CHAPTER VI

WOMEN AS DEPICTED IN ORISSAN SCULPTURE
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The cultural heritage of Orissa dates back to the third century B.C., from which starts her dated history, i.e., from 261 B.C. when Asoka conquered Kalinga. Her sculpture forms an integral part of her cultural heritage. The Jaina caves at Khandagiri and Udayagiri, the Buddhist relics and monasteries at Ratnagiri, the Hindu temples at Bhubaneswar, Puri and Konarak and innumerable sculptures found in different parts of Orissa give a vivid evidence of Orissan sculpture. These sculptures provide a concrete expression of Orissa's genius in art and architecture, and its social life and religious developments. The main characteristic of the Orissan sculpture is decoration. The people of Orissa are great lovers of beauty and this has been reflected in their various sculptures. The temple architecture of Orissa is by and large an offering presented to the deity. The architects constructed the temples with the motive that a temple must be worthy of the deity. As such they filled the walls with exquisite carvings from the pavement to the pinnacle, providing a feast for the eyes and soul of the devotees from a distance.

The earliest Orissan sculpture found can be dated to the time of Asoka and such sculpture continued to the end of the Hindu rule in Orissa in 1568 A.D. The existing sculptures found in the different monuments cover a period of about two thousand years. They provide us with an insight into the life that existed when they were carved, along with the contemporary dress and ornaments. They have survived through the vicissitudes of time as Orissa continued to be a Hindu kingdom till 1568 A.D. The different Hindu rulers of this long period of Hindu supremacy seem to have completed with each other in the construction of a number of temples in their kingdoms. Series of monuments have been created in Orissa of which temples are the last links. The colossal figure of the forepart of an elephant carved on the top of the boulder containing Asoka's edicts at Dhauli about 8 kilometers from Bhubaneswar happens to be the earliest specimen of Orissan art.

The Orissan sculpture is a class by itself, known as the Kalinga type, though it is considered to be a sub-

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4 Ibid., p.20.
class of the Nagara style of North India. Sculptures on the temples are the product of a particular time and region. The temples of Lingaraj, Rajarani and Mukteswara are remarkable for their indigenous character and those are the products of the Kalinga school of art and architecture. The sculptors of Orissa seemed to have breathed life into stone with their superb workmanship executed on the faces of innumerable gods and goddesses, devotees, lovers, belles, soldiers and Nayikas and the like. The ancient Orissan sculptors had the special ability of depicting the various facial expressions on the face of the Buddha, a meditative look on that of the image of Tirthankara, a smiling expression on the face of a Vishnu image, a fierce look on some of the Hindu deities and a seductive look on a Nayika.

The most prominent sculptural ornamentation on the walls of all the Orissan temples is the carving of beautiful young girls. The Saktas consider femininity as the highest active principle of the universe. As such, the Devi receives supreme adoration. She takes innumerable

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7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., p.29.
9 Ibid.
forms, viz., the goddess of creation, of destruction, the Mother-goddess, the terrifying goddess fighting against evil, the goddess of illumination, and the goddess of knowledge and of liberation. To pay homage to her femininity, it is indispensable to decorate temples with figures of tender, voluptuous naribandha (panel of maidens). It is said "As a house without a wife, as frolic without a woman, thus without female figures the monument will be of inferior quality and bear no fruit."

A temple is not only a monument dedicated to God, it is a spiritual power-house, a power-dispenser for those who visit it in the right spirit. The figures of the beautiful Alasa-kanyas in all parts of the temple attract the soul of the created towards its creator.

The architects of the early Orissan temples followed textual instructions and decorated the walls of the temples with beautiful panels of Kanyas. The trend in the representation of these beautiful young maidens is to give her great importance.

12 Ibid., (I, 392-393).
13 Ibid., p. LIII.
* Alasa-Kanya - indolent or playful maiden (nayika), female figures in various poses decorating the exterior facade of the temple.
The ruins of the ancient fort of Sisupalgarh, situated approximately two kilometers to the east of Bhubaneswar, are another magnificent specimen of the secular monuments of Orissa in the fourth or third century B.C. Udayagiri and Khandagiri, mentioned in the epigraphic records as Kumari Parvata and Kumara Parvata respectively, are rich in rock-cut caves meant for Jaina ascetics. All those represent the earliest devotional architecture of Orissa. The earliest groups of the cave-abodes belonged to the period of Kharavela who ruled during the first century B.C. The cave-abodes are simple, small and meant to provide limited living accommodation to the Jaina-monks in the rainy season. These caves are now known as the Jaya-Vijaya Gumpha, Svaragapuri Gumpha, Manchapuri Gumpha, Rani Gumpha, Hati Gumpha, etc. The sculptures of the women found in the caves of Udayagiri and Khandagiri have been discussed earlier in detail.

Debala Mitra has given a completely different view about the sculpture found in Udayagiri and Khandagiri. She observes, "The early reliefs are the only peep-hole affording an inkling into the life that existed when they were carved. Contemporary dress and ornaments are 15 Vide Chapter II of the thesis, pp.68-74.
The reliefs also give a vivid picture of the lighter side of life like dance, music, and sports. It seems that the orchestra is formed by women and that dancing was their monopoly. The musical instruments depicted on stone are the mridanga, flute, harp and dhakka (varieties of the drum).

The political history of Orissa after Kharavela is rather hazy. This period is described as the Dark period of the Orissan history. No temple of the Gupta period has yet been discovered in Orissa, though the earliest Orissan temples bear the post-Gupta influences both in respect of art and architecture. A large number of sculptural and architectural specimens, survive like the temples found in Jajpur, Bhubaneswar and Puri. The earliest temples of Orissa which survived the ravages of time belong to the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. Some of those temples are the Lakshmanesvara, Bharatesvara and Satrughnesvara temples situated at Bhubaneswar. Those are in a dilapidated condition. The Parasuramesvara
temple was constructed somewhat later, but was of the type of the above three temples, having more refined sculptural details of Orissa. In the middle of the 8th century A.D. this temple was built. The pillared hall and the main temple contain sculptural pieces. The female figures on the two stone grills, one on each side of the doorways, represent a group of dancers and musicians playing on trumpet, flute and cymbals. All these figures are in motion and well-proportioned. The dancers are represented in difficult poses with twisting bodies.

The Parasuramesvara temple was followed by several others. All these temples, were constructed during the supremacy of the Hindu royal dynasties, viz., the Sailod-bhava, Bhauma, Somavamsi, Ganga and Suryavamsi dynasties that ruled in Orissa one after the other from the seventh to the sixteenth century A.D. The temples are built in all important centres of Orissa. However, the most remarkable temples are the temples of Parasuramesvara, Muktesvara, Vaital, Markandesvara, Rajarani, Brahmesvara and Lingaraja at Bhubaneswar and the Jagannath at Puri. The Surya Deul of Konarak constructed during the thirteenth century A.D. is the greatest, the most ambitious and the most stupendous monument of Orissa that excels the

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rest in beauty and grandeur. Konarak was the last great temple of the thirteenth century A.D. Gajapati Kapilendrādeva was a great general. The empire established by him extended from the river Ganga in the north to the river Kaveri in the south. But neither Gajapati Kapilendrādeva, nor his son Purusottamādeva, nor grandson Pratapradrādeva was a great builder, though a few temples were constructed during their reigns like the Kapilesvara at Bhubaneswar, the Dhavalesvara near Cuttack and the temple of Sakhigopal near Puri.

All the Orissan temples from the sixth century A.D. to the sixteenth century A.D. are decorated from the top to the bottom and the most significant decorative motifs are the female figures known as Alasa-Kanyās, women in idle mood or playful maidens (nāyikā). There are sixteen types of such maidens, viz., alasa (indolent), torana (learning in a doorway), mugdā (innocent simple girl), māninī (resentful, offended girl), dālamālikā (drawing down towards her the branch of a tree), padmāgandhā (smelling like a lotus), derpana (looking into a mirror), vīnyāsa (thoughtful and meditative), ketaki-baragā (one who adorns her hair with Ketaki flowers), mātrumūrti (mother with child), guṇthana (bashful girl

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displaying her back), Cāmara (holding a fly-whisk), nartaki (dancer with hands joined together above her head), Ṣukasaṅkā (playing with a parrot or mainā), nūpurapādikā (with one leg bent and pulling on ankle bells) and mārdalā (drummer). The author of the ancient text says that these sixteen maidens dwell in a building made with art. All of them are full of delicate beauty expressing in different ways their intense feelings of love, emotions and tenderness. As recommended by the Sāstras the indolent maiden is given names according to her moods. K. C. Panigrahi has mentioned that each of them is like a piece of love poem written on stone. These female figures found in the Orissan temples are conventional, i.e., a female leaning in a doorway, drawing down towards her a branch of a tree, holding babies, smelling a lotus, looking into a mirror, writing love letters, putting on ornaments or engaged in any other feminine pastimes. Yet they are not completely devoid of human sentiments. The exterior walls of the sanctum of Vaital Deul are of resplendent
beauty, a lush paradise filled with beautiful females and meandering creepers. The decoration of jangha is intended for paying homage to women. The female figures represented there are very attractive, charming and tempting. They are also graceful in their movements. They are found to be relaxed in pose, crossing the left leg behind the right. These female figures are of alasa-kanyas. In terms of execution the figures are characterised by a "soft plasticity of modelling, delicacy of features and perfect equipose, strongly reminiscent of the classical tradition. The body proportions of these Kanyas are perfect. They appear to be self-content and show no signs of emotions. They are isolated within the boundary of their niches. Their hair is arranged in a large chignon on one side of the head which resembles a large shell. In one case this chignon is arranged in tiers of snail-shell curls. The hairs of the female figures, found on the eighth century temples of Bhubaneswar, are tied or rolled-up on the top of the head. They used transparent garments. These female figures are found in numerous poses like holding a lotus, a cauri, a weapon and a parrot.

29 Ibid.
30 Mitra, D., Bhubaneswar, p.33.
One of the popular and interesting Padmagandha motifs is a female smelling the fragrance of a lotus flower. The long-stemmed lotus emerges from the lower left corner of the niche and crosses the Kanya in a diagonal curve to the upper right. The Kanya crosses her right leg dynamically so that her foot is firmly placed next to the root of the stem. She bends the stem with her left hand, rear the hip. She uses her uplifted right hand to hold the stem near the flower. This motif originally belonging to the ninth century A.D. has appeared on a detached sculpture at Cuttack, which is kept in the Orissa State museum. This motif was very popular in the early tenth century A.D. Those have appeared on the Muktesvara and Rajarani temples.

A number of alasa-kanyas in various seductive poses are found in the Gouri temple. They stand on lotus cushions and a lotus creeper forms a canopy over their head. Standard motifs like a woman removing her sandal, embracing a tree and looking into a mirror are found in the walls of the temple. There are a few new motifs, one of those having a most interesting theme is found in the representation of a Kanya clinging to a tree with one hand while trying to clutch her slipping garment with the other hand, while a mischievous monkey was trying to snatch from her. One can see both the frontal and the
profile charms of the Kanya, her necklace hanging on the lower contour of the breasts, the tasseled girdle fastened with a multipetalled buckle and the hair arranged in a big bun to one side of the head. Two small and very beautiful images are found on the gandi of the temple. A dancing Kanya gracefully balances on one foot with both arms uplifted in a dancing mudra while the other foot is moving with the rhythm of the dance. The second image is of an alasa-kanya holding a mirror.

The Muktesvar temple may be called the epitome of Orissan architecture, a dream in sandstone. The artist must have bestowed all his care and skill to make it a well proportioned model of Orissan architecture. It is the gem of Orissan architecture. The female figures carved on the exterior walls of Muktesvara temple are full of grace. They are in chaste poses. Most of the female figures are alasa-kanyakas, i.e., sālabhanjikā, the woman standing on a doorway, the Padmagandhā the

* Vide Appendix, Fig. No. 13.
35 Ferguson, J., History of India and Eastern Architecture, 1876, p.419.
** Vide Appendix, Fig. No. 14.
mischievous monkey snatching the lower garment of a female clinging to a tree. Female figures on this temple are also seen lifting up a foot to remove a thorn or adjusting a sandal and reaching down for cosmetics held by an attendant on a pallette. In the dālamālikā pose, the creeper or a branch of a tree bends over the head of a female figure to serve as a canopy. New motifs are also found on the walls, such as a mother breast-feeding her child, playing musical instruments, holding a parrot on the elbow. Female musicians appeared for the first time on the jangha of a temple at Bhubaneswar. All the images of the Kanyakas are extremely beautiful and charming. These figures are more rounded and proportionate than those found in the Vaitala temple. The figures are extremely graceful and provocative, the way the sculptor carved the necklace which hangs down to the lower contour of the big, rounded breasts. The hairstyle is a large chignon arranged to one side of the head and a jewelled tiara decorates the front of her head above the forehead. Here the images are more graceful than the figures found on the walls of the Gouri temple.

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* Vide Appendix, Fig. No.15.
** Ibid., Fig. No. 16.
*** Ibid., Fig. No. 17.
The female figures on the anartha-pāga of the lower jangha of the famous Rajarani temple are more graceful, taller, pleasingly seductive than their prototypes on the Muktesvara temple. These alasa-kanyas, in the pose of performing their daily duties, are more conscious of their beauty as well as sophistication. In addition to the traditional alasa-kanyā a new motif is found in which a peacock steals pearls from the hairdo of a woman clinging to a tree. The creeper which is used as a canopy for the alasa-kanyā is found with a large number of leaves. The ornaments found on the damsels are the same as found in the Muktesvara temple, except that the girdles are more artistic with strings of pearls hanging from the lowest strand. There is an extremely charming figure of a woman looking into a mirror while applying some paste, perhaps vermilion, to the parting of her hair. Another charming, yet terrifying, figure is that of a beautiful dancer holding a skull-cup along with a trident in her left hand and a drum in her up-lifted right hand. A new motif is found in the temple that of a female holding a young child.

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* Vide Appendix, Fig. No. 18.


** Vide Appendix, Fig. No. 19.
her uplifted hands, while the child reaches out to touch an ornament in her hair. Another delicate scene of a woman is also found. She is nursing a child seated on the thigh of her uplifted leg.

The female image plays a major role among the decorative motifs of the temple. The most significant female images found in the anuraha recesses of the upper jangha on the lateral projections of the pāga designs and on the baluster fittings of the gavāksa (window) of the Jagamohana are the traditional alasa-kanyās, such as śālabhanjikā, dālamālikā, woman in a doorway, the motif of a monkey tugging at her garments, looking into a mirror, playing with a maina bird or parrot or Šukasārikā motif. A number of female musicians who play musical instruments like the flute or the vēṇā and a number of female dancers are placed for the first time on the balusters filling the gavāksa (window). Queen Kolavati is found presenting beautiful women to the temple to perform dance and music for Lord Siva, the presiding deity of the temple. The inscription of the

* Vide Appendix, Fig. No. 20.

temple does not say whether these girls actually perform
dances before the deity or not. However, the image of a
female dancer holding a pīḍha roof with her uplifted
left hand on the gavāksa-mandana of the jagamohana
suggests that dance performances used to take place inside
the temple. The dance probably used to take place within
the jagamohana, as the female musicians and dancers are
placed on the balusters of the gavakṣa which became a
general phenomenon on most of the later temples. These
female figures are found to have been slender in form,
more animated, most graceful and conscious of their
feminine beauty with new facial features, the most
prominent being the sharp and pointed nose.

Figures of women do not dominate the overall
decorative motifs of Lingaraj temple, though numerous
alasa-kanyās are found on the pilasters of the rāha, on
the lateral flanks of the mundis, on the vertical bars
connecting the patta and vasanta mouldings of the
pābhāga and on the gavāksa-mandana of the jagamohana.
The traditional motifs of alasa-kanyās such as dālamālīka,
girding herself with a branch, the darpāṇa motif or

41 Ibid.
looking into a mirror, the \textit{\textsc{sukas\textregistered}rik\textregistered} motif of playing with a parrot, the \textit{\textsc{alsa}} pose of holding her hands above her head, the \textit{\textsc{nupurap\textregistered}dik\textregistered} motif of adjusting ankle-bells, the motif of holding a child on one hip, the motif of a monkey undressing a \textit{\textsc{kany\textregistered}} and a group of musicians playing on various instruments are found. High up on the temple walls is found one of the extremely charming and graceful female figures looking down while removing her garments. These motifs are chaster and simpler. They depict female figures putting on a number of ornaments like festoons hanging down from their girdle and pearls hanging down from their neck; Along with the \textit{\textsc{nupura}} they put on other ornaments on their legs and a scarf that hangs behind the shoulders. From the architectural and sculptural point of view, the Lingaraj temple is in no way inferior to the Sun Temple at Konarak.

Similarly the decorative motifs found on the exterior walls of the Parvati Temple are \textit{\textsc{alsa-kany\textregistered}s}. Under a canopy formed of meandering creepers the \textit{\textsc{kany\textregistered}s}

\begin{itemize}
  \item * Vide Appendix, Fig. No. 21.
  \item ** Ibid., Fig. No. 22.
\end{itemize}
are in relaxed poses either with legs crossed or one leg slightly uplifted and with their hair tied tightly at the back while a little is visible at the top resulting in a rounded appearance for the face similar to the images found in the thirteenth century temples. These female figures in graceful poses with musical instruments look attractive and full of life. The lower garments of the Kanyās are not transparent.

The majestic temple of Konarak, also known as the Black Pagoda, excels all the monuments of Orissa in beauty and grandeur. The celebrated temple was constructed during the reign of Narasimhadeva I (1238–1264 A.D.) in memory of his military achievements over a part of Bengal ruled by the Muslims. This is evident from the numerous depictions of the Rāja engaged in various activities, as well as countless battle scenes, carved out on the walls of the temple. It is said that 1200 craftsmen collected from all parts of Orissa were engaged in the construction of the massive temple which is highly

* Vide Appendix, Fig. No. 23.
** Ibid., Fig. No. 24.
decorated. T. E. Donaldson, referring to the construction of this great temple, observes, "The construction of the Surya Deul at Konarak was virtually a national undertaking, the temple intended not only as a sanctuary for the Sun God but also as an imposing tribute to Raja Narasimha's military prowess, with workmen recruited from all over Orissa." The great temple was constructed in the form of a gigantic ratha or wheeled chariot having beautifully carved twenty-four giant wheels and drawn by seven horses with beautiful ornamental coverings on their back. The only structure of the temple that has survived is the Jagamohana which is in fact with three doors. The doors of the Jagamohana are blocked up and its interior filled with sand. The main temple has collapsed; whatever remains of the colossal temple is richly carved. It attracts visitors from all corners of the world.

A number of extremely graceful and magnificent female musicians are found placed in the recesses separating the potalas on the Pidha roof of the Jagamohana of the temple as well as in the Mata mandapa. These musicians are comparable to any of the female figures found in any


* Vide Appendix, Fig. Nos. 25, 26, and 27.
other temple of Orissa. They exhibit supreme grace and dignity befitting their lofty position. They have jewellery like heavy necklaces, circular earings and alambikā (festoons) on the upper forehead. At the back of the head their hairs are tied in a tight chignon. Decorative tassels found on the hips and loose ends of their lower garments hang from the centre belt-buckle. Loose ends of scarves draped around the shoulders of the Kanyās and fluttering on either side of the body are often found hanging below the knees. At Konarak the genius of the architect and the sculptor combined to create a sanctuary in honour of the Sun god, the illuminator of the Universe. Even in its ruin it now illuminates India and her art and shines forth through the world as a momentous creation of human endeavour. Konarak is the last temple with sculptures of such a high order, after which no colossal temple was constructed. The entire sculptural scheme is dominated by erotic groups, superbly cut, once painted and now world famous.

49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
In all these temples mentioned above the graceful female figures are shown in various attractive poses and gestures and expressing various moods and experiences. They are in various poses like smelling a lotus flower, fondling a baby, observing her face in a mirror, playing with a parrot etc. Most of the female figures are extremely charming and graceful with their smiling faces, rhythmically inclined bodies, well proportioned figures and beautiful ornaments. It has been rightly observed that "The charming glances of their eyes have added life to the stones. The setting of ornaments on their bodies is neither so scanty as to ignore the importances of the ornament nor so plentiful as to ignore their natural beauty." Other human figures were also depicted showing daily life. Out of the four disciplines of life, viz., Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Moksha, various scenes of Kāma were depicted on the temple walls. Mithuna figures or erotic scenes are also depicted on the temple. Those are shown engaged in sexual intercourse in different poses, both fanciful and normal. The reason for exhibiting these figures on the walls of the temples cannot be stated with any degree of certainty. However, these figures are

54 Ibid., p.475.
found all over India from the second century A.D., in Mathura up to the tenth century A.D., and in Khajuraho it continued up to the seventeenth century A.D. The Vishnu Dharmottara mentioned that love scenes which create a pleasant sensation may be represented in temples and palaces. H. K. Mahatab observes that "when Hinduism and Buddhism came down to the low level of 'Tantrism' it was believed that passion can be controlled not by suppressing it, but by feeding it to its full satisfaction. Art and literature were influenced accordingly. Panigrahi is of the opinion that these erotic sculptures first appear in the temples of the Bhauma rulers, i.e., during the eighth-ninth century A.D. when Mahayana Buddhism fostered Tantrism. He is of the opinion that their presence on the temples of Orissa is due to the Tantric influence. The Silpa Prakash justifies the depiction of amorous couples on the temples in the following words:

"Desire is the root of the universe. From desire all things are born. Primordial matter (mula-bhûte) and

all beings are re-absorbed through Desire. Without Siva and Sakti creation would be a mere illusion. Without the action of Desire (Kāmakriyā) there would be nā life, no birth and no death (1.498-499)."

Desire is a necessary and sacred urge for creation; as such its representation on the temple walls was desirable. Mithuna is a sexual union, which is the cause of intense pleasure, the cause of all living creatures and the root of the world, which produce the third, the world of manifestation. Sex is a part of life, religion too forms a part of life. Life cannot be separated from religion; as such in Hinduism there is no reason to hide anything. Buddhism has separated the spiritual from the sexual activities, but this theory of Buddhism too underwent a change after Tantrajana crept into the religion. The mithuna images were carved to illustrate as well as conceal the secrets of the doctrine laid down in a yantra underneath the sculptures. This yantra should not be revealed to those who have not been initiated yet. The yantra consists of a standing linga and of sixteen triangles, grouped in conjunction with the

60 Ibid., p. LIV.
linga. The linga is Siva and the triangles are Matrkas. The representation of Yantra is compulsory in the Siva and Sakti temples. The yantra was considered powerful and the mere sight of it would destroy all obstacles coming on the way of Sadhana. It had to be concealed from the eyes of the people and for this reason mithuna images were placed over it to give delight to people (11-599). People were allowed to be delighted to see the sexual images which were accepted as a sacred law of nature and had to be worshipped with great respect.

In the Tirthesvara temple near Kotitirtha pond in Bhubaneswar, a female motif placed at a certain site generally represents cult images. She sits on the ground with her legs spread wide apart to display her yoni (female organ) for the religious ceremony. A dwarf attendant stands beneath her yoni, preparing it for yoniabhiseka. It is a ritual called Kumāri-pujā or astakamakala-prayoga which is described in the Kaulachudamani. This suggests a tantric motif of decoration. Another female figure that appears in the west flank of the rāha places one leg on a stool, casually exhibiting her joni to which an attendant is applying cosmetics in between

her legs. Such *yoniabhiseka* motifs too appear on the Gauri, Rajarani and Brahmesvara temples. The eight stages of ritual for love-making appear in the Varahi temple at Chaurasi in a series of eight erotic scenes, viz., *Vasikarana* or bringing the Kumari under control, *sammoha*, enchanting her; *akarsana* and *ucchatana* or attracting and preparing her for the sexual union; *yoniabhiseka* or consecration of the female organ; *purascarana*, the preliminary action of the sexual union; *rajpana* or drinking the raja; *prastaya*, or entering and *nivriti* or return to the normal state. It would appear that this particular Varahi temple was associated with sex rituals of the type practised by the Kaula sect and the Somavamsi rulers of Orissa were followers of such a cult as all their records commence with several verses praising the pursuit of love.

The appearance of these erotic scenes in the early temples of Orissa are rare whereas they appear in large numbers in the later temples, particularly in the matchlessly magnificent Konarak temple. These erotic

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63 Banerjea, N., *The Varahi Temple at Chaurasi*, In V. V. Mirashi Felicitation Volume.

figures of Konarak have received greater attention as well as greater criticism than any other decorative motif.

The age of the great temples was over after the construction of the Konarak temple in the middle of the thirteenth century A.D. In this connection Thomas E. Donaldson has rightly said, "With the decline of the Ganga supremacy the creative force of the Orissan artist becomes rapidly exhausted." The later rulers added structures like nāta-mandiras and bhoga mandapas to the existing temples. The Madalāpāṇji reveals that Kapilendradeva in his fifteenth regnal year constructed the compound wall of the outer premises of the Jagannath temple at Puri. Purusottamadeva constructed the bhoga mandapa of the Jagannath temple. In the later part of the fifteenth century Anangabhimadeva III constructed a Jagannath temple at Varanasi-Kataka.

Thus, female figures as decorative motifs are found in all the temples of Orissa. The number, placement

and size vary from temple to temple. Panigrahi suggests that many of these female figures represent the conventional poetical ideas found in the Sanskrit literature. Kalidasa's Meghada, and Malavikagnimitra and the Katha Sarita Sagara mentioned that the Asoka tree blossoms at the touch of the feet of a beautiful woman or when she embraces the Asoka tree. Panigrahi says that this conventional poetical idea has been represented in stone by the ancient sculptors of Orissa. Panigrahi further remarks that the sculptors of Orissa have depicted on stone certain well known poetical ideas prevalent during that period in order to embellish their creations. The sculptors were inspired by the beauty of these ideas while they were executing them on stone. Panigrahi further opines that these sculptors evince no desire to depict the real life of the current society in which they lived.

The women occupied an exalted position in the society. There was no purdā system. Women appeared in public and accompanied their husbands to religious

69. See also a Coomaraswamy, Yaksa, I, (Washington, 1928), pp. 32-34.
69. In the Tantrasara, even the breath, laughter, song, conversation and embrace of a woman brings different trees into bloom.

70. Ibid., p. 435.
performances and festivals. Some of them were accomplished in all fields of life. They even know elephant driving and were competent enough to fight against the men and animals.

The female figures depicted on the temple walls give a vivid picture of their engagement in some kind of feminine pastime in their idle hours. They are also shown as having human sentiments, in most if not all cases. In the erotic sculptures too the female figures which appear are well shaped and charming. All the instrument players appearing on the temples are women. These figures give an idea of the garments which they used, being sometimes heavy and sometimes light. They give an idea of the different type of hairdos of that period. All these female figures are found with full sets of ornaments like ear-rings, bangles, necklaces, tiaras in rare cases, and such other ornaments which were used by the ladies in the society.

Depiction of the female figure as a sensuous and graceful being, as beauty personified in the words of Donaldson, in the most sacred edifices like the temples is an act of paying homage to the women. Long ago did

Indian art recognise the auspicious nature of woman.
The image of a female has been placed at the entrance of a temple to protect the temple from evil spirits. As per the Vedic ritual no sacrifice could be performed without the presence of the sacrificer's wife. It is said in the Ramayana that when Rama-chandra performed the horse sacrifice in the absence of Sita, he was obliged to have a golden Sita in lieu of the live one and then performed the sacrifice. The Silpa-sastra too corroborates the above and mentions that the architect must be accompanied by a girl or a courtesan while performing the sacrificial offerings. The presence of a woman is a must during the purascarana rite, mentioned in the Tantrasara.

Woman is conspicuous as she symbolizes fertility and because she is beautiful. Beauty too symbolizes abundance or fertility and auspiciousness. Beauty is offspring. It seems from all these that women enjoyed a respectable position in the society.

Thus it is to be seen that the women are abundantly depicted in Orissan sculpture. Right from the sculptures

74 Satapatha Brahmana, (XIII, 8.1.13).
of Kharavela's reign in the 1st century A.D. there is hardly any monument in which figures of women have not been depicted. A close study of those figures indicates the position of women in the society during that period. It appears that their position was more or less at par with that of men. Otherwise the sculptors would not have taken so much of care in depicting them in such a faithful manner.