

Patronage of Viṣṇuism in Odisha from c. 3rd century BCE to c. 13th century CE: An epigraphic and iconographic analysis

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Abstract

The theme of this chapter is based on the patronage of the Viṣṇuism in Odisha from c. 3rd century BCE to c. 13th century CE. A thorough analysis of different copper-plates and stone inscriptions along with the iconographic and architectural developments of different dynasties of Odisha have been done in order to understand the origin, continuity, development and downfall of the Viṣṇuism in Odisha. Discussions will be done how the royal patronage played a key role to give it a status as major religion. It will also focus on how Viṣṇuism was continued along with the other contemporary religious sects like Buddhism, Śaivism and Śaktism during the different dynastic periods in Odisha. Thorough discussions will be done on about the process of cult assimilation and how the autochthonous deity was became the state deity, the Lord Jagannatha.

Keywords: patronage, devotees, *agrahāra*, epithet

Introduction

Rock Edict XIII of Aśoka has the evidence about the existence of Brāhmaṇas along with the Śramaṇas in Kāliṅga during the c. 3rd century BCE. Hāthigumphā inscription of Khāravela (c. 1st century BCE) shows that king Khāravela was worshipping the deities of all religious sects and he had built temples for poly-sectarian groups. Also the existence of an image of goddess Lakṣmī over the gateways of the Ananta Gumphā strengthens the logic about the existence of Viṣṇuism in Odisha during c. 1st century BCE^[1].

Also Mātharas and Piṭrbhaktas of Kāliṅga (south part of Mahendra Mountain, c.364-540 CE) were the great patrons of Lord Viṣṇu (*parama-bhāgavata*). Nalas (possibly the second half of the c. 5th century CE) of western Odisha (Sambalpur, Sundargarh, Kalahandi and Bolangiri districts of modern Odisha) were loyal devotees of Lord Viṣṇu. Śailodbhavas (c. 7th century CE to c. 8th century CE) of northern Odisha had also given their contributions for the flourishing of Viṣṇuism. During the reign of the Sarabhaparīyas of Dakṣiṇa Kosala (c. 7th century to early c. 8th century CE) it was spread in north-western parts of Odisha. Due to the rapid spread of the Śaivism and Tāntric rituals and also continuous development of the Śaivism, from c. 8th century to c. 12th century there was negligible growth of the Viṣṇuism in Odisha^[2].

Viṣṇuism in Odisha was developed along with the synthesis of other contemporary religious sects like Buddhism, Śaivism, Śaktism and Tāntrism. After c. 12th century CE, during the reign of Imperial Gaṅgas and Sūryavarmāśis patronage for the Viṣṇuism was increased.

Observation of Inscriptions

Mātharas

Māthara king Prabhañjanavarman^[3] (Kāliṅga; c. 5th century CE)^[4] was a worshiper of Bhagavat-svāmi-Nārāyaṇa. The grant was issued from Simhapura. The village Niṅgōṇḍi was granted in favour of brāhmaṇas of different *caraṇas* and *gōtras*. The purpose of the grant was to glorify his family (Mātharas). It was an *agrahāra* but the natives of the village had to pay the tax in cash (*hiraṇya*) and share of the produce (*mēya*) to the donees. The royal patron was a Vaiṣṇavite and the gift was an *agrahāra* village. Tax in form of cash and grain was levied on it.

Māthara (Kāliṅga) king Anantaśaktivarman^[5] (possibly belonged to c. first half of the 5th century CE) was a great worshiper and devotee on the lotus feet of the Lord Nārāyaṇa. The grant was issued from Vijayapura in favour of the families of numbers of brāhmaṇas. It was addressed to the inhabitants of Āndōreppa (village). It was a tax free *agrahāra*. Earlier the village was granted by Āryyaka-Śaktibhattāraka. The royal donor was a devotee of Lord Viṣṇu. The gifted village was issued second time.

Anantaśaktivarman^[6] (Mātharas of Kāliṅga; c. first half of the 5th century CE) was a devotee of Lord Nārāyaṇ and he was entitled by the sectarian epithet of *paramadaivat*. The order was addressed from the Victorious Camp Simhapura

³ S. Tripathy, 'Niṅgōṇḍi Grant of Prabhañjanavarman' *IO*, Vol. I, New Delhi, Motilala Banarsidass, 1997, pp. 92-94.

⁴ T. E. Donaldson, *Hindu Temple Art of Orissa*, Vol. I, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1985, pp. 24-25. The king Prabhañjanavarman I (c. 456-471 CE) and Prabhañjanavarman II (c. 521-536 CE) were the Mātharas.

⁵ S. K. Acharya, 'Andhavaram Plates of Anantaśaktivarman, Year 14', *Copper-plate Inscriptions of Odisha: A Descriptive Catalogue (Circa Fourth Century to Sixteenth Century CE)*, NewDelhi, D.K. Printworld, 2014, pp.14-15.

⁶ S. K. Acharya, 'Madras Museum Plates (or Sakunaka Plates) of the Anantaśaktivarman, Year 28', *Copper-plate Inscriptions of Odisha: A Descriptive Catalogue (Circa Fourth Century to Sixteenth Century CE)*, NewDelhi, D.K. Printworld, 2014, pp.15-16.

¹ N. Satapathy, *Religious Life in Orissa: A Study of the Interrelation of Cults*, Calcutta, R. N. Bhattacharya, 2000, pp. 51-53.

² H. v. Stietencron, 'Advent of Viṣṇuism in Orissa', in Eschmann. A. *et al* Eds., *The Cult of Jagannath and the regional Tradition of Orissa*, New Delhi, Monohor, 1986, pp.1-24.

in favour of Durggaśarman and Nāgaśarman (two brāhmaṇa brothers with Kātyāyana-*gōtra* and Taittirīya *śākhā*). The gifted village Sakuṇaka was an *agrahāra*. The royal donor was affiliated to Vaiṣṇavism and the gift was a tax free *agrahāra* issued in favour of the brāhmaṇa donees for the development of the religion.

Pitribhaktas

Umāvarman ^[7] (Pitribhaktas; c. 360-395 CE) ^[8] was a *Paramadaivat*. Village Kuttura (division of the Mahēndra-*bhōga*) was a tax free *agrahāra*. It was issued from Sunagara in favour of Khallasvāmin (a brāhmaṇa). The name of the gifted village was Kuttura (division of the Mahēndra-*bhōga*). The royal donor was a devotee of the Lord Viṣṇu.

King Nandaprabhañjanavarman ^[9] (Pitribhaktas; c. 480-498 CE ^[10]; Southern Odisha) was entitled by the religious epithet of *Paramabhāgavata*. The grant was issued from Sārapalli in favour of Hariścandravāmin (a Brāhmaṇa). The donee was a resident of Akṣat-*āgrahāra*. The name of the gifted village was Deyavāta and it was a tax free *agrahāra*. Śambhuyaśas ^[11] (Mudgala family of Northern Odisha; Possibly Gupta Year; c. 555. CE) ^[12] was *Paramadaivata*. He had issued the royal grant from Hāndaka in favour of Śarvakuṇḍadatta (a brāhmaṇa). The name of the granted village was Kannirdhaka (located in Antarakulākoṇa district).

Eastern Gaṅgas

King Hastivarman ^[13] (Eastern Gaṅgas; c. 577 CE) ^[14] had granted this grant at the request of Buddhamañci (the *bhogika*). He was a devotee of the lord Gokarṇṇasvāmi located on the Mount Mahendra. Possibly the Lord was his family deity. The royal order was issued in favour of Gokarṇṇasvāmi located on the Mount Mahendra Raṇabhītodaya. The name of the gifted village was Rohaṇaki located in Varāhavartinī-*viṣaya* of Kaliṅga. The donated items were, six *halas* of agricultural land with *niveśanas* (houses meant for that). The donation was made for the Lord Nārāyaṇ of the granted village Rohanaka. It was a *devāgrahāra* (gift for the God) and was given for conducting rituals like *sattra*, *bali*, and *caru* and for the renovation of dilapidated shrine. It was a permanent and rent free *devāgrahāra*. The king was entitled by the sectarian epithet of *Paramamāheśvara*.

Śailodbhava

According to the Tekkali Plates of Madhyamarāja III ^[15] (Śailodbhabas of Koṅgada; palaeographically it is dated to c. 8th century CE) ^[16], the king had achieved the boon from the goddess Laksmī. The same inscription has the reference that Madhyamarāja III was compared with the Lord Nārāyaṇa. The king was a devotee of the Lord Nārāyaṇa and goddess Laksmī.

Bhauma-Karas

Queen Tribhuvanamahādevī ^[17] (Bhaumas of Toṣālī; c. 894 CE) had issued the grant from *Guhadeva-pāṭikā* at the request of Śāśilekhā (Vrāgadi-family of Virāṭa-lineage). She was the queen of the king Mahāmaṇḍalādhipati Maṅgalakalaśa. The grant was issued for the construction of the temple Nānneśvara (based on her father's name as Śri-Nanna). Name of the two gifted villages were the Koṭṭapurā and the Nānneśvara-tala-*pāṭaka*. Both the villages were located in Daṇḍabhukti-*maṇḍala*. It was given for the religious merit of the late father of Śāśilekhā. It was a rent free gift. One part of the shares was for the offering of ablation, sandal paste, and for the *bali* and *caru* of lord Umā-Maheśvara. The same share was also for the repairing of the temple and providing *sattra* and garments to the mendicants associated with the shrine. The second part of the share was given for the food and garments to the Brāhmaṇas. And the third part of the shares was given for the food and clothes of mendicants and others those were connected to the temple. The fourth part of the shares was for the maintenance of the family of *dānapatis* or brāhmaṇas. The royal woman donor was entitled with the epithets like *Parameśvarī* and *Paramavaiṣṇavī*. So the queen was a devotee of Lord Viṣṇu. It was a multipurpose grant given to both the religious institution and to the brāhmaṇas.

Bhañjas of the Khiṅjali-maṇḍala

Raṇaka Śatrubhañja-deva ^[18] (the Bhañjas of the Khiṅjali-maṇḍala; possibly dated to c. late 9th century CE) ^[19] was a *paramavaiṣṇava* (devotee of Lord Viṣṇu). The royal order was issued from Dhṛtipura in favour of Śatrubhaṇa Golaśarman (an immigrant from Ayodhyāpura (in Madhyadeśa; and a native of Hiṅgugā). The name of the gifted village was Tavoḍḍāgrāma Khiṅjali-maṇḍala. The king was a devotee of Lord Viṣṇu. The donee was a brāhmaṇa and the donated item was a village.

⁷ S. Tripathy, 'Dhavalapeta Plates of Mahārājā Umāvarman' *IO*, Vol. I, New Delhi, Motilala Banarsidass, 1997, pp. 108-109.

⁸ N. K. Sahu, *History of Orissa*, Cuttack, Nalanda, 1981, p.68.

⁹ S. K. Acharya, 'Chicacole (Kaliṅga) Plates of Nandaprabhañjanavarman', *Copper-plate Inscriptions of Odisha: A Descriptive Catalogue (Circa Fourth Century to Sixteenth Century CE)*, NewDelhi, D.K. Printworld, 2014, p. 7.

¹⁰ N. K.Sahu, *History of Orissa*, Cuttack, Nalanda, 1981, p.68.

¹¹ S. Tripathy, 'Erbang Plate of Śambhuyaśas, Year 235', *IO*, Vol. I, New Delhi, Motilala Banarsidass, 1997, pp. 180-181.

¹² N.K.Sahu, *History of Orissa*, Cuttack, Nalanda, 1981, p. 89.

¹³ S. K. Acharya, 'Narasīngapalli Plates of Hastivarman, Year 79', *Copper-plate Inscriptions of Odisha: A Descriptive Catalogue (Circa Fourth Century to Sixteenth Century CE)*, NewDelhi, D.K. Printworld, 2014, pp. 113-114.

¹⁴ N. K. Sahu, *History of Orissa*, Cuttack, Nalanda, 1981, p. 84.

¹⁵ S. Tripathy, 'Tekkali Plates of Madhyamarāja III', *IO*, Vol. I, New Delhi, Motilala Banarsidass, 1997, pp. 272-274.

¹⁶ T. E. Donaldson, *Hindu Temple Art of Orissa*, Vol. I, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1985, p. 28. The king Madhyamarāja I (*alias* Ayaśobhīta) was ruling during c. 670-700 CE.

¹⁷ S. Tripathy, 'Baud Grant of Tribhuvanamahādevī, Year 158, Plate A', *IO*, Vol. II, New Delhi, Motilala Banarsidass, 2000, pp. 161-166.

¹⁸ S. K. Acharya, 'Badhigam Plates (B) of Śatrubhañja, Year 14', *Copper-plate Inscriptions of Odisha: A Descriptive Catalogue (Circa Fourth Century to Sixteenth Century CE)*, New Delhi, D.K. Printworld, 2014, pp. 292-293.

¹⁹ N. K. Sahu, *History of Orissa*, Cuttack, Nalanda, 1981, p. 137; T. E. Donaldson, *Hindu Temple Art of Orissa*, Vol I, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1985, p. 218. According to the author the king Śatrubhañja I (?), Śatrubhañja II (*alias* Maṅgalarāja) and Śatrubhañja III (*alias* Tribhuvanakalaśa II, c. 934 CE) were different rulers of the Khiṅjali-maṇḍala Bhañjas.

Queen of Śilābhañjadeva ^[20] (a *paramavaiṣṇava*), Saṅgrāmamahādevī (Bhañjas of the Khiñjali-maṇḍala; possibly dated to c. late 9th century CE) ^[21] had issued this grant from Dhṛtipura in favour of Lord Vāsudeva, a free-feeding house (a *sattra*) and learned brāhmaṇas. The name of the gifted village was Ṭaṭarikelā (located in Dakṣiṇapalli division of Khiñjali-Maṇḍala). The grant was divided into three different parts (*trija-bhāga*). Two parts were given to the temple of the lord Vāsudeva (one for offerings and rituals for the deity and other was for feeding the teachers and students, residing in the temple). The third part was gifted to the brāhmanaṣas from different areas. The purpose of the grant was for the religious merit of the donor and his parents. The royal donor was entitled by the religious epithet of *paramavaiṣṇava* (devotee of lord Viṣṇu).

King Raṇabhañjadeva ^[22] (Bhañjas of the Khiñjali-maṇḍala; possibly dated to c. early 10th century CE) ^[23] had issued this royal order from Dhṛtipura in favour of Bhaṭṭaputra Trivikramanandi, an immigrant from Catuvde. The name of the gifted village was Vādhamaśarā (located in Tulesiṅga viṣaya of Khiñjali-Maṇḍala). The royal patron was entitled by the sectarian epithet of *paramavaiṣṇava* (devotee of lord Viṣṇu).

Netṭabhañjadeva-Prthivīkalaśa ^[24] (Bhañja of Khiñjali-maṇḍala; presumably dated to c. 10th century CE) ^[25] had issued the royal order from Vañjulvaka. The donee was Vañnika Aichadata, migrant from Tribhuvanapura (of Varendri). The name of the gifted village was Guṇḍapāṭaka. The motive behind the land grant in favour of a *vañnika* (merchant) has not given. The king was entitled by the sectarian epithet of *paramavaiṣṇava* (devotee of lord Viṣṇu). The royal patron was a Vaiṣṇvite and the donee was a merchant.

Later Bhañjas

Netṭabhañjadeva ^[26] (Later Bhañjas; possibly dated to c. 10th

century CE) ^[27]? had issued the grant from Khollipāṭi. The Aṭaigrāma (village) of Vāseva-khaṇḍa was gifted to donee Akṣapaṭali Dāmodaraśarman, a migrant from Harapura. The donor was a *Paramavaiṣṇava* (a devotee of Viṣṇu). The patron was affiliated to Viṣṇusm.

Salonabhañja ^[28] (Later Bhañjas) ^[29] had issued the grant from Gandharavāḍi of Svarnnapura. The village Nayaḍāgrāma (situated in Khātiyā-viṣaya of Gandharavāḍi-maṇḍala) was gifted to Mahādeva (a brāhmaṇa) and a migrant from Madhyadeśa. The donee was well versed in Tarka, Vedānta and the Vedas. He was also a poet, an *upaśani* and a good minister. So the donee was a teacher with multi-talents. King was a *Paramavaiṣṇava* (devotee of Viṣṇu).

Viṣṇuism of South Kośala

Nalas

Skandavarman ^[30] (Nala family; c. 5th century CE) ^[31] had installed the foot prints of Lord Viṣṇu for worshiping. He was a devotee of Lord Viṣṇu. The royal order was issued from Puṣkarī. He had gifted some land or village along with some amount of money for a *sattra*, for the feeding of the ascetics, brāhmaṇas and destitute. The purpose of the gift was to provide free foods not only to brāhmaṇas but also to the ascetics (of all religious groups) and destitute (common people). The item was gifted both in the form of land and money. The purpose of the donation was for the flourishing of the Viṣṇism.

Śarabhapurīyas

King Narendra ^[32] (Śarabhapurīya; possibly dated to c. 500-525 CE) ^[33] had issued the grant from Tilakeśvara. He was a great devotee of Bhagavat (Viṣṇu). Earlier the village Keśavaka (located in Cullāḍasīmā-bhoga) was granted by the *paramabhaṭṭāraka-pāda* in favour of Bhāśrutasvāmin. The natives of the village had been ordered to pay the donee all taxes like *bhoga*, *bhāga*, *dhānya* and *hiranya*. The donor was titled by *Paramabhāgavata*. The purpose of the grant was for the religious merit of both the *paramabhaṭṭāraka-pāda* (overlord) and the donor.

Narendra ^[34] (a Śarabhapurīya ruler; c. 500-525 CE) ^[35] had issued the grant from Śarabhapura. The grant was issued in favour of the Temple of the Lord Śrīharasvāmin (situated at

²⁰S. K. Acharya, 'Tatarkela Plates of Śilābhañjadeva, Year 19', *Copper-plate Inscriptions of Odisha: A Descriptive Catalogue (Circa Fourth Century to Sixteenth Century CE)*, New Delhi, D.K. Printworld, 2014, pp.297-299.

²¹T. E. Donaldson, *Hindu Temple Art of Orissa*, Vol I, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1985, p. 218. According to the author the king Śilābhañjadeva I (alias Āṅgaḍi; c.?), Śilābhañjadeva II (alias Tribhuvanakalaśa I; c.?), and Śilābhañjadeva III were the kings of the Bhañjas of Khiñjali-maṇḍala.

²²S. K. Acharya, 'Kankala (also known as Phulbani) Plates of Raṇabhañjadeva, Year 28', *Copper-plate Inscriptions of Odisha: A Descriptive Catalogue (Circa Fourth Century to Sixteenth Century CE)*, New Delhi, D.K. Printworld, 2014, pp.308-309.

²³N. K. Sahu, *History of Orissa*, Cuttack, Nalanda, 1981, p. 137.

²⁴S. K. Acharya, 'Odisha State Museum Plates of Netṭabhañjadeva-Prthivīkalaśa', *Copper-plate Inscriptions of Odisha: A Descriptive Catalogue (Circa Fourth Century to Sixteenth Century CE)*, New Delhi, D.K. Printworld, 2014, pp.334-336.

²⁵N. K. Sahu, *History of Orissa*, Cuttack, Nalanda, 1981, p. 132; T. E. Donaldson, *Hindu Temple Art of Orissa*, Vol I, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1985, p. 218. The king Netṭabhañjadeva I Kalyānakalaśa (c. 915 CE?) and Netṭabhañjadeva II Kalyānakalaśa *alias* Prthivīkalaśa (c. 933 CE?) and Netṭabhañjadeva III *alias* Tribhuvanakalaśa III (c. 949 CE) were different rulers of the Bhañjas of the Khiñjali-maṇḍala.

²⁶S. K. Acharya, 'the Bhanjanagar Plates of Netṭabhañjadeva, Year 3', *Copper-plate Inscriptions of Odisha: A Descriptive Catalogue (Circa Fourth Century to Sixteenth Century CE)*, New Delhi, D.K. Printworld, 2014, pp.344-345.

²⁷T. E. Donaldson, *Hindu Temple Art of Orissa*, Vol I, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1985, pp. 218-219.

²⁸S. K. Acharya, 'Baud Plates of Salonabhañja, Year 27', *Copper-plate Inscriptions of Odisha: A Descriptive Catalogue (Circa Fourth Century to Sixteenth Century CE)*, New Delhi, D.K. Printworld, 2014, pp.346-347.

²⁹T. E. Donaldson, *Hindu Temple Art of Orissa*, Vol I, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1985, pp. 218-219.

³⁰S. Tripathy, 'Podagadh Stone Inscription of Skandavarman, Year 12', *IO*, Vol. I, New Delhi, Motilala Banarsidass, 1997, pp. 162-163.

³¹Donaldson, *Hindu Temple Art of Orissa*, Vol I, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1985, pp. 177. The king Skandavarman was ruling during c. 475-500 CE.

³²A. M. Shastri, 'Kurud Plates of Narendra, Year 24', *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas, Pāṇḍuvamśins and Somavamśins*, Part II, New Delhi, ICHR, 1995, pp. 8-11.

³³A. M. Shastri, *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas, Pāṇḍuvamśins and Somavamśins*, Part I, New Delhi, ICHR, 1995, p. 110; Donaldson, *Hindu Temple Art of Orissa*, Vol I, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1985, p. 189.

³⁴A. M. Shastri, 'Mallar (also known as Rawan) Plates of Narendra', *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas, Pāṇḍuvamśins and Somavamśins*, Part II, New Delhi, ICHR, 1995, pp. 12-13.

³⁵Donaldson, *Hindu Temple Art of Orissa*, Vol I, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1985, pp. 189-190.

Vaṭapadraka). The name of the gifted village was Village Ārāmaka (or Torāmaka), which was located in Maṅṭarāja-*bhukti*. The purpose of the grant was to bear the expenditure for repairing the temple and also for offering *bali-caru*, and *sattra* (free-feeding house). The king was entitled by the religious epithet of *Paramabhāgavata*. The royal patron was affiliated to Viṣṇuism and it was an endowment for the development of the religious institution.

Mahā-Jayarāja^[36] (a Śarabhapurīya ruler; c. 550-560 CE)^[37] had issued the grant from Sarabhapura. The Village Pamvā (located at Pūrvarāṣṭra-district) was gifted in favour of Brahmadevasvāmi. The royal donor was entitled by the sectarian epithet of *Paramabhāgavata*. The motive behind the grant was to increase the religious merit of the donor and his parents. The donee was a brāhmaṇa and the gifted item was a village.

Somavamśīs

Mahābhavagupta Janamejaya I^[38] of Trikaliṅga (Somavamśī; c. 882-922 CE)^[39] had issued the order from Suvarṇapura. Village Jollamurā-*grāma* located in Lupatturā-*khaṇḍa* (Trikaliṅga) was gifted to Bhaṭṭaputra Sādhāraṇa, a migrant from Ṭakkārikā (a native of Turvunā). The natives had to pay *kara*, *bhoga*, *bhāga* and *hiraṇya* to the donee. Three parts of the gift was given for the construction of a shrine at Suvarṇapura. The temple was dedicated to the Jalaśayaṇa of the God Nārāyana-Bhaṭṭāraka. It was gifted for the daily rituals like *caru*, *bali* and *naivadya*. It was also given for the other services like renovation of the temple and worshiping of the God. And other five parts were gifted to learned brāhmaṇas of different *gotras*. The royal patron was a Vaiṣṇavite and the donees were both the brāhmaṇas and religious institution. It was a multi-purpose grant given for the development of the Viṣṇuism and education.

Somavamśī king Mahābhavagupta Janamejaya I^[40] of Trikaliṅga (c. 882-922 CE)^[41] had issued the grant from Ārāma in favour of the Kamalavana-*vaṇika-sthāna* (the merchant Association of the Kamalavana), migrated from Khadirapadra and was a native of Suvarṇapura. The name of the gifted village was Gottaikeḷā. The donee was again donated it to two different temples of God of Keśava (*śrī-keśava-bhaṭṭāraka-deva-kula*) and Aditya (*śrī-aditya-bhaṭṭāraka-deva-kula*). It was granted for the offerings, daily rituals and also for the renovation of the temples. This

grant was given to both the Lord *Viṣṇu* and the Sun (Aditya). The king was a devotee of the Lord *Viṣṇu*. It was a gift after gift. First the village was gifted to the merchant association (purpose of the grant has not mentioned) and later the merchant association registered the same village in favour of two shrines dedicated to Lord *Viṣṇu* and Aditya for the development of the religion.

Pāṇḍuvamśīs

Pāṇḍuvamśī king Tivaradeva^[42] (Kosala; according to A. Cunningham possibly it is dated to c. later half of the 6th century CE)^[43] had issued the grant from Śrīpura. It was issued in favour of twenty-five brāhmaṇas of two different groups. The names of gifted villages were Bondaka and Avaḍika of Pihārāja *bhukti*. The royal donor was entitled by the religious epithet of *Paramavaiṣṇava* (worshipper of *Viṣṇu*).

Pāṇḍuvamśī king Mahā-Naṅṅarāja^[44] (possibly dated to c. 8th century CE)^[45] had issued the order from Śrīpura in favour of Nārāyaṇopādhyāya (a bhāgavata brāhmaṇa). Village Kontiṅka-*grāma*, located in Aṣṭadvāra *viśaya* of Kosala-*maṇḍala* was gifted to the donee. The king was entitled by the epithets of the Lord of whole Kosala (*prāpta-sakala-kosalā-maṇḍala-ādhipatya*) and lord of Utkala. The sectarian epithet of the king was *Paramavaiṣṇava* (worshipper of *Viṣṇu*). So the royal donor was affiliated to Vaiṣṇvism and he had gifted a village to a brāhmaṇa for flourishing of the religion.

Discussions

Based on the epigraphic evidence the existence of Viṣṇuism in Odisha goes back to c. 4th to 5th century CE. Mātharas (Kaliṅga) and Pitribhaktas were Vaiṣṇavite and rulers of these two contemporary dynasties were loyal patrons for the Viṣṇuism. They were the devotees of Lord Bhagavat-svāmi-Nārāyaṇa and had some sectarian Vaiṣṇavite epithet like *paramadaivat* and *Paramabhāgavata*. Being these two dynasties were the contemporary to the Imperial Guptas, probably they were influenced by the Guptas.

Though the Eastern Gaṅgas of Trikaliṅga (c. 6th century CE) were Śaivite and Lord Gokarṇasvāmi located on the Mount Mahendra was their tutelary deity, still they worshiped Lord Nārāyaṇ (Narasīṅgapalli Plates of Hastivarman, Year 79).

Śailodbhasas of Koṅgada (c. 6th century to c. 8th century CE) were staunch devotees of Lord Śiva. But Tekkali Plates of Madhyamarāja III (c. 8th century CE) shows that the king Madhyamarāja was compared with Lord Nārāyaṇa and he was blessed by the goddess Laksmī.

Bhaumas of Toṣālī had given patronage to Buddhism, Śaivism, Śaktism and Viṣṇuism. Queen

³⁶ A. M. Shastri, 'Arang Plates of Mahā-Jayarāja, Year 5', *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas, Pāṇḍuvamśīs and Somavamśīs*, Part II, New Delhi, ICHR, 1995, pp. 20-23.

³⁷ A. M. Shastri, *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas, Pāṇḍuvamśīs and Somavamśīs*, Part I, New Delhi, ICHR, 1995, p. 112.

³⁸ S. K. Acharya, 'Gopalpur Plates of Mahābhavagupta Janamejaya I, Year 10', *Copper-plate Inscriptions of Odisha: A Descriptive Catalogue (Circa Fourth Century to Sixteenth Century CE)*, New Delhi, D.K. Printworld, 2014, pp.227-228.

³⁹ K. C. Panigrahi, *History of Orissa*, Cuttack, Kitab Mahal, 1985, p. 98; Donaldson, *Hindu Temple Art of Orissa*, Vol I, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1985, p. 272.

⁴⁰ S. K. Acharya, 'Sonepur Plates of Mahābhavagupta Janamejaya I, Year 17', *Copper-plate Inscriptions of Odisha: A Descriptive Catalogue (Circa Fourth Century to Sixteenth Century CE)*, New Delhi, D.K. Printworld, 2014, pp.243-244.

⁴¹ K. C. Panigrahi, *History of Orissa*, Cuttack, Kitab Mahal, 1985, p. 98; Donaldson, *Hindu Temple Art of Orissa*, Vol I, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1985, p. 272.

⁴² A. M. Shastri, 'Bonda Plates of Tivaradeva, Year 5', *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas, Pāṇḍuvamśīs and Somavamśīs*, Part II, New Delhi, ICHR, 1995, pp. 102-106.

⁴³ A. M. Shastri, *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas, Pāṇḍuvamśīs and Somavamśīs*, Part I, New Delhi, ICHR, 1995, pp. 139-156. Some placed it c. 6th century CE; Donaldson, *Hindu Temple Art of Orissa*, Vol I, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1985, pp. 188-189.

⁴⁴ A. M. Shastri, 'Adhabhara Plates of Mahā-Naṅṅarāja', *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas, Pāṇḍuvamśīs and Somavamśīs*, Part II, New Delhi, ICHR, 1995, pp. 116-118.

⁴⁵ A. M. Shastri, *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas, Pāṇḍuvamśīs and Somavamśīs*, Part I, New Delhi, ICHR, 1995, pp. 156-157; Donaldson, *Hindu Temple Art of Orissa*, Vol I, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1985, p.189.

Tribhuvanamahādevī^[46] (c. 894 CE) was a *Paramavaiṣṇavī* (great worshiper of Lord Viṣṇu). This time religious assimilation was happened in Odisha.

Bhañjas of the Khiñjali-maṇḍala (c. 9th century CE; contemporary of Bhaumas) had also given patronage to Lord Vāsudeva and their rulers were *paramavaiṣṇavas* (devotees of lord Viṣṇu). Like that Later Bhañjas (c. 10th century CE) were also *Paramavaiṣṇavas* (devotee of Viṣṇu). Nalas of Puṣkarī were the devotees of Lord Viṣṇu.

Śarabhapuriya of South Kośala (c. 6th century CE) were devotees of Lord Viṣṇu. They had given endowment to Lord Bhagavat (Viṣṇu) also they were *Paramabhāgavata*. Pāṇḍuvamśīś (South Kośala; Śrīpura) were *Paramavaiṣṇava* (worshiper of Viṣṇu).

Somavamśī (c. 9th century to c. 12th century CE) were royal patrons of Śaivism. They had also given endowments in favour of God Nārāyaṇa-Bhaṭṭāraka and God of Keśava. Patronage for Viṣṇuism was increased during the time of Imperial Gaṅgas (c. 11th to c. 15th century CE) and Sūryavamśīś (c. 15th century to c. 16th century CE). Some of the Vaiṣṇavite temples like temple of Ananta Vāsudeva, Lord Jagannatha and Konark were built during this period.

Earlier Viṣṇuism was a minor religion in Odisha and it was continuing along with the other religions. During the later period royal endowments were distributed equally along with the Śaivism and Viṣṇuism. So there was an amalgamation of cult and rituals. Iconographical images found on the walls of the different temples of the Śailodbhabas shows that they had also given patronage for the Viṣṇuism. Image of Lord Hari-Hara is found at the temple Śatrughneśvara (c. 6th century CE). Another Hari-Hara image is also found on the southern part of the wall of the *jaḡamohana* of the Paraśurāmeśvara temple (c. 7th century CE). The scene of Rāma killing the golden deer is also found on the wall of the Svarnajāleśvara temple (c. early 7th century CE). One image of Mudgala Mādhava (c. 7th century CE) is found in Kākatpur region of Prācī Valley. One image of Nṛsimha is also found inside one of the niches of the *jaḡamohana* of the Uttareśvara temple (c. 8th century CE). Twins temple of Gandharādī: Siddheśvara and Nīlamādhava (c. 10th century CE; Upper Mahānadi Valley) of Baudh show the coexistence of both Viṣṇuism and Śaivism. The Dadhi-manthana motif of Lord Kṛṣṇa is found inside a niche of the temple Brahmeśvara (c. 11th century CE). The enshrined deities inside the temple Liṅgarāja (c. 11th century CE) is Hari-Hara. Trinity located inside the sanctum of the Ananta-Vāsudeva Temple (c. 11th to 12th century CE) are Ekānamśā (Subhadrā) and Vāsudeva (Kṛṣṇa). It shows the synthesis of Viṣṇuism, Śaivism and Śktism. Two other Vaiṣṇavite temples are Lord Jagannatha (c. 12th century CE) and Surya temple Konārka (c. 13th century CE) which were developed during the Imperial Gaṅgas^[47].

There is an iconographical similarity between the images of goddess Khambheśvarī and Subhadrā. Being goddess Subhadrā is worshipped by the Bhuvaneśvarī mantra, so she is basically a śākta goddess. There is a shrine of goddess Vimalā inside the sacred campus of Lord Jagannatha. Like the goddess Subhadrā, goddess Vimalā is a form of

Kātyāyanī (Durgā) and she is also worshipped with the Bhuvaneśvarī mantra. The *prasāda* is being first offered to goddess Vimalā, before it is offered to Lord Jagannatha⁴⁸. Like that the iconographic image of Lord Jagannatha has resemblance with the image of the Ekapāda Bhairava. Ekapāda Bhairava is a tāntric deity and god Śiva is also worshipped as Bhairava. During the later period as a wooden god Narasiṃhas is conceptualized as a form of Lord Viṣṇu^[49]. In Odisha, Viṣṇuism was continuing as a minor religion along with the Śaktism and Śaivism and later it was developed rapidly and became the major religion of the state due to the increased royal patronage. Also in the Gita Govinda of Jayadeva (c. 12th century CE), Buddha is named as the ninth incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu and Jagannatha is conceptualised as Adi Buddha^[50].

Conclusion

Epigraphic evidence shows that Mātharas (Kaliṅga) and Pitribhaktas (c. 4th to 5th century CE) were affiliated to Viṣṇuism. The Eastern Gaṅgas of Trikaliṅga (c. 6th century CE) were also staunch devotees of the Lord Nārāyaṇ. Śailodbhabas of Koṅgāda (c. 6th century to c. 8th century CE) were also patrons of Lord Nārāyaṇ. Śarabhapuriya of South Kośala (c. 6th century CE) were followers of the Viṣṇuism. Though Bhaumas of Toṣālī had given maximum patronage to Buddhism, they were also given endowments for the development of the Viṣṇuism. Bhañjas of the Khiñjali-maṇḍala (c. 9th century CE), Later Bhañjas (c. 10th century CE) and Nalas of Puṣkarī were also great patrons for the flourishing of the Viṣṇuism. But Somavamśīś (c. 9th century to c. 12th century CE) were mostly affiliated to the Śaivism. But later rulers like Imperial Gaṅgas (c. 11th to c. 15th century CE) and Sūryavamśīś (c. 15th century to c. 16th century CE) had given large number of patronage for the development and flourishing of the Viṣṇuism in Odisha.

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