

## RECENT STUDY ON ONE KHAKHARA TYPE TEMPLE OF ODISHA IN EASTERN INDIA

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**Received: 25.04.2020**

**Revised: 26.05.2020**

**Accepted: 28. 06.2020**

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### ABSTRACT

The Varahi temple of Chaurasi is a well-known Shakta shrine of the Prachi Valley of Odisha in Eastern India. The artistic techniques and architectural pattern of the Varahi temple of Chaurasi are very distinctive aspects of the Odishan temple art of Eastern India. The Varahi temple of Chaurasi is one of the best specimens of the Kalinga style of temple architecture and it was constructed during the Somavamsi period. The Kalinga style temple architecture of Odisha is divided into four categories/types such as *rekha*, *pidha*, *khakhara* and *Gauriyas* respectively. The Varahi temple of Chaurasi is of the *khakhara* type and dedicated to Goddess Varahi. The Varahi temple of Chaurasi in the Prachi Valley is one of them and it is technically decorated with different types of sculptures for its artistic ornamentation. In fact, the technical arrangements of sculptures in the Varahi temple of Chaurasi represent a good specimen of the Kalinga style architecture of Odisha. Chaurasi was once a centre of Shakta, Vaishnava, Saura and Shaiva form of the Brahminical worship as evidenced from the existing sculptures. The erotic figures appear in the major niches of the *vimana* and most of them are in the *kanika paga* niches and two in the *anuratha paga* niches on the western side. *Tantric* nature of Varahi worship is principally evident on the Varahi temple of Chaurasi where erotic rituals, which mostly include 'Kapalika' participants. The cult of Varahi flourished as an adjunct of *Tantric* form of *Shakti* worship in medieval period, especially in eastern India. The aim of this article is to focus on artistic features noticed in the Varahi temple of Chaurasi along with its religious significance. In the writing of present article, the primary as well as secondary sources have been methodologically used by the author.

**Keywords:** Varahi, Kalinga style, *khakhara* type, temple, Chaurasi, Puri, Odisha, India.

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Varahi temple of Chaurasi is a famous Shakta shrine of the Prachi Valley of Odisha in Eastern India. For the spread of Shaktism in the sacred soil of the river Prachi, a series of Shakta temples were built in the different places of its Valley. The native rulers had constructed some

Shakta temples in different parts of the Prachi Valley. The extant Shakta temples of the Prachi Valley are Varahi temple at Chaurasi, Ambika temple at Kenduli Deuli (Kenduli), Durgatemple at Nua-Satanga (Motia), Durga temple at Kudapatna (Amanakuda), Durga temple at Adasapur, Rama-Chandi temple at Narisho, Hara-Chandi temple at Bisimatri, Kakatei temple at Kakatpur, Mangala temple at Kakatpur, Dakshina-Chandi temple at Mangalapur, Charchika temple at Narasinghpurhat, Chandaghanta Chamunda temple at Nuagaon, Durga temple at Ambapara, Chitresvari temple at Chitresvari, Durga temple at Narisho, Adya-Kali temple at Govindarampatna, etc. Out of the above



Shakta temples of the Prachi Valley, here Varahi temple of Chaurasi is taken for scholarly discussion. This temple is situated on the right bank of river Prachi, about nine miles from Gop on the road towards Kakatpur (Tripathy, Vol. XIV, Part-II., 1930, pp. 292-306). It is also exactly located at a distance of 1½ kms from the Amareswar *chhak* of the main road, which lies between Nimapara and Kakatpur of Puri district (Mohapatra, 2017, p. 401). The Varahi temple of Chaurasi represents a good specimen of the *Kalinga style* temple architecture of Odisha and it was constructed during the Somavamsi period. Odishan temples are divided into four categories such as *rekha*, *pidha*, *khakhara* and *Gauriya* types respectively (Bose, 1932, p. 78). The Varahi temple of Chaurasi is of the *khakhara* type of Odishan temple architecture. It is the sole surviving temple among the seven shrines erected in the region dedicated to the *Sapta-matrukas* (Mitra, Vol. II; No. 1, 1960, p. 3). The present article attempts to focus on art and architecture along with religious significance of the Varahi temple of Chaurasi of Puri district of Odisha in Eastern India.

## II. METHODOLOGY

Both the primary and secondary sources were used within the writing of this article. The primary data were accumulated via Gazetteers, Texts, unpublished thesis, realistic observation, public opinions, and hearsay accounts during the period of experimental field survey. The accumulated facts with reference to the art, structure and non secular importance of the Varahi temple of Chaurasi of the Prachi Valley is based on practical observations via the empirical study by the author. The secondary facts regarding the prevailing article are Books, Journals, Periodicals, Manuscripts, Antiquities, Records, Reports, etc. The facts accumulated from the primary and secondary sources are applied in this article.

## III. DISCUSSION AND RESULT ANALYSIS

### 3.1. Architectural features of the Varahi Temple of Chaurasi

The Varahi temple of Chaurasi is one of the best specimens of the *Kalinga style* of temple architecture and it was constructed during the Somavamsi period of Odishan history. The place of Chaurasi was once a famous *Shakta pitha* of the Prachi valley of Odisha in Eastern

India(Odisha Tantra Sanskruti, 1997, p.78). The temple of Varahi is an earliest Shakta temple of Odisha to integrate some of the new architectural features. The temple is in dilapidated condition due to the use of poor quality stones in it. Now, this temple is a protected monument under the Archaeological Survey of India Circle, Bhubaneswar. The temple of goddess Varahi consists of a rectangular *khakhara* type *deula* or *vimana* and an oblong *jagamohana* with a roof made up of two sloping terraces. It is made of sand stones, which locally called as *Baulamala* and *Kanda patharas*. The temple faces to east.



#### A. *Vimana*

The *vimana* of the Varahi temple is *pancaratha khakhara* order *deula* and its height is about 27 feet from the surface of temple complex (Behera, 1993, pp.99-100). R. P. Mohapatra has pointed out that the *vimana* or main *deula* of the Varahi temple closely resembles with the Gauri temple of Bhubaneswar in architectural features (Mohapatra, Vol.1, 1986, p.93). The structure of the *vimana* erects on a plain *pishta* of 2 feet 4 inches in height (Donaldson, Vol.1, 1985, p.274). The base of the *vimana* is rectangular and it measures 18 feet by 12 feet 6 inches (Donaldson, Vol.1, 2000, p.141). The *bada* (Borner and Rath Sarma, 1966, p. 142) of the *vimana* is *pancanga* type i.e. having five fold divisions namely *pabhaga*, *tala bandhana*, *jangha*, upper *bandhana* and *baranda*. The *pabhaga* consists of three mouldings of *khura*, *kumbha* and another *khura* shaped moulding. The *muhanti* or the lower edge of top moulding is relieved with scroll work while its sloping upper facet is ornamented with a small *caitya* medallion. The *pabhaga* mouldings show advanced features as noticed in the Mukteshvara and Gauri temples (Parida, 1999, p.124). The *raha paga* has a *khakhara mundi* between two sets of these three mouldings. The upper half of the niche is filled with an *urdhva-garbhika* also designed as a *khakhara mundi*, an architectural feature peculiar to the Somavamsi period, which actually restricts the size of the *parshvadevata* enshrined within. A thin *tala-garbhika* appears beneath the niche. The niche is framed on each side by a pilaster decorated with scroll work in its central facet. There is a large projecting eave crowns the niche.



The *raha paga* on the western side is much wider and its upper portion filled with an *urdhva-garbhika*, which consists of three *khakhara mundis*. A band of decorative scroll work frames the inside of the niche, which is relieved with a *dvara-lalata bimba* panel above and the scroll work

on the flanking pilaster begins above a *tala bandhana* motif. The *tala bandhana* contains three horizontal mouldings, which are found joined by a vertical band at the centre of each *paga*.

The *kanika paga* of the *bada* is same design on all sides and consists of a central vertical facet relieved with ornate scroll work above a *tala bandhana*. The upper portion of the facet has a shallow niche filled with *mithuna* figure and a crowning upper *bandhana*, which turns into an ineffective *baranda*. The *anuratha pagas* on the western side are similar in design. There is also an additional offset so that the *paga* appears multi-faceted are narrower. The recess between the *kanika* and *anuratha paga* is filled with a *naga-nagini* pilaster or *stambha*. This is the first example of this motif appear in the *anuratha* recess. The tail of the *nagini* appears at the bottom and the head appear at the upper portion of the *stambha*, so that the figure appears to be ascending and seven hooded snakes is canopied on the head portion of the *naga* and *nagini* figures. At the base of the *stambha* is decorated with diminutive *gaja-kranta* motif which appearing on the projecting *tala-bandhana*. These *stambhas* begin from the *pabhaga* and extend up to the *gandi* where they are surmounted by *shalabhanjika* figures. The recess between the *anuratha* and *raha paga* on the western side is filled with a thin pilaster decorated with scroll work extending up to the height of the *jangha*. The figures of Ganesha and Surya (Sun god) are housed in the central niches of the *bada* as the *parshvadevatas* of southern and western sides respectively. The northern side central niche is emptied because the local miscreants stole the side deity. Observing the temple, K.S. Behera opines that the temple represents advancement over the Vaital temple in the disposition of the *bada* (Behera, 1993 , p.99).

The wagon vault shaped superstructure is found surmounted on the *bada* of *vimana*. It is divided into two storeys by a recessed *kanthi* decorated with *mithuna* and other erotic sculptures (Banerjee, 1965, pp.348-354). The *baranda* can be conceived as the first *bhumi* or storey of the *gandi*. The *baranda* consists of a row of *khakhara mundi* designs aligned with the *pagas* of the *bada* and decorated with a small *vajra-mastaka* on its top moulding. In the northern as well as southern sides, these *mundis* crowning the *kanika* and *anuratha pagas*, which are surmounted by a *kalasa* while on the western side only the *kanika* has this surmounting motif. On the central *raha*, these *khakhara mundis* have a small niche at the base immediately above the projecting eave crowning the *parshvadevata* niche. The intervening recesses between the *kanika* and the *anuratha pagas* are filled with the *shalabhanjikas*, which crowning the *naga-nagini* pilasters. On the northern and southern sides, the intervening recesses between *raha* and *anuraha pagas* are decorated with amorous couples.

The *bhumi* division above this *baranda* design can be considered as a second *bhumi*. There is a recess or *kanthi* at the base, which is decorated with niches on the *anuratha* and *kanika pagas* on the western side. The niches of the recess contain amorous couples. The intervening recess between the *kanika* and *anurathapagas* is similarly filled with a *stambha* surmounted by a *shalabhanjika*. On the northern and southern sides, the *anuratha paga* is eliminated and replaced by the *vajramastaka* design of the *raha*, which becomes enlarged. Both

the northern and southern sides become *tri-ratha* in plan. The *raha paga* contains a large *caitya*-medallion formed by strings of pearls dripping from a small *kirtimukha* mask projecting at its apex. The medallion is filled with a *khakhara mundi* design within in it. On the eastern and western sides, the *vajramastaka* of this *bhumi* is not as pronounced and similar designs crowning the *anuratha paga*. The treatment of the *gandi* of the *vimana*, with a succession of two rows of *khakharas* and prominent window motif on the *raha*, is somewhat similar to that of Gauri temple at Bhubaneswar (Behera, 1993, p.100).

The *bisama* portion above the *gandi* consists of a splayed *pheni* decorated with scroll work. The *beki* or recess is decorated with perforated *jali* work. The *mastaka* of the *vimana* is designed in *khura*-shaped *khakhara*, which is *tri-ratha* in plan. The *muhanti* or lower edge of the *khakhara* is decorated with amorous couples. The entire central projection is carved with a motif of a *caitya* window medallion. The strings of pearls dripping from the mouth of a *kirtimukha* projected on the top of *khakhara*. The *caitya* medallion is filled with *khakhara mundi* as on the *gandi*. On the eastern and western sides, this medallion is flanked by a large dwarf *Yaksha* standing one leg uplifted and holding a club in one hand while other hand is placed on the cheek. On the northern and southern sides, the *kirtimukha* mask is replaced by a large rampant lion or *udyata simha*. The top of the *mastaka* is crowned by a *kalasa* (Bose, 1931, p.182). The treatment of the roof of *mastaka* is slightly different from that of the Gauri temple of Bhubaneswar. There are some new motifs found from the *vimana* of the Varahi temple, which became the standard decorative elements of the later temples. The *garbha muda* of the sanctum consists of several pieces of flat stones supported at intervals by iron beams.

### **B. Jagamohana**

The *jagamohana* or *mukhasala* of the Varahi temple is oblong structure and it measures 31 feet by 23 feet (Donaldson, Vol.1, 2000, p.142). It is a *pidha deula* and it is about 18 feet high from the surface of the temple complex (Mohapatra, 2017, p.405). The *bada* of *jagamohana* is *tri-ratha* in plan and it consists of three divisions viz *pabhaga*, *jangha* and *baranda*. The *pabhaga* of the *bada* consists of four mouldings. The *khura* moulding is carved with *kirita* designs. A *campaka* leaf carved on the *kumbha* links up with the third moulding, which is designed as a *pidha* and decorated with a small *caitya* on its sloping upper surface. The top moulding is in the shape of an inverted *pidha*, which is relieved with scroll work on its upper surface.

The central projections of the northern and southern walls of the *jagamohana* are provided with latticed windows. The side or flanking *nagas* of the *jagamohana* are decorated with *khakharamundi* designs alternating with thin pilasters. There are three *khakhara mundis* on each side of the centre *gavaksha* projection. The thin pilasters alternating with the *mundis* are relieved with scroll work above a *purna ghata* or *kalasa* at the base crowned by a squatting *vara-rakshaka* at the top. The corner pilasters of the *bada* are wider and crowned by an amorous couple and the base is decorated by a set of mouldings or *tala bandhana*.

The *gavaksha* projection on the northern as well as southern sides is framed at the sides by *nagini* pilasters and the base is decorated by horizontal mouldings and the serpents are both females. There is also a capital added above the *nagini* decorated with a centre figure flanked by a squatting *vararakshaka*. The *gavaksha* between the *naginistambha* is much wider and a *khakhara mundi* is added on each side of the window and its niche is filled with a four-armed female figure. The window is decorated with criss-crossing bars of lattice to produce diamond-shape perforations (*banka-jali*). The window is surrounded by three bands, which are ornately carved with scroll work and floral designs. There are four insets, one at the centre of each side, decorated with a figure motif. On the top the Gaja-Lakshmi image is flanked by *vidyadharas* and at the bottom is a pot-bellied *gana*. The *gavaksha mandana* above the latticed window is decorated with three elongated *vajra-mundis* separated from one another by a thin pilaster of similar design.

The *jangha* of the *bada* measures approximately 4 feet in height and is crowned at the top by a *baranda* consisting of a slightly projecting *pidhamoulding* with surmounting recess, which is 1 foot 4 inches in height (Donaldson, Vol.1, 1985, p.277). The *muhanti* or the lower edge of the moulding is relieved with scroll work while its sloping upper face contains miniature dancing figures and animals. The recess is filled with perforated *jali* works alternating with *bharavahaka* figures. There are twelve pilasters; four on each side of northern and southern walls and two flanking the entrance portals on the eastern and western sides respectively.

The roof of the *jagamohana* consists of two receding sloping terraces with repetition of the *khura* shaped *baranda* containing lotus petals. The recess or *kanthi* separating the two terraces is decorated with shallow niches alternating with large *kumbhas*. The niches of the *kanthi* contain erotic couples. The cornices beneath the two projecting eaves are decorated with scenes from the *Ramayana*, hunting scenes and animal processions. On the crown of the flat roof is a monolithic *kalasa* placed on a square pedestal.

### C. Portal Decoration

The sanctum of the *vimana* has one doorway towards the *jagamohana*. The doorframe of the sanctum is excellently carved with pot-bellied female figures. These two female figures are acting as the *dvarapalas* of the main doorway of sanctum and standing in an arched niche at the base of the doorjamb. Their hair is arranged in spiral coils. They both hold a cup in their left hand with their right hand holds a noose respectively. Diminutive attendant female figures are also carved on the lower corners of the niche. The adjacent *naga* figures holding garland of flowers are also depicted. The doorframe of the sanctum consists of three mouldings, which are relieved with scroll work, frolicking boys playing on musical

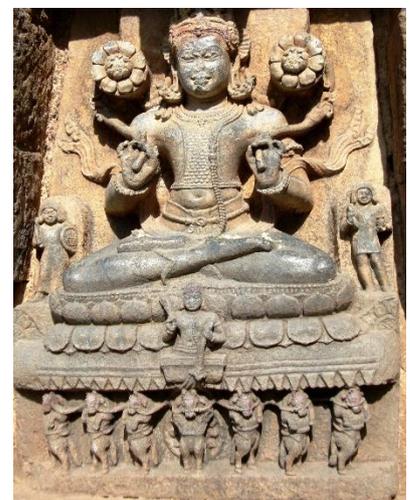


instruments and dancing in various poses and flying *vidyadhara* figures with garlands. Some flying *vidyadhara* figures are also carved on the doorway lintel. The image Gaja-Lakshmi is finely carved on the centre of the doorway lintel and it is partly damaged.

The *jagamohana* of the temple has also one doorway towards east. The doorframe of the *jagamohana* is also ornamented like that of the sanctum. The lower parts of the jambs contain four-armed standing female figures as the *dvarapalas* of the doorway (Mohapatra, 2017, p.407). They are housed in an arched niche of the two sides doorjambs. Both the female figures are severely damaged. So the attributes in their hands can not be properly identified. The doorjamb consists of three bands decorated with scroll work, creepers with the frolicking boys and flower devices. On the inside jamb above the *dvarapala* niche is carved with a diminutive *naga* figure in the posture of descending the jamb. This is a popular decorative motif, which appeared for the first time in eastern Odisha. On Odishan temple door frames the tail disappears into the foliage of the *Kutula* scroll. The pilasters beyond the doorjambs are relieved with *naga* and *nagini* figures displaying garlands in hands. Both the figures have a canopy of serpent hoods. The square capitals of the pilasters are relieved with squatish *bharavahaka* or *atlantid gana* figures in the attitude of supporting the superstructure. Gaja-Lakshmi image is carved on the centre of the doorway lintel. The sidewall of the entrance projection houses the river Goddesses of Ganga and Yamuna (Mohapatra, 2017, p.408). There is an octagonal pillar installed in front of the *jagamohana*. Recently, a lion figure has been kept on the top of pillar.

### 3.2. Sculptures of the Varahi temple

The Varahi temple of Chaurasi is excellently decorated with both cult images and non-iconic figures. The central niches of the *bada* of *vimana* are housed with the *parshvadevata* images of Ganesha and Surya. The images of Surya and Ganesha are the *parshvadevatas* of western (back) and southern sides of the *bada* respectively. The niche on the northern side is completely empty. These side deities are unusual in a Devi temple. The *parshvadevata* niches of a *Devi* temple generally contain the images of the different forms of the *Devi*. Here Vidya Dehejia tries to explain the presence of Surya (Sun god) may have been associated with 'Kaula-Cult' temples (Dehejia, 1979, p.127 and see Parida, 1999, p.124). It may be pointed out that the Somavamsi rulers of Odisha appear to have been followers of the 'Kaula Cult'. The image Surya is depicted as a docile god seated in *padmasana* on his chariot, which is drawn by seven horses.



His charioteer, Aruna is seated in front, holding the reins of the seven horses carved against the lower facade of the double petalled lotus pedestal. The deity holds the stalk of a full-blown lotus flower in both hands and has a large round halo back side of the head. The image of Surya is

independently carved and inserted into the niche. Diminutive figures of Danda and Pingala are flanked on both sides of the Sun God. On the right side of the Surya Devata standing Danda with staff and shield in hands and Pingala on the left holding pen and inkpot (Mohapatra, Vol.1, 1986, p.94). These two figures are also carved at the base of the jambs framing the niche. The slab of Surya Devata measures 31 inches in height and 19½ inches in width (Behera & Donaldson, 1998, p.138). The image of Surya Devata was made in the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. ( Behera & Donaldson, 1998, p.138) K.S. Behera and T.E. Donaldson opine that the figures of Danda and Pingala are dressed in a northern style tonic (Behera & Donaldson, 1998, p.138). A figure of amorous couple is carved on the inset above Surya Devata attached to the base of the *urdha-garbhika*.

The four handed image of Ganesha has been installed on a lotus pedestal of the southern side central niche. He holds a hatchet in his lower left hand, a pot of *ladus* in upper right hand, a broken tusk in upper right hand and a rosary in lower right hand respectively. The background slab of the deity is decorated with trefoil arch. He is flanked by flying *vidyadharas* on the above and by *ganas* in the lower corners. Mouse, the conventional mount of deity appears on the right of pedestal. The image Ganesha has also a large round halo behind his head. The presence of Ganesha suggests, as pointed out by Alice Borner, that he may be invoked to help remove the veil of ignorance that obstructs the light of *Jnana Devi*. Surya, as the principal of light is obviously a complementary aspect of the *Jnana Devi* (Borner & Ratha Sarma, 1996, p. XIII).



The two-armed image of Goddess Varahi is preserved in the sanctum as the presiding deity of the shrine. She is carved seated in *lalitasana* pose on a plain footed pedestal (Mohapatra, 2017, p.405). Her right foot resting on the crouching buffalo carved on the pedestal. She displays a skull-cup (*kapala*) in left hand and a fish in right hand. She has a pot-belly and the head of a boar. The third eye of the Goddess is prominently shown on the forehead. Her lower garment hangs over their left foot. Hairs on her head are arranged in spiral curls and rises inwards. The plain halo is oval behind her head. The figures of *vidyadharas* holding garlands are finely carved on both side top corners of the slab. The presiding deity is partially fixed into the wall of the sanctum. It measures 6 feet 1 inch in height and 2 feet 9 inches in width (Behera & Donaldson, 1998, p.142). The image of presiding deity (Goddess Varahi) can be dated to the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. ( Mohapatra, 2017, p.405). It is a unique image of Varahi in Eastern Odisha.



According to the *Kaula* doctrine observed in this shrine, consecrated to Goddess Varahi who

represents the *Jnana* aspect of the *Devi* (Borner & Ratha Sarma, p.XIII ). K.S. Behera and T.E. Donaldson have mentioned that the *Tantric* nature of Varahi worship is particularly evident on the Varahi temple at Chaurasi where erotic rituals, many of which include 'Kapalika' participants (Behera & Donaldson, 1998, p.94 ). J. N. Banerjee has remarked, "it seems that the cult of Varahi flourished as an adjunct of *Tantric* form of *Shakti* worship in medieval India, especially in eastern and central part of India" (Benerjee, 1965, pp.352-353 ).

Inner walls of the *jagamohana* are completely plain. The *jagamohana* preserves two Varahi images, which are noticed at both sides of the doorway wall of the sanctum. The four armed image of Varahi is preserved at the south-west corner of the *jagamohana* hall. The image Varahi is carved in *ardha paryanka* pose; one leg is on the pedestal and the left leg knee raised and its foot kept on the pedestal. The pedestal of the slab is decorated with humped buffalo flanked by diminutive female devotees. She displays rosary in upper left arm, *panapatra* in lower left arm, the upper right arm holds an indistinct object. The background of the slab is decorated with elongated *prabhamandala*. The image Varahi measures 2 feet 5½ inches in height and 1 foot 7½ inches in width (Mohapatra, 2017, p.409). It is made of sand stone. One more stone slab containing the image of Varahi and it is noticed at the north-west corner of the *jagamohana*. The two armed image of Varahi is carved in *ardha paryanka* pose like the earlier one. The base of the podium is ornamented with figures of devotees and *dhyani rushi*. She holds fish in right arm and *panapatra* in left arm respectively. *Apsara* figure holding garland is depicted on both side top corners of the slab. The image Varahi is made of sand stone. It measures 2 feet 11½ inches in height and 1 foot 7 inches in width (Mohapatra, 2017, p.409).



The niches of the corner *mundis* of the *jagamohana* house the *dikpalas* while those of the second *mundis* contain their female counterparts. Most of them have not survived and a few have been wrongly placed during repairs. The niches of the third *mundi* on the northern and southern sides contain a *Shaivite* deity with the surviving images such as Ganesha, Kartikeya and a four-armed Durga. The niches on either side of the *gavaksha* window house four-armed *Mahavidyas* or *avaranashaktis* (Borner & Ratha Sarma, 1996, P.XLIV)

The erotic figures appear in the major niches of the main shrine. They are in all of the *kanika paga* niches and two in the *anuratha paga* niches on the western side. Jitendranath Banerjee identifies the eight erotic scenes we find here as depictions of the eight stages of ritual love-making or *ashta-kamakala prayoga*, as described in the unpublished Odia manuscripts called the *Kaula Cudamani* (Benerjee, 1965, pp.352-353). These eight modes of ritual love-making are such as: (1) *Vasikarana*, (2) *Sammohana*, (3) *Akarsana*, (4) *Yayanvishaka* (5) *Purascharana*, (6) *Rajhpana*, (7) *Prastava* and (8) *Nivruta* ( Das, 1977, p.358). J.N. Banerjee

also points out that six scenes out of eight carved at Chaurasi temple correspond directly to six of the stages of the *Kaula Cudamani*(Benerjee, 1965., pp.352-353). There are also numerous *mithuna* figures appearing on the *gandi* and in the recess separating the terraces of the *jagamohana* roof.

The most popular decorative motifs are *shalabhanjikas* appearing on the *gandi* of the *vimana*. The *bharavahaka* or *bhara rakshaka* figures are also noticed on the capitals of the pilasters and flanked on the *pagavajra-mastakas* of the *jagamohana*. The squatting *bhara rakshakas* are carved with pot-bellies. Other figure motifs include the hunting and battle scenes from the *Ramayana* are noticed on the *baranda* and roof of the *jagamohana*( Mohapatra, 2017, p.410).

The *naga* and *naginistambhas* or pilasters are most conspicuous noticed in the frame of the entrance portal, *gavaksha* projection and *anurathapaga* recess of the *vimana*. The *gaja-kranta* motifs are appearing at the base of the *stambhas*. The *udyatasimhas* are also noticed on the roof above the *vajra-mastaka* of the *gandi* of the *vimana*. The *kirtimukhas* with hanging festoons of pearls dripping from open mouths are carved near the top of the *naga stambhas*. The scroll work on the doorframe is the most popular motif. The oblique carving technique is generally employed in the scroll work. A. N. Parida says that the sculptures of Varahi temple betray the developed character. These belong to the category to which the sculptures of the Mukteshvara temple have been included(Parida, 1999, p.125 ).

### 3.3. Date of the Varahi temple

There is no authentic source regarding the approximate date of the Varahi temple of Chaurasi. Most of the scholars accept that the Varahi temple of Chaurasi was built during the Somavamsi period of Odisha history. On the basis of the architectural style, Devala Mitra has referred to that the Varahi temple of Chaurasi appears to have been later than the Parshurameshvara temple and slightly earlier than the Mukteshvara temple of Bhubaneswar belonging to 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. (Mitra, p.6. and see R.P. Mohapatra, 1986, p.52). K.S. Behera has also opined that the Varahi temple of Chaurasi is later than the Parshurameshvara temple(Behera,1993, p.100). A.N. Parida has remarked that the Varahi temple belonged to the period when the other two temples viz. Mukteshvara and Gauri of Bhubaneswar were built (Parida, 1999, pp.125-126 ). He also opines that the Varahi temple of Chaurasi constructed in the later part of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.T.E. Donaldson has mentioned that the construction period of the Varahi temple can be dated to the first quarter of the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D.(Donaldson, Vol.1, 1985, p. 274). On the other hand Vidya Dehejia has described that the Varahi temple of Chaurasi is one of the most fascinating of early Odishan temples. It belongs clearly after the formative phase and exhibits all the features, which we have distinguished as characteristic of the transitional phase(Dehejia, 1979, pp.125-126). This temple displays a number of features that show a logical progression towards the conclusion. M.P. Das is of the view that the shrine of

Goddess Varahi is assignable to the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. (Das, 1977, p.358). On the idea of the architectural fashion and sculptural features, the date of the Varahi temple of Chaurasi may be tentatively assigned to the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. (Mohapatra, 2017, p.411). Most probably, this temple was constructed by the Somavamsi ruler of Odisha.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

We can observe from the above discussion that the architectural features of Varahi temple of Chaurasi represent the best specimen of the *khakhar* type temple of Eastern Odisha. The temple was almost certainly constructed before the erection of the Sun temple of Konark. From the stylistic point of view, the *vimana* or main *deula* of the Varahi temple closely resembles with the Gauri temple of Bhubaneswar. Though the temples of *Sapta matrikas* and Chamunda are very common in Odisha, the independent temple of Goddess Varahi is extremely rare. The place of Chaurasi was once a centre of Shakta, Vaishnava, Saura and Shaiva form of the Brahminical worship as evidenced from the available sculptures. The erotic figures appear in the major niches of the *vimana* and most of them are in the *kanika paga* niches and two in the *anuratha paga* niches on the western side. Like earlier scholars, the present author has also observed that *Tantric* nature of Varahi worship is principally evident on the Varahi temple of Chaurasi where erotic rituals, which mostly include 'Kapalika' participants. The cult of Varahi flourished as an adjunct of *Tantric* form of *Shakti* worship in medieval period, especially in eastern India. The niches of the northern and southern sides walls of *jagamohana* contain a *Shaivite* deity with the surviving images like Ganesha, Kartikeya and a four-armed Durga. The niches on either side of the *gavaksha* window house four-armed *Mahavidyas* or *avaranashaktis*. The *jagamohana* of the temple preserves two old Varahi images, which are noticed at both sides of the doorway wall of the sanctum. The *gavaksha* projection on the northern as well as southern sides is framed at the sides by *nagini* pilasters and the base is decorated by horizontal mouldings and the serpents are both females. The lower parts of the jambs of the *jagamohana* contain four-armed standing female figures as the *dvarapalas* of the doorway. They are housed in an arched niche of the two side doorjambs. The architectural style and sculptural features of the temple suggest that the construction period may be tentatively dated 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. From the religious point of view, this temple is also one of the important *Sakta* shrines of Eastern Odisha. The structural features of the Varahi temple of Chaurasi represent the best specimen of the *Khakhara* type temple architecture of Odisha in India.

#### **Acknowledgement**

I acknowledge with grateful thanks to Prof. P.K. Nayak, Prof. K.S. Behera (late), Prof. C.R. Mishra (late), Prof. Prof. K.K. Basa, Dr. B.K. Ratha, Prof. H.K. Satapathy, Dr. P.K. Routray, Prof. Harihar Panda and Prof. Byomakesh Tripathy for their encouragement and valuable suggestions in course of the preparation of the article. I express my profound reverence

to **Prof. Achyuta Samanta**, the Hon'ble Founder of KISS, Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar who encouraged me for the writing of this article.

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