣṇu-Śahasra-Nāma 97. Verse 4 of the Podāgada Stone inscription reveals that king Skandavarman constructed the foot-prints (Pādamula) 98 of Viṣṇu or a shrine

97. ibid.
where the footprints of Viṣṇu were erected. H. Von Shietencron believes that the pillar which bore this was probably a Garuḍa Stamba, like Besnagar Pillar inscription. The temple there constructed by Skandavarman appears to be the first Viṣṇu temple in South Kosala. Verses five and six of the epigraph further reveal that for the worship of Viṣṇu in the temple of a rent-free plot of land was donated by the king for the supreme Being (Purusa). The reference to Viṣṇu as Purusa seems to be identical with Puruṣa of the Puruṣa-sukta. It may be noted in this context that the Randasore stone inscription of the time of Naravarman of the Gupta period dated 404 A.D. also begins with an invocation to the Puruṣa with one thousand heads (Śahasra sīrṣetāsmiti puruṣaya); and in verse eight of the same record Vāsudeva is referred to as Puruṣa probably according to the Pancharātra text in the Naṭarjunakonda inscription of the time of Abhinavasusana.


103. ibid, p. 398.

These references reveal that the Supreme Being 'Puruṣa' of the Vedic lore was considered to be identical with Vāsudeva of the Bhāgavata cult and Nārāyaṇa of the Pancharātra cult. It is further mentioned in the Poḍāgoda inscription\textsuperscript{105} that the proceeds of the rent-free land donated to Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva, were to be used in a 'Sattra' of the Brāhmaṇa, specially of the ascetics (Satyopa-bhojya-vipranam yatina chavisesatah). This reference to the Yatis in the epigraph leads us to believe that there flourished a sect of monks belonging to the Bhāgavata cult who were specially patronised by Skanda Varman. Verse 8 of the inscription\textsuperscript{106} further reveals that the order of the king was recorded on a pillar in front of a temple. H.Von Stietencron\textsuperscript{107} is right in identifying the pillar with the Garuḍa pillar which was located in front of the Viṣṇu temple. Verse nine of the inscription is particularly significant because it says, 'He who will conform to the good path followed by kings will for long find refuge in god Vāsudeva.'\textsuperscript{108} The verse under discussion undoubtedly reveals that Vāsudeva was considered to be the goal and the final refuge by the 'Yatis' and the Brāhmaṇas of the Bhāgavata cult, who were patronised by the Nalas in that period. Verse eleven of the epigraph\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{105} Vr.6 of the Inscription, \textit{Inscriptions of Orissa}, vol.I, Pt.II, p.94.


\textsuperscript{107} ibid.


\textsuperscript{109} ibid.
refers to the general or senāpati named Pritibhāgavata, who promulgated the ordinance of his master. The name Pritibhāgavata is yet another significant clue to indicate the popularity of the Bhāgavata cult in South Kosala in the period under review. The inscription was engraved by a person named Viśvarupa\textsuperscript{110}. This name also is suggestive of the Viśvarupa or the cosmic vision associated with Vāsudeva in the Bhagavadgītā\textsuperscript{111}.

The foregoing analysis of the contents of the Podāgaḍa stone inscription makes it clear that the association of the Nalas with Vākātakas and the Guptas contributed to the development of Bhāgavata cult in South Kosala and helped popularise the worship of Vāsudeva under their patronage. It seems that the teachers of the Bhāgavata cult migrated from South Kosala to Kaliṅga and popularised their creed there in the fifth century A.D. Although the Māṭhara rulers like Ananta Śaktivarman and Prabhāṇjanavarman among the early kings of Kaliṅga were devotees of Nārāyaṇa\textsuperscript{112}, others like Chandavarman and Nancaprabhāṇjanavarman accepted the Bhāgavata

cult and declared themselves as **Paramabhaqavata** in their charters.\(^\text{113}\) We are inclined to believe that the early kings of Kaliṅga of the Māṭhara dynasty, who migrated from the South, were influenced by the Pancharātra cult and worshipped Nārāyaṇa, while others like Chandravarman and Nandaprabhaṇjanavarman who ruled over Kaliṅga in the fifth century A.D. accepted the Bhāgavata cult probably under the influence of the Brāhmaṇas and Yatis of the Bhāgavata cult who migrated from South-Kosala. The Nalas continued to patronise the cause of Vaiṣṇavism as late as the eighth century A.D. A much mutilated stone inscription\(^\text{114}\) engraved on a wall of the temple of Rajivalochana at Rajim in Raipur district of Madhya Pradesh reveals that Vilāsatuṅga of the Nala family constructed a temple dedicated to Viśṇu in or about the eighth century A.D. Thus Bhāgavatism became triumphant in South Kosala under the Nalas from the fifth century A.D. and continued to exercise influence for centuries afterwards.

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The re-establishment of the Bhāgavata cult in South Kosala under the patronage of the Sarabhapuriyas was a landmark in the growth and development of Vaiṣṇavism. The Sarabhapuriyas who hailed from a tribal stock of the Vindhyas were undergoing a process of social upgradation when the Pancharātra cult came with a new message. The patronage of the Imperial Guptas had richly contributed to the spread of Vaiṣṇavism in various parts of India. Prabhābatīgupta, daughter of Chandragupta II, is known to have been initiated by Chanālaśvāmi, an Āchārya of the Pancharātra school of Vaiṣṇavite order. It is well known to us from the epigraphic sources that successors of Prabhābatīgupta exercised sovereignty over South Kosala for some time. It is quite likely that during the period of Vākātaka suzerainty over South-Kosala the Pancharātra teachers found an avenue to proceed to the region to propagate their cult.

Under such circumstances, when the tribal chief Sarabha asserted his supremacy and established a new kingdom, the Āchāryas of the Pancharātra school must have got hold of

117. ibid.
the tribal chief keen for his social upliftment. During this process of transformation from tribalism to Aryanisation the teachers of the Pancharātra school provided a living faith to the royal house of Sarabhapura. They came forward to sanskritise the tribal people like Pulindas, Śabaras and Sarabhās who dwelt in the Vindhyan range. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa informs us that Kiratas, Hunas, Pulindas, Abhiras and Yavanas were also purified by the worship of Viṣṇu. This puranic reference clearly indicates that the teachers of the Pancharātra school gained hold even over the people of the forest regions. We know that Heliodorous had embraced Vaiṣṇavism by accepting Vāsudeva as the 'God of gods'. In the post-Gupta period the Hunas, as V.A. Smith rightly observed, 'yielded to the wonderful assimilative power of Hinduism and rapidly became Hinduised'. Several indigenous and aboriginal tribes underwent the same process. The Gonds, Bhārs and Kharwārs emerged as Chāndelas, Rāthors and Gaharwārs. Pulindas emerged as Šailajas or Šailodbhavas in Kangoda and the Šarabha or the Šarabhapuriyas as Amarāryas in South Kosala. The Šarabhapuriyas

118. Bhāgavata Purāṇa II, 4.18.
120. Smith, V.A.
121. ibid.
122. Behera, S.C. Rise and Fall of the Šailodbhavas, Calcutta (1982), Ch. IV.
of tribal origin underwent a process of Aryanisation and called themselves Amarāryas\textsuperscript{123} who were no other than the scions of 'Amarāja' family mentioned in the Bahamani plates of Bharatbala\textsuperscript{124}. They not only linked themselves with the Pāṇḍava kings of Mekhala by bringing about the marriage of Lokapraṅkaśā with Bharatbala\textsuperscript{125}, but also received a sort of spiritual sanction from the Āchāryas of the Pancharātra school who by branding them with the emblems of Sankha and Chakra must have played a great role in entertaining them into the fold of Brahmanical form of Hinduism. It is striking to note that all the donees of the Sarabhapuriyan charters have their names ending with 'Svāmin' like Chanālasvāmi of the Poona plates\textsuperscript{126} of Prabhavatigupta. These svāmins were very probably Vaiṣṇavas of the Pancharātra school and among them we find names such as Viṣṇusvāmi\textsuperscript{127} of Vajasaneya Charaṇa and Kausika gotra, Mādhava Chaturvedāvämi\textsuperscript{128}, Likshita Ananta Svāmi\textsuperscript{129} of Vajasaneya Charaṇa and Bharadvāja

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Mallar Plates of Vyāghrarājā, \textit{EI}, vol.\textsc{xxxiv}, pp.45-50.
\item \textit{EI}, vol.\textsc{xxvii}, p.132.
\item Sircar, D.C. \textit{Select Inscriptions}, vol. 1965, p.413ff.
\item Amugura plates of Jayarāja and Khariar Plates of Suḍevarāja I.
\item Mahasamund Plates of Suḍevarāja I.
\item Pokhara Plates.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
gotra and Dāmodarasvāmi\textsuperscript{130} of BharaCdvāja gotra. Among these donees, thus, we find the names of Lord Viṣṇu like Viṣṇu, Mādhava, Ananta and Dāmodara who belonged to either Kausika or Bharadvāja gotra. It is revealing to note that according to Isvara Samhitā\textsuperscript{131}, Sauditya, Aupagayuna, Maunjayana, Kausika and Bharadvāja were the five sages who were first indoctrinated with the Pancharātra system in five successive days and nights. The Isvara Samhitā offers ample indication that Viṣṇusvāmi of Kausika gotra, Dikshita Ananta Svāmi and Dāmodara Svāmi of Bharadvāja gotra were learned scholars of the Pancharātra school of Viṣṇavism who were patronised by the Śarabhapuriyas.

All the rulers of the Śarabhapuriya family were devout worshippers of Viṣṇu who declared themselves as 'Paramabhāgavata' in their charters. Although they were the followers of the Pancharātra systems they observed the Bhāgavata cult which accepted Kṛṣna-Vāsudeva as their supreme deity. They did not call themselves 'Bhāgavatasvāmi Nārāyaṇa Pādabhakta' like the Māṭharas, nor did they call themselves 'Parama Viṣṇava' like the early Paṇḍuvaṃsis. Like the Guptas they designated themselves as Parama Bhāgavata. It is

\textsuperscript{130} Mallahar Plates of Pravarāja.

\textsuperscript{131} Isvara Samhitā, XXI, 579, 532. Quoted by B. Bhattacharyya forwarded to Jayasamhitā, p.9.
presumed that the new cult of Vaiśṇavism, which the 
Śarabhupuriyas embraced, synthesized the Pancharātra and 
the Bhāgavata schools admitting the non-Āryan tribes into 
its fold. This neo-Vaiśṇavism thus was a great movement 
which succeeded in Āryanising the foreigners and the non- 
Āryan tribes of Southern India. The teachers of this 
movement accepted Kṛṣna-Vāsudeva to be identical with 
Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu and inspired the Śarabhupuriyas to construct 
temples for the enshrinement of Vaiśṇavite deities. 

Rawan plates\textsuperscript{132} give us an instance of such a 
Vaiśṇavite shrine maintained by the Śarabhupuriya king. 
The charter reveals that Mahārāja Narendra had built a temple 
dedicated to Bhagavān Sridhara Svāmin. The monarch is 
further known to have donated the village Ārāmaka of Maṅṭarāja 
BhuKti for daily worship, offerings and oblations in the 
temple as well as for the repair of the shrine situated near 
Bāṭapadraka\textsuperscript{133}. This piece of evidence reveals that Viṣṇu 
was worshipped as Bhagavān Sridhara Svāmin and that various 
rituals were observed in the temple dedicated to the deity at 
Bāṭapadraka.

\textsuperscript{132} JESI (1979), vol.VI, pp.44-45.

\textsuperscript{133} ibid, vol.IV, (1979), pp.44-45.
The epigraphic reference is also supported by the archaeological remains of the period. At Khariar we have noticed an interesting image of Viṣṇu which on the ground of iconographic features may be assigned to the age of the Šarabhapuriyas. The image is found in the locality where two sets of copper plate grants of the Šarabhapuriyas were also recovered. Mārāguḍā valley which has been identified as the capital of the Šarabhapuriyas is very close to Khariār where the Viṣṇu image was recovered. The Viṣṇu image of Khariar is four-armed. Saṅkha and Chakras are clearly visible in the two upper arms while the two lower arms are broken. Nascent ornamentation, plain halo and simple tiara are the features of this icon which are typical of the stone images of the seventh century A.D.

The numismatic sources also substantially prove that under the influence of the Guptas Vaiṣṇavism flourished in South Kosala. The Gupta emblem of Garuḍa finds place in the gold coins of Mahendrāditya along with the representation of Saṅkha and Chakra. That the kings of this dynasty minting these coins were devout worshippers of Viṣṇu is clearly evident from the iconographic representation on the coins.
SAIVISM

From the study of numismatic and archaeological evidences it may be inferred that Saivism flourished in Orissa shortly after the beginning of the Christian era. The discovery of a large number of Kushāṇa coins from Mauryabhanja, Keonjhar and other places of Orissa has led us to believe that Kushāṇa authority continued in ancient Orissa till the reign of Huviska. Huviska was a Śaiva which is known from the figure of Phallic Śiva in his coins. It will not be out of place to mention that "Phallic Śiva was a part of Śiva-worship in the time of Huviska".

The study of numismatic evidence of Kusānas may be corroborated by the fact of recent discovery of a Nāṭarāja image from Asanpāt in the Keonjhar district. The Asanpāt stone inscription containing a beautiful image of Nāṭarāja is the earliest known epigraphic evidence indicating Śiva worship in this region. This inscription records the building of a temple (Devayātana) evidently for Lord Śiva by Mahārāja Śri Śatrubhanja of Nāga dynasty as is ascribed to the fourth

century A.D. The image under which the record is installed depicts Natarāja Śiva with eight hands. In his two upper hands, he holds a snake and in the lower two arms he plays with a lute. One of his hands exhibits Varadāmuḍrā while in the other three, he holds a Trisūla, a Dambara and an Aksha-mālā. The image is in the form of a naked Urdhva-linga indicating Tāṇḍava dance of Śiva after his consort Sati gave away her life in the sacrificial altar of her father Daksha Prajāpati. Nandi and Bhrukuti, his two attendants are represented on both the sides. It is the earliest Natarāja image found in Orissa and speaks of the popularity of Śaivism in this country in 4th century A.D.

In ancient Orissa, like anywhere else, Lord Śiva was worshipped both in form of images and Phallic-symbols. Under the Guptas, the worship of the latter was more prevalent because we learn from the Besnagar inscription that a number of Śiva-lingas were created from the Buddhist Stupas and Vaiṣṇava Pillars like Garuḍadhvaja. It is quite reasonable to accept the fact when we find the colossal Lingam of the Bhāskaresvara temple at Bhubaneswar which was originally an

Asokan pillar. Such conversions of Asokan pillars into Śiva-lingas naturally paved the way for the rise of a number of phallic-symbols. This may be one of the reasons for which the worship of the latter became popular and was firmly footed in religious history of Saivism in Orissa.

The conversion of Asokan pillars (a Buddhist symbol) into Śiva-lingas during the Gupta period reveals the predominance of Śaivism over Buddhism and Vaiṣṇavism. Its popularity and predominance in ancient Orissa may be attributed to the flow of a large number of missionary Śaiva-ascetics who were encouraged by rulers to preach their faith freely among the subjects. From the copper plate inscription of Senakpat of Bālārjuna's time we learn of the two Śaiva ascetic Sadahśivāchārya and Sadāśivāchārya who came to Kośala and converted this ruler of Somavāṃsi dynasty into Śaivism; and the ruler assumed the epithet of Parama Māheśvara. Also in Dharma Lingēsvara plates of Devendravarman (G.E.184) we find that a Śiva ascetic Patangasivāchārya came during the reign of this Gaṅga ruler who became a disciple of the said Śaiva ascetic. In this context the figures of a number of Śaiva ascetics like Lakulisa (who was the founder of the

140. JASB, vol.XVII, No.2, pp.100-105.
141. EI, vol.XXXI, pp.31-36
The inscription was edited by M.G.Dikshit and D.C.Sircar.
Pāṣupat sect of Śaivism) and his disciples on the Śaiva temples of Orissa like Śatrughaneśwar, Parasurameśwara of Bhubaneswara reveal that Śaiva ascetics were well known to the people of Orissa.

The early Nala kings of South-Kosala, Bhavadattavarman\(^{143}\) and Arthapatirāja\(^{144}\) in the 5th century A.D. were worshippers of Śiva and they declared in their charters that their kingdom was bestowed on them by Mahēśvara and Mahāsenā (Mahā-maheśvara-Mahāsenaśrita rājyavibhavah). In Kalinga, though the Māṭhara kings were patrons of Vaiṣṇavism, they had no dislike for Śaivism. Śatrudāmana of Siṁhapura, who was probably a subordinate ruler under Māṭhara king Śaktivarman, was a worshipper of Damanesvara Śiva\(^{145}\). The Vasiṣṭha king, Anantavarman, also calls himself a devout worshipper of Maheśvara\(^{146}\).

\(^{143}\) EI, vol.XIX, pp.100ff.
\(^{144}\) ibid, vol.XXV, pp.12-16.
\(^{145}\) ibid, vol.XXI, pp.89-93.
\(^{146}\) ibid, vol.XXIII, pp.55-61, and vol.XXIV, pp.47-52.
The Eastern Gaṅgas, who established their rule in Kaliṅga in 498 A.D., were great patrons of Śaivism. The earliest known ruler of this dynasty, Indravarman I, paid homage to Parameśvara who is described as the creator, sustainer and destroyer of all the worlds. The tutelary deity of the Gaṅga rulers was Gokarnasvāmi Śiva, installed on the crest of the mount Mahendra. In the preamble of their charters, they pray for the lotus feet of this great God.

In Uttera Tosāli or Utkala, Śaivism was in a flourishing state during this time. In the last quarter of the sixth century, Mahārāja Sri Śambhuyasa, the Mudgala king of this territory, was a devout worshipper Lord Śiva. Early in the second decade of the seventh century A.D. Utkala was occupied by king Saśānka of Karnasuvarna who was a devotee of Śaiva and a great patron of Śaivism. In the Ekāmbra Purāṇa we get repeated references to the building of a magnificent temple for the Lingam of Tribhubanesvara at Ekāmra by Saśānka.

149. Ekāmbra Purāṇa, Chs. 13, 48 and 50.
After Śaśānka, Śaivism found royal patronage under the Śailodbhavas of Kangoda-mañḍala. The early Śaiva temples of Bhubaneswar namely Parasurāmeśvara, Śatrughneśvara, Bharatēśvara, Śvarnajāleśvara and Lakshamaneśvara were built during this period.

Saktism

Regarding the evolution of Śaktism in Orissa in the period which immediately followed the fall of the Chedis, we have very scanty information. It is, however, the discovery of Bhadrak stone inscription¹⁵⁰ which throws dim light on the Brahmanical form of Hinduism in the 3rd century A.D. The reading of the name of the king in the epigraph has been controversial. According to D.C.Sircar the inscription was engraved by Mahārāja Gaṇa. But K.C.Panigrahi thinks that it was engraved by Mahārāja Śurasarmā. Infact, some portions of the inscription are damaged, and as such it has given rise to controversy with regard to its reading. Hence, we have followed the reading and interpretations of K.C.Panigrahi¹⁵². He reads that in the 8th regnal year of Mahārāja Śurasarmā three pieces of gold (the gold given being

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¹⁵². ibid, vol. XXXV, pp. 240-45.
80 paṇa) were settled with the honourable Mahākulapati Agnisarmā (Agni Sarmana) towards maintenance of the goddess Parnādevadi (Parna devati)\textsuperscript{153}. According to him, Rangali, the wife of Sri Pava, was the donor of the gift. Panigrahi observes, "Her name (Parna devati) indicates that she was a sylvan goddess. Even now, a goddess called Patarasuni (Goddess of leaves and jungle) is worshipped in the rural areas of Orissa". It is known to us from Khila Harivamsa\textsuperscript{154} that the Mother Goddess was worshipped as Aparnā and Nagna Śavari. These names undoubtedly indicate the non-Āryan aspects of the cult of the Mother Goddess. The reference to the goddess Parna devatī\textsuperscript{155} (meaning the leaf-clad) in the Bhadrak inscription indicates that in the 3rd century A.D. the aboriginal Mother Goddess found a definite place in the religious pantheon.

With the south Indian campaigns of Samudragupta in the 4th century A.D. the stream of Hinduism began to flow from the Northern India to Kośala and Kaliṅga. Consequently there was a fusion of the primitive non-Āryan elements and the Āryan Brahmanical thoughts of Saivism and Śaktism. The

\textsuperscript{153} Line 2 of the inscription, IHC, vol.XXXV, p.241.
\textsuperscript{154} Banarjea,J.N. Purānic and Tāntric Religion,1966, p.120.
\textsuperscript{155} The deity is analogous to Parasuni, Baluhuni and Bhadarathani which are still being worshipped all over Orissa.
primitive tree worship got itself mingled with the Brahmanical faith and made distinct contributions to the rise of Śaivism and Śaktism in Orissa. Infact, the linga worship emerged out of the primitive tree worship and the trunk of the tree or a post which was the symbol of the Divine Mother for the tribal people was accepted as the veritable Mother Goddess of the Āryan pantheon. Its most vital expression is noticed in the dense forest region of the Kalahandi district of Orissa which was known as Mahākāntāra\textsuperscript{156} or Mahāvana\textsuperscript{157} in the Gupta period. The tribal population of this locality obviously used to worship a pillar or a trunk of tree as Mother Goddess, but under strong Gupta influence there was a Hinduised conversion which made them believe that the 'Stāmbha' or pillar itself was no other than the Āryan Goddess (Īśvari) Umā. This fusion led to the rise of the Stambhesvari cult in the 5th century A.D. This is known to us from a set of copper plates\textsuperscript{158} discovered on the bank of the river Tel near the village Terasinga in the district of Kalahandi. The epigraph refers to Bhagavati Stambhesvari as a tributary deity of Mahārāja Tustikara whose mother Śri Śobhini Kaustubhesvari Rājajanani was also a devout worshipper of the Mother Goddess Stambhesvari. The grace of

\begin{verbatim}
158. EI, vol.XXX, pp.274-278.
\end{verbatim}
Bhagavati Stambheśvari has also been invoked in the last line (line 21) of the charter. It is interesting to note that the charter has been issued from a place called Parvatadvāra, which literally means gate-way to the mountains. In the inscriptions the Mother Goddess was worshipped by the hill tribes in forest, mountains and caves. It seems therefore that the Mother Goddess who was worshipped in the form of a 'Stamba' or a pillar by the non-Āryan tribes was enshrined in the locality of De-Bhogaka Kshetra; and the new ruler Tustikara under the influence of his mother donated the village Prastaravatāka of De-Bhogaka Kshetra to the Āryan priests of Kasyapa gotra named Ārya-Droṇa-Sarmā (line 8/9) obviously for the proper maintenance of the rituals dedicated to Stambheśvari. This epigraphical evidence gives us a clear proof of the fusion of the Āryan and non-Āryan elements in the Śakti worship of Orissa in the 5th century A.D.

In the course of the growth of Śakti worship in Orissa, the Mother Goddess was worshipped both in the form of a pillar and in anthropomorphic form along with the Pancharātra school of Vaishnavism, Lakulīsa and the Śaiva Siddānta School of Śaivism. The earliest known centre of Śaktism and Śakti
worship in its anthropomorphic form in Orissa was Viraja\textsuperscript{159} (Modern Jajpur in Cuttack district) on the bank of river Vaitarani. It is no wonder that under strong Gupta influence the first anthropomorphic forms of Mother Goddess in her aspect of Mahisasamardini Durga was enshrined as an icon in a temple near Jajpur which on archaeological grounds is assigned to this Gupta period\textsuperscript{160}.

In the post-Gupta period the Sarabhapuriyas of South Kosala and the Sailodbhavas of Kongoda emerged as two great royal houses which evolved from the aboriginal stock. The Sarabhapuriyas embraced Vaisnavism and the Sailodbhavas embraced Saivism in the 7th century of the Christian era; and they were deeply influenced by the Brahmanical forms of Hinduism.

\textsuperscript{159} The author of Mahabharata considered the river Vaitarani to be the heart of Kalinga (Ete Kalingah Kaunteya! Yatra vaitarani nadi) and refers to the river as the destroyer of all sins (Tata vaitarani gatvā sarva pāpa vimochanim).
\textit{Mahābhārata}, Vanaparva, XXCV.6.

The Viṣṇu Purāṇa, which was the product of the Gupta period also refers to Virajā as Nāvigayā, CHRJ, vol.IV, No.3/4, p.43.

In the Kubjika Tantra, Virajā is regarded as one of the 42nd centre of Sakti worship - Sirca, D.C. The Sāktā Pithás, p.19.

Jñānārnavā Tantra attaches equal importance to Virajā as a centre of Sakti worship, JRASB, Letters, vol.XIV, No.2948.

\textsuperscript{160} Please see the Chapter VII.
Tārānāth, the Tibetan chronicler and the Prajñā Paramitā Sutra lead N.K. Sahu to suggest that Orissa (Oḍivisa in Tārānāth's account) was the land of the origin of Mahāyānism. Buddhism had suffered a setback with the emergence of Khāravela in Kaliṅga. With the emergence of the Kushāna ruler Kanishka, there opened a period of brisk activities for the monks of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The galaxy of Buddhist scholars adorning Kushāna court caused their influence to be felt in the length and breadth of the country. Orissa which was under the influence of the Kushāna dominion could never have been away from the magic spell of Buddhism. It became a popular religion of Orissa and the different centres of Buddhism that sprang up at Tos'ali, Tamralipti, Ratnagiri, Ganiāpalli, caused the spread of the Mahāyānic doctrine.

The discovery of four Buddhist pillars of post-Ashokan period at Bhubaneswar, at Jayrampur in the district of Balasore and a monastic institution with Buddhistic images at Ganiāpalli suggest the continuity of the religion till the rise of the Bhauma-Kara.

161. Sahu, N.K. *Buddhism in Orissa*
Ganiāpalli in Bargarh Sub-division of Sambalpur district exposed two Buddha images and a monastic institution of 5th century A.D. One of the images is in Dhyāna pose bearing the characteristic features of classical Gupta art. The other is a Muchalinda Buddha seated in meditation on the coils of a serpent. At a little distance are seen large sized old bricks, stone mandapa with two broken pillars, and ruins of a big establishment of a monastery. There are a very large number of stones fragments of all sizes and shapes, including some clearly recognisable faces, two images (one seated and the other standing), and some limits of one-time images. And as the bricks and fragments of the bricks spread almost continuously from the Muchalinda shrine to this pile of stone ruins, it is justifiable to say that we have here a very large ancient establishment underground, with a considerable life, perhaps from the early centuries of this era to about 5th or 6th century A.D.

The discovery of a copper plate grant in 1960 from the village Jayarampur in the district of Balasore fills up to some extent the missing link in the history of Buddhism. The place which yielded the copper plate, a bronze image of Buddha and a chlorite image of Tārā is locally known as

165. For detail please see Ch.VIII.
166. Prachi Valley Report, p.143.
167. ibid.
168. ibid.
Ahutikunda. A local tradition relates that Kirāṭa Rāja of Mahābhārata performed sacrifice here and had his capital in this place\textsuperscript{169}. The extensive ruins of structures in different places of the village and the recovery of the Buddhistic remains justify the existence of a vast establishment in the area in the past.

The copper plate from the village issued by Mahāsāmanta Achyuta, a subordinate chief under the Mahārājādhirāja Śri Gopachandra, refers to the village Śvetabaliaka, the annual tax of which was assigned for maintenance of the deity Bhāgavat Āryavalokitesvara who was installed and worshipped by the Ārya Sangha of the Buddhist group. Palaeographically the copper plate grant is assignable to the 5th/6th century A.D.\textsuperscript{170}.

It is of great interest to note at this stage that after the decline of the Guptas several dynasties rose into prominence. Among them mention may be made of the Maukharies, Vīgrahās, and Chandras in Orissa. It was at this time that Mahārājādhirāja Gopachandra, son of Dhananāchandra, became an overlord in Bengal and the northern part of Orissa adjoining the Daṇḍabhukti mandala. The copper plate

\textsuperscript{169} OHRJ, vol. XI, No. 4, p. 206f.
\textsuperscript{170} ibid.
brings to light the fact of co-operation and interaction of Buddhism with Hinduism in the 5th and 6th centuries A.D.

From this inscription we further learn that the students who used to learn the Vedas and the Smritisāstras, lived in that Vihāra (institution). It proves that there existed no restrictions whatsoever for students of the Vedanta group for admission to that Buddhist institution. As a matter of fact, there was a full co-operation among the Buddhists and the Brāhmaṇas during the 5th and 6th centuries A.D. for which reason a Paramamāhesvara Mahārajadhīrāja like Gopachandra allowed his subordinate chief Achyuta to grant a village in his territory in favour of the Árya Sangha and the Buddhist deity, Avalokiteśvara.¹⁷¹

The extensive Buddhist remains of Orissa, assignable to the Bhaume period speak of a great flourishing of Tantric Buddhism. Different schools of the Tantric Buddhism gave birth to myriads of new gods and goddesses with numerous iconographic features. The Bhauma-Karas of Orissa and the Palas of Bengal in particular and other ruling dynasties of India in general popularised the religion through their noble patronization.

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