PREFACE

There is a saying that, "Man without religion is just like ship without compass". That means religion and religious faith are important aspect of the life of the people of India. Odisha is not an exception from it.

Odisha, the holy land of Lord Jagannatha has remained sacred through ages where various religious faiths flourished and prospered. For the study of religion we have large number of inscriptions both private as well as official in the form of copper plate grants issued by the royal dynasties and their feudatories beginning from the Māṭharas (350 A.D.) to the end of the Somavārśīs (1110 A.D.) throwing light on the political and cultural history of Odisha. But some inscriptions supply us an ample information about different religions like Jainism, Buddhism, Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, Śaktism and minor religious cult like Sun worship, Nāga cult, Gaṇapati cult and Skanda-Kārttikeya cult which existed in Odisha during the period of our study.

The study of Odishan inscriptions started for the first time in 1784 with the foundation of Asiatic Society by the British and other European scholars. In 1857 the eminent scholar like James Prinsep deciphered the
Special Edict of Asoka at Dhauli and Hathigumpha inscription of Khāravela which started the age of scientific study of epigraphy as well as paleography of Odishan inscription. After that the Archaeological Survey of India was established to collect the epigraphic records and their decipherment under the direct supervision of Alexander Cunningham as the Director General of this department (1871-75). In 1872 Indian Antiquary was published from Bombay for the epigraphic study of Eastern Gaṅga dynasty of Kaliṅganagara in the volume of this journal. In the year 1888 J. Burgess, the than Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India started an official journal entitled Epigraphia Indica, intended to specially for the publication of inscriptions. The credit for decipherment of numerous epigraphic records is due to scholars like A. Cunningham, E. Hultzsch, J.F. Fleet, L.D. Barnett, Sten Konow, Bhagwanlal Indraji, R.L. Mitra, H.P. Sastri, M.M. Chakravarti, N.N. Basu, R.D. Banerjee, R.G. Basak, D.C. Sircar and many others.

In 1945-46 the Kaliṅga Historical Research Society was established under the patronage of Maharaja R.N. Singdeo of Patna and Maharaja P.K. Deo of Kalāhāṇḍi and published the Journal of the Kaliṅga Historical Research Society.

In 1958 the Odisha State Museum was established and published its Journal i.e. Odisha Historical Research Journal. From that time the
collection, decipherment, editing and publication of a large number of inscriptions have been made by Odishan scholars in Journals such as Journal of Andhra Historical Research Society, Journal of Bihar and Odisha Research Society, Indian Historical Quarterly, Journal of the Kaliṅga Historical Research Society and Odisha Historical Research Journal etc.

The study of religions have been made by some eminent scholars like Dr. N.K. Sahu, L.N. Sahu, B.C. Pradhan, J.K. Sahu, H.C. Das, B. Das, H.K. Parija, P.K. Mishra, J. Pattanaik, S.C. Panda, K.C. Mishra, B. Pradhan and others. Their study of the subject is more or less in connection with this work. But no such attempt has been made so far by any scholar for the epigraphic study of religious history of Odisha separately.

The work entitled, “Religious study of Odishan inscription from 350 A.D. to 1110 A.D.” has been divided into nine chapters.

Chapter-I on INTRODUCTION deals with the importance of inscription, occasion and place of inscription, exaggeration in inscription, scientific study, Odishan inscription in general, classification, cultural study, merits and demerits of inscription.

Chapter-II on ‘POLITICAL HISTORY OF ODISHA FROM 350 A.D. TO 1110 A.D.’ deals with the Historical Geography of Kaliṅga, Utkala,
Tošāla, Koṅgoḍa, Oḍra, South Kośala and Trikaliṅga and the Political History of the Māṭharas of Kaliṅga, Nala and Śarabhapurīyas of South Kośala, Eastern Gaṅgas of Kaliṅga, Śailodbhavas of Koṅgoḍa, Bhaumakaras of Tošāla and their feudatories like the Bhaṇjas of Khiṅjali maṇḍala, the Śulkis of Kodālaka maṇḍala and the Tuṅgas of Yamagarta maṇḍala and the Pāṇḍuvarāṇīs-Somavārāṇīs of South Kośala and Utkala.

Chapter-III on 'RELIGION IN EARLY ODISHA' deals with Jainism, Buddhism, Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Śaktism in various manifestation like cult of Mahiśāmardinī Durgā, cult of Stambhesvarī, cult of Cauṣaṭhi Yoginīs, cult of Saptamātrukās and the cult of Kāpālikas.

Chapter-IV on 'BUDDHISM AND JAINISM' deals with its origins and developments in Odisha on the basis of epigraphic evidences.

Chapter-V on 'ŚAIVISM' deals with its origins and developments in Odisha on the basis of epigraphic evidences.

Chapter-VI on 'VAIṢṆAVISM' deals with its origins and developments in Odisha on the basis of epigraphic evidences.

Chapter-VII on 'ŚAKTISM' deals its origins and developments in Odisha on the basis of epigraphic evidences. Here in this chapter different manifestation of Śakti has been discussed like the cult of Stambheśvarī, cult of Mahiśāmardinī Durgā, cult of Saptamātrukās, cult of Cauṣaṭhi Yoginīs and cult of Kāpālikas.
Chapter-VIII on 'MINOR RELIGIONS' deals with Sun worship, Nāga cult, Gaṇapati cult and Skanda-Kārttikeya cult in Odisha on the basis of epigraphic evidences.

Chapter-IX on 'CONCLUSION'