

Review Article

SCULPTURE MASTERPIECES FROM THE SAIVA TEMPLES OF PRACHI VALLEY OF ODISHA IN EASTERN INDIA: STYLE AND ICONOGRAPHY

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Abstract

The region of Prachi Valley is famous for its remarkable antiquities and religious sanctuaries in Odisha of Eastern India. The historians of Odisha had not sufficiently highlighted the Prachi Valley civilization before the independence of India. On the basis of the extant archaeological remains, the Prachi Valley can be considered as an important place of cultural-heritage in Odisha. This valley is a co-ordinating place of many religious sects of India like Buddhism, Jainism, Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Tantricism, Saura, Muslim, etc. as evidenced of the availability of stone images of above sects. Really, the Prachi Valley has produced an excellent trend of sculptural activities in Odisha of Eastern India. A large number of images of various sects noticed in the different shrines of the Prachi Valley. Hence, the region of Prachi Valley is an interesting study for the scholars and art historians. In the present piece of work, the authors are restricted to the sculpture masterpieces from the Saiva temples of Prachi valley of Odisha. All the extant images of Prachi valley are executed by the artists of Kalingan School of artists of Eastern India. The rare images noticed from the Saiva temples of Prachi Valley represent the iconographic features of the Odishan classical art of the medieval period. The study of unique sculptures of the Saiva temples of Prachi Valley of Odisha is one of the fascinating aspects of the Kalingan school of art of India. Indeed, the Prachi valley is well known for the place of preservation of masterpiece sculptures of Odisha in Eastern India.

Keywords: Saiva, Sculpture Masterpieces, images, Prachi valley, Odisha, India.

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INTRODUCTION

The region of Prachi Valley is one of the important historical sites of Odisha in Eastern India. The exact territory, which extends from the Devi river up to the Kushabhadra river in the coastal-belt of Odisha, is generally accepted as the region of the Prachi Valley. In fact, the Prachi Valley is a gift of the ancient river Prachi. The Puri District Gazetteer records that the Prachi river drains the country at the border of undivided Cuttack and Puri districts, having its origin near Kantapara and passing through the village of Kakatpur to fall into the sea, 11 km to the south of it.¹ The glorious civilization that grew in ancient time in the Prachi Valley and the remarkable culture that prevailed there have not been fully highlighted. It is really surprising that the Valley of a small river Prachi gave birth to a glorious civilization. Although the Valley is small in size (area) but it contains a magnificent cultural treasures of the past. The Prachi Valley is a significant cultural heritage site of Eastern India and the Valley is also famous for its historic antiquities and religious sanctuaries in the coastal-belt of Odisha. In fact, the Prachi valley is indeed rich in archaeological remains. A good number of temples of smaller and medium sizes existed in the different parts of the Prachi Valley. These monuments are found in so large numbers and in so varied forms extending over several centuries in the past that the Prachi Valley may be regarded today as a veritable museum of Odishan history and culture through the ages.² The Prachi Valley is one of the important centres of the Hindu temple art in the coastal-belt of Odisha. The popularity of the Prachi Valley increased after the erection of some notable temples in around the river Prachi. Really, the Prachi Valley has also tremendously developed an excellent trend in sculptural activities as evidenced by the thousands of sculptures available in all parts of it. The present article attempts to highlight the style and iconography of the rare sculptures

noticed from the Saiva temples of Prachi valley of Odisha in Eastern India.

METHODOLOGY

For the accomplishment of the present article, both the primary and secondary sources have been used by the authors. The primary data have been collected from Gazetteers, reports, practical observations, taking photographs and measurements, hearsay accounts of respondents through the interview methods adopted in course of the experimental field survey, etc. The field survey had been undertaken for the collection of data with regard to the style and iconographic features of the rare sculptures noticed in the Saiva temples and also all the extant images of the Prachi valley of Odisha as far as practicable on the part of present researchers. For the collection of primary data, the practical field study has been adequately made by the present authors. The data collected from both the primary and secondary sources are critically analysed and interpreted as per the methodological procedure.

DISCUSSION AND RESULT ANALYSIS

Three Images from Grameshvara temple of Nibharana

The temple of Grameshvara is situated on the bank of sacred river Prachi and at the centre of the village Nibharana in the Niali Block of Cuttack district of Odisha. It is exactly located at a distance of 54 kms from Bhubaneswar and 5 kms from the Nuahat Bus stand.³ The temple is dedicated to "Grameshvara Mahadeva". This temple is considered by the local people as one of the "Dvadasha Sambhus" on the bank of river Prachi.⁴ In course of the field survey of the temple, three rare sculptures/ images are noticed to the authors. Out of these, two images are found preserved inside the jagamohana of the temple. They are the images of Narayana and Risavanatha. The image of Narayana is being worshipped in the south-east corner of the jagamohana hall. The four

handed image of Narayana is carved seated in padmasana on the double petalled lotus pedestal. He holds padma, sankha, gada and chakra in his four hands. Garuda, in the shape of winged a human being is carved to the left of the pedestal. On the opposite side of the Garuda image, there is a female figure depicted in standing posture showing anjali mudra. Tiny figure of a female is depicted on both sides of the slab of the deity. The figure of simha vidala is decorated on the

centre of both sides of the slab. The backside of the head of the deity is adorned with makara headed trefoil arch. The figures of Brahma and Vishnu are carved on either side of the makara headed arch. Flying apsara figures holding garlands are nicely delineated on top corners of the slab. The slab of the Narayana image measures 36 inches x 20 inches. Iconographical features of the Narayana image indicate that it might have been built in the



Ganga period. The image of Narayana is made of chlorite stone. The other sculpture is of a rare image of Lord Risavanatha, which is kept in the north-east corner of the jagamohana. The image of Lord Risavanatha is being worshipped in different forms by the local people. Some devotees worship it as Lord Buddha, some wrongly believe it as Kandarpa and others consider it as Kamadeva. Radha Charana Panda is of the view that the image is of Lord Buddha.⁵ The 'Prachi Valley Report' records it as an image of Parshvanatha of the Jaina pantheon.⁶ Most probably this image is of the Jaina Tirthankara Risavanatha. The two handed image of Lord Risavanatha is carved seated cross legged in yogasana pose on the visvapadma. Both the palms of hands are kept one on another at the crossing point of the legs. The gesture of the image suggests that the deity is in meditative pose. Chauri bearer figure is depicted standing posture on both sides of Lord Risavanatha in the attitude of rendering service.⁷ The backside of the head of Risavanatha is ornamented with trefoil arch, which is surmounted by three tiered umbrella. Above the three tiered umbrella is carved with a Kevala tree appears on the head of Lord Risavanatha. Flying apsaras holding garlands, cymbals and drum played by Vidyadhara are found carved on both side top corners of the slab. Scroll works appear in the slab as the space fillers. Champaka flower medallion is decorated on both side upper part of the stone slab containing the Tirthankara image. Hairs on the head of Lord Risavanatha are arranged in jata, a few strands of which are seen falling on the shoulders. A series of devotees in kneeling posture with folded hands are carved on the lower part of the pedestal of deity. Bull, the conventional mount of the Tirthankara is carved at the centre of the lotus pedestal. Bull is the distinct traditional associate of Risavanatha. Spirited lion is flanked on both sides of the bull figure. The slab of the

deity measures 39.5 inches x 12 inches.⁸ The image of Lord Risavanatha is designed in black chlorite. Observing the Risavanatha image, R.P. Mohapatra remarks that stylistically the image can be placed in the Ganga period.⁹ The existence of the image of Lord Risavanatha indicates that the Jaina images were being worshipped in some places of the Prachi Valley. On the basis of this scanty evidence, we can presume that Jainism was also flourished in the Prachi Valley during the medieval period.

The sanctum of the additional shrine of the Gramesvara temple preserves the image of Lord Vishnu as the presiding deity of it. The four armed Vishnu image is carved in standing posture on the double petalled lotus pedestal or visvapadma. The deity exhibits sankha, padma, gada and chakra in his four hands. Garuda, the custom way conveyance of the deity is carved to the right of the pedestal. There is a female devotee depicted on opposite side of Garuda figure. A female figure is decorated on the basement of both sides of the slab. Female figure is found to be carved on both sides of the slab. The backside of the head of deity is decorated with three curved arch surmounted by the kirtimukha motif. The figures of Brahma and Siva are chiselled at the end of either side of the trefoil arch. Apsara figures holding musical instruments in their hands are sculpted at both sides of the trefoil arch. The slab of the presiding deity of the shrine measures 21.5 inches x 41 inches. The image of Lord Vishnu is made of chlorite stone. The face is oval, the chest is broad and krita mukuta is high. The ear rings, neck lets, necklace, the beaded sacred thread, armlets, wristlets are beautifully chiselled. Girdle, dhoti with diaphanous draperies, shrivelled waists, slender but proportionate physiognomy suggests unmistakably an early date may be Somavamsi period to the image. Here Lord Vishnu stands in samabhanga attitude.



Ganesha Image of Amareshvara Temple at Amareshvara

The Amareshvara temple is situated at Amareshvara village on the bank of river Prachi located at a distance of about 60 kms from Bhubaneswar.¹⁰ Ganesha is the southern side parshvadevata of the temple. The four armed Ganesha image is finely engraved in seated posture on the double petalled lotus podium. The deity holds broken tusk, a pot of ladus, japamala, a paśupata in his four hands. Mouse, the conventional mount of deity is carved on the right of the pedestal. The back side of the head of deity is decorated with trefoil makara headed arch. Full blown lotus flower is carved on both side top corners of the slab. The image Ganesha is made of chlorite stone. It measures 1 foot 7 inches in height and 1 foot and 3 inches in width respectively.¹¹ Iconographic features of the Ganesha image indicate the Odishan classical art of the late Somavamsi period.

Uma-Maheshvara Image of Angeshvara Temple at Pitapara

The Angeshvara temple is situated at the village Pitapara located at the distance of about 61 kms away from Bhubaneswar on the northern bank of the river Prachi.¹² There is a modern flat roof shed built in the north-east

corner of the Angesvara temple complex. This shed preserves some loose sculptures of different gods and goddesses of the Brahminical pantheon. One of them is a rare image of Uma-Maheshvara noticed inside the shed. A stone slab containing the yugala figure of Siva -Parvati (Uma-Maheshvara) is found preserved in that shed. Both the Siva and Parvati images are engraved in lalitasana pose on double petalled lotus podium. The conventional mounts of Devi Parvati and Lord Siva such as Lion and bull are carved on either side bottom part of the pedestal. Lord Siva (Maheshvara) displays rosary, abhaya mudra, trident in three hands and the one hand embraces Devi Parvati (Uma). Here Devi Parvati is carved in lalitasana pose on the left lap of Maheshvara. The face of Devi Parvati is completely broken. The right arm of Devi Parvati lies on the shoulder of Lord Siva while the left arm of Devi holds an indistinct object. The backside of the head of Uma-Maheshvara image is ornamented by trefoil arch. Flying apsara figure is carved on both side top corners of the slab. The image Uma-Maheshvara measures 18 inches x 30 inches and it is made of granite stone. Stylistic ground, Uma-Maheshvara image possesses the artistic features of the Odishan classical art of the Ganga period.



Parvati image of Someshvara temple at Samesvara

The temple of Someshvara is located at the village Samesvara, which is situated at a distance of 1½ km from Kakatpur Block in the Puri district.¹³ Devi Parvati is the northern side parshvadevata of the Someshvara temple. She is four armed but two of her lower arms are now completely broken and with two upper arms. She perfectly looks like a two armed goddess.¹⁴ Here Devi Parvati is engraved in

standing pose on the double petalled lotus podium. She holds rosary in right side hand and a lotus in the left hand. Lion, conventional mount of Devi Parvati is carved on the right of the pedestal. Female attendant figure holding nagapasha and ankusha is depicted on both side bottom parts of the slab. Similar diminutive attendant figure holding nagapasha and ankusha is carved at the centre of both sides of the slab. These two diminutive attendant figures are

flanked on both sides of Devi Parvati. She wears a complete set of ornaments dangling earrings, necklaces, heavy bracelets and anklets, armlets, highly ornamented girdle and bejewelled tiara.¹⁵ The backside of the head of Devi Parvati is adorned with trefoil arch. Vidyadhara and apsara figures are carved on both side top corners of the slab. They are carved displaying chamara, garlands and other attributes in their hands. The bottom part of the pedestal of Devi Parvati is decorated with scroll work. The image Parvati measures 40 inches x 21 inches. This image is a very beautiful from the iconographical point of view.

Four Images from Grameshvara Temple of Lataharana

The Grameshvara temple is situated about 3 kilometers to the south-west of Kakatpur and the river Prachi.¹⁶ The temple is exactly located at the centre of the village Lataharana in the Kakatpur Block of the Puri district. Ganesha is the southern side parshvadevata of the Grameshvara temple. The eight armed image of Ganesha is carved in dancing posture on the plain pedestal. The upper two hands of the deity possess snake, the lower right hand displays rosary, the two hands of the right side are completely broken, other two hands of the left side display broken tusk and kuthara(hatchet) and the rest hand of the left side is already broken from the arm portion. This variety of Ganesha image is known as 'Nrutya Ganapati' of the Prachi Valley.¹⁷ From the artistic point of view, the image deserves the attention of scholars as well as devotees. The description

of this type of Ganesha image is found mentioned in the Silpasasstra.¹⁸ The image Ganesha is made of sand stone. The slab of deity measures 17 inches x 26 inches. Devi Parvati is the parshvadevata of the northern side. The four armed image of Devi Parvati is carved in standing posture on the double petalled lotus pedestal. The higher right hand of Devi Parvati is fragmented from the wrist portion, the lesser right hand holds rosary with downward posture, the upper left hand is also broken from the wrist and the lower left hand is broken from the arm. In one side of the lower part of the slab is decorated with diminutive female figure who holds nagapasha in one hand and the opposite side female figure displays a full blown lotus with stalk. These two female figures are housed in the pidha mundi niches of both sides of the slab. Trefoil makara headed arch is carved on the backside of the head of Devi Parvati. Flying apsara figure is finely carved on both side top corners of the slab. Diminutive vidyadhara figure is carved on both sides of the kirtimukha motif. The slab of Devi Parvati measures 16½ inches x 17 inches. All these three side deities are housed in the pidha mundii niches. The pidha mundi is projected out at the central niche of the bada wall of the vimana. Here T.E. Donaldson is of the view that the parshvadevatas of the temple can be assigned to the 11th-12th centuries.¹⁹ Iconographical features of the parshvadevatas indicate that these images were possibly made in the early part of the Ganga period. Most probably, these are the original side deities of the temple.



A very important image depicting a Jaina couple (Gomedha-Ambika) has been brought to light at the southern side additional shrine of the Grameshvara temple of Lataharana. The Jaina couple named Yaksha Gomedha and Yakshini Ambika has been carved seated in ardhaparyanka pose on a common pedestal. The local people consider it as Hara-Parvati. The lower part of the lotus pedestal of the image is decorated by seven devotees seated in folded hands amidst heaps of offerings. The figure of Ambika displays a bunch of mangoes in right hand, and holds a baby in left-hand. Image of Gomedha on the other hand holds a group of mangoes in right big hand and left hand rests on the thigh. Both the figures wore simple lion clothes in the same style and bear on them same types of ornaments, the only exception being in the conical head dress of the Yaksha and the round hairdo of the Yakshini.²⁰ Both of them reveal the same meditative

expression with half closed eyes fixed at the tips of the noses, while their faces lit with smile indicate that they are not completely indifferent to the world outside.²¹ A mango tree is depicted in the background of the slab. From the trunk of the tree a baby is found swinging in between the couple. At the top (above their heads), Tirthankara Naminatha is found seated in yogasana pose on a lotus pedestal.²² On either side of the Tirthankara, cauri bearers are also found carved with artistic care. The image of the Jaina couple measures 17½ inches in height and 9 inches in width respectively.²³ Observing the iconography of the Jaina couple, some senior scholars remark that the Jaina couple image belongs to the 11th century A.D.²⁴ The image of Jaina couple represents the best work of the Jaina sculptors who have been able to represent here the combination of beauty with plastic art.



There are two Vishnu images found inside the flat roof shed of the northern side of the Grameshvara temple complex of Lataharana. Out of these, one large sized fine image of Lord Vishnu is recorded here. The image of Lord Vishnu is carved in standing attitude on double petalled lotus podium. Here Lord Vishnu displays chakra, varada mudra, sankha and gada in four hands. Sridevi and Bhudevi figures are carved on either side of the slab. The bottom part of the pedestal is decorated with a series of female devotees who are depicted in kneeling posture with folded hands. Garuda, the vehicle of Lord Vishnu is carved in kneeling posture on the right of the pedestal. The diminutive female figure is carved on both side centres of the slab. The trefoil arch is carved in the backside of the head of deity. Figures of Brahma and Vishnu are

carved on either side base of the arch. Apsaras and gandharvas holding musical instruments like drum and cymbal are carved on both sides of the decorative arch. They are depicted in dancing posture with good performance. The slab of deity measures 26 inches x 53 inches. Observing this Vishnu image, Radha Charana Panda says that the image was collected from a ruined Vishnu temple of that locality. He also remarks that this Vishnu image was also made as the witness of the Dvadasha Sambhus of the Prachi Valley.²⁵ The image of deity is made of chlorite stone. Here the image of Lord Vishnu is being worshipped in the name of Madhava. The available Madhava images represent characteristics features of Lord Vishnu found abundantly in the entire length and breadth of the Prachi Valley.²⁶



Ganesha Image of the Sovaneshvara temple at Nuagaon

The temple of Sovaneshvara is one of the important Saiva shrines of the Prachi Valley in Odisha. It is situated about 1 km from the Niali Bazar in the district of Cuttack. The temple is located at the village Nuagaon near Niali and it is about 50 kms from Bhubaneswara on the left bank of river Prachi.²⁷ This temple is generally considered as one of the "Dvadasha Sambhus" on the bank of river Prachi.²⁸ The image Ganesha is the southern side parshvadevata of the Sovaneshvara temple. The four armed image of Ganesha is engraved in standing pose on double petalled lotus podium. The lower part of the pedestal is decorated with kneeling devotees, sacrificial yugas in both sides and lotus bud with stalk.

Mouse, the conventional mount of deity is carved on the left of the pedestal. Diminutive attendant figure holding jack fruit is carved on both sides of the deity. Trefoil arch is found designed on the backside of head of Ganesha. Vidyadhara and apsara figures holding garlands, musical instruments, chamaras are depicted on both side top corners of the slab. The image Ganesha displays broken tusk, rosary, a pot of ladus and a kuthara (hatchet) in his four hands. Ganesha is ornately bejewelled with his yajnaopavita and anklets being formed by serpents. The image Ganesha measures 53 inches x 27 inches. On the stylistic ground, the Ganesha image possesses the artistic features of the Odishan classical art of the Ganga period



Buddha Image of the Dakshinesvara temple of Bagalpur

The Dakshinesvara temple situated at Bagalpur of the Govindpur Police Station of the Cuttack district. The temple is located at a distance of 3 kms from Kantapara.²⁹ There are some loose sculptures preserved inside a modern asbestos roof shed noticed in the eastern side of the main deula. Out of the extant sculptures of the shed, the Buddha image is one of them. The two armed image of Lord Buddha is carved in padmasana pose on the double petalled lotus pedestal. The

right hand lies on the right knee with varada mudra while the left hand is in abhaya mudra and keeping it at the centre of the crossed legs. The lower part of the pedestal is decorated with scroll work flanked by lotus bud. The backside of the head of deity is decorated with prabhavamandala. His head is crowned by a jatamukuta. He wears a necklace and a sacred thread in his body. The image Buddha is made of sand stone. Apsara figure is carved on both sides of prabhavamandala. The image Buddha measures 1 foot 4½ inches in height and 10½ inches in width respectively.³⁰ The iconography of Buddha image suggests the artistic features of the Odishan classical art of the medieval period.



Rishabhanatha Image of Svapneshvara temple at Adaspur

The temple of Svapneshvara is situated about 37 kms from Bhubaneswar on the eastern bank of the river Prachi.³¹ In the left side doorway wall of the sanctum is fixed with an image of Jaina Tirthankara, Rishabhanatha. The two armed image of Rishabhanatha is carved in standing posture on the double petalled lotus pedestal. The Tirthankara image is found depicted in kayotsarga pose and in complete nudity.³² Both the hands of deity hang downward posture. The Lanchan bull is carved at the centre of the bottom part of the pedestal. Female devotees are carved in kneeling posture on both sides of the bull figure at the bottom part of the pedestal. Figures of Bharata and Bahavali holding fly whisks are carved on both sides of the slab in the gesture of rendering service to the Adinatha.³³ Diminutive figures of 24 Tirthankaras are finely carved on the slab. Ten Tirthankaras are carved on each side of the slab. Four Tirthankaras are

found depicted on the pedestal of the deity. The backside of the head of Aishabhanatha is decorated with prabhavamandala, which is carved with lotus petal designs surmounted by a trilinear umbrella. Flying apsara figure is depicted on both side top corners of the slab. The image Rishabhanatha is made of black chlorite stone. The slab of deity (Rishabhanatha) measures 20½ inches x 10½ inches. It seems to be the representation of the last Tirthankara Mahavira who with the First Tirthankara (Rishabhanatha) commonly appears in the Jaina sculptures of Odisha.³⁴ The peculiarities of the image will lead one to identify Rishabhanatha as Mulanayaka.³⁵ This indicates that Adinatha was the temple cult of this locality and a temple enshrining this deity might have been situated in the vicinity of the Svapneshvara temple.³⁶ Here, P.K. Ray has assigned the image Rishabhanatha to circa 7th century A.D.³⁷ The image of Rishabhanatha was possibly made in the 11th-12th centuries A.D. on the ground of iconographical features.



Durga Image of Vandeshvara Temple of Chahata

The temple of Vandeshvara is situated at the village Chahata in the Nimapara Police station of the Puri district. The sanctum of the Vandeshvara temple has also preserved an image of Mahisamardini Durga. She is also being worshipped in the sanctum. The ten armed image of Mahisamardini Durga is carved in standing posture on the body of Mahisasura. The right side five hands of goddess Durga hold

khadga, nagapasha, chakra, trident and arrow while the left side hands possess bow, shield, pasankusha, rein of the asura and the attribute in upper hand is missing. Here Devi Durga is piercing the head of the asura by trident. Both the figures of lion and buffalo are engraved on the lower part of slab. Image Durga is depicted in ugra posture and it is made of black chlorite. This Durga image is noticed in the north-west corner of the sanctum.



Uma Mahesvara Image of Siddheshvara Temple of Mudgala

The temple of Siddheshvara is one of the Saiva shrines of the Prachi Valley in Odisha. It is situated about 5 kms from Jinti on a bifurcation away from the Kakatpur-Astarang road.³⁸ In the right side niche of the doorway of the sanctum houses the image of Uma-Maheshvara. The four handed image of Lord Siva(Maheshvara) is carved in lalitasana pose on the double petalled lotus pedestal. The upper two hands of Lord Siva display rosary and trident. The lower side right hand shows abhaya mudra and the rest lower left hand embraces the breast of Devi Parvati (Uma). Here Devi Uma is engraved in seated pose on left lap of Lord Maheshvara. Her right hand lies on the shoulder of Lord Siva and the left arm holds shield. Both the images of Lord Siva and Parvati are depicted in yugala posture. The bottom part of the pedestal is decorated with scroll work, kneeling devotees, etc. Lion and bull, the conventional mounts of Devi Parvati and Lord Siva are also found depicted on the pedestal. The trefoil arch is designed in the backside of the heads of these yugala deities. Flying apsara figure is finely depicted on both side top corners of the slab. They are displaying lotus flowers in their hands. The image of Siva-Parvati (Uma-Maheshvara) is made of chlorite stone. It measures 36 inches x 20 inches. Such type of Siva-Parvati yugala murti is said by scholars as Uma-Maheshvara, which is a masterpiece sculpture of Prachi valley by considering its iconographic significance.

Parvati Image of Gatanatha temple at Badakhalgaon

The temple of Gatanatha is located at village Badakhalgaon in Kantapara Block of the Cuttack district. This temple is situated about 6 kms from Adaspur and 4 kms from the Prachi river. Devi Parvati is the northern side parshvadevata of the Gatanatha temple. The four armed image of Devi Parvati is carved in standing posture on the twofold petalled lotus podium. Devi Parvati possesses nagapasha in upper right hand, rosary in lower right hand, stalk of the lotus in lower left hand and the upper left hand is broken. The backside of the head of Devi Parvati is carved with trefoil arch crowned by the kirtimukha motif. Diminutive female figure is depicted on either side of the arch. Apsara figure holding garland is carved on both side top corners of the slab. The image Parvati is made of sand stone. The slab of Devi Parvati is about 2 feet in height. The image Parvati may be dated to the Post-Ganga period.

Narayana Image of Ishvaranatha temple at Narisha

The temple of Ishvaranatha is one of the Saiva shrines of the Prachi Valley. It is located at the village Narisha in the Balipatna Block of the Khurda district. A detached sculpture of Narayana is found to be preserved in the jagamohana hall. The four armed image of Narayana is carved in standing posture on the double petalled lotus pedestal. The bottom part of the pedestal is decorated with female devotees in kneeling posture, bell, scroll work, etc. The deity Narayana displays chakra in one hand and other three hands are broken. Garuda, the conventional mount of the deity is

carved on the right of the pedestal. Sridevi and Bhudevi figures are found carved on each side of Narayana. Diminutive Chauri bearer figure is depicted on both side centres of the slab. The trefoil arch is found designed on backside of the head of Narayana. Apsara figures holding garlands and musical instruments are depicted on both side top corners of the slab. The image Narayana measures 38 ½ inches x 20 inches. It is made of chlorite stone. Style and iconography of the image of Narayana suggest the artistic features of the Odishan classical art of the Ganga period.

Vishnu image of the Rameshvara temple at Sohagpur

The temple of Rameshvara is one of ancient Saiva shrines located at Sohagpur under the Kakatpur Police Station of the Puri district. The temple is situated about 2 kms from Panichhatra on the left bank of the river Prachi.³⁹ The natamandapa of the temple preserves a good specimen of the sculpture of Vishnu. The four handed image of Vishnu (Madhava) is carved in standing posture on the double petalled lotus pedestal. The centre of the bottom part of the pedestal is decorated with scroll work, female devotee figure is depicted in kneeling posture on both sides of the pedestal. Garuda, the conventional mount of the deity is carved in kneeling posture on the right of the pedestal. Sridevi and Bhudevi are bordered on both sides slab of Vishnu image. Chauri bearer figure is carved on the centre of both sides of the slab. The image Vishnu displays chakra, varada mudra, gada in his three hands and the upper left arm is broken from the elbow portion. Trefoil arch is decorated on backside of the head of deity. Diminutive figures of Bramha and Siva are carved on either side base of the trefoiled arch. Apsara figures holding garland and musical instrument like drum, cymbal, conch, etc. are depicted on both side top corners of the slab. The image Vishnu is made of chlorite stone. It measures 48 inches x 24 inches. Observing this Vishnu image, P.K. Ray remarks that the beautiful image of Vishnu of the natamandapa was initially the presiding deity of the Vishnu temple, which existed on the bank of river Prachi in the remote past.⁴⁰ This Vishnu image has been preserved inside the temple in the first half of the twentieth century.

CONCLUSION

We come to know that the Saiva temples of Prachi valley preserve a good number of fine specimens of sculptures of various sects of Indian religions. The systematic surveys made by the present authors reveal that Jainism and Buddhism flourished simultaneously with Saivism, Saktism and Vaishnavism as sculptures of above pantheons noticed in the different Saiva temples of Prachi valley of Odisha. Some fine specimens of Jaina images are found preserved in the different Saiva shrines of the Prachi Valley. A rare image of Risavanatha is found preserved in the jagamohana of the Gramesvara temple of Nibharana. Iconography of the image of Lord Risavanatha of Nibharana symbolizes the features of the Odishan classical art of the Ganga period. Another beautiful image of Risavanatha has been fixed on the doorway wall of the renovated Svapneshvara temple of Adaspur. On the stylistic ground, the image of Rishabhanatha of Svapnesvara temple possesses the Odishan classical art of the late Somavamsi period. A very important image depicting a Jaina couple has been brought to light at Lataharana in the Prachi Valley. The Jaina couple named Yaksha-Gomedha and Yakshini-Ambika has been carved seated in ardhaparyanka pose on a common pedestal. The extant images of Jaina Tirthankara clearly suggest that Jainism had a strong base in the Prachi Valley sometimes during the early medieval period. Subsequently, the Jainas had accepted Vaishnavism of the Hindu pantheon in the modern period and they lost their separate identity. In some of the Saiva temples, images of Lord Vishnu are also found to be worshipped by the local devotees. Most of the Vaishnavite images are very important from the artistic point of view. The Narayana image of Nibharana is one of the best specimens of the Odishan classical art of the Ganga period. The additional shrine of the Gramesvara temple of Nibharana preserves the image of

Lord Vishnu, which is worshipped as Madhava. The four handed image of Lord Vishnu possesses the artistic features of the late Somavamsi period of Odishan history. Iconographic features of the Ganesha image of Amaresvara temple show the Odishan classical art of the Somavamsi period. Stylistic ground, Uma-Maheshvara image of Angesvara temple complex retains the artistic features of the Odishan classical art of the Ganga period. The eight armed Ganesha image of Lataharana is known as 'Nruty Ganapati' of the Prachi Valley. From the artistic point of view, the Ganesha image attracts the attention of art historians, scholars and devotees. Iconographical features of the Ganesha image indicate the Odishan classical art of the early part of the Ganga period. The Yaksha Gomedha and Yakshini Ambika image of Lataharana represents the best work of the Kalingan School of artists who gave more emphasis upon the combination of beauty with plastic art. The image of Lord Vishnu preserved in the additional shrine of Gramesvara temple of Lataharana was possibly collected from a ruined Vishnu temple of that locality. It represents the artistic features of the early Ganga art of Odisha. The Ganesha image of Sovanesvara temple is elaborately ornamented with his yajnaopavita and anklets being formed by serpents. It is a fine specimen of the sculpture masterpiece of the Prachi valley of Odisha. The most important Buddha image of the Prachi Valley is depicted in bhumisparsa-mudra found in the Dakshinesvara Siva temple of Bagalpur. The iconography of Buddha image proposes the artistic features of the Odishan classical art of the Ganga period. The alingana murti of Uma and Maheshvara retains the individuality of Lord Siva and his Sakti although they are locked together in eternal embrace. This type of Uma- Maheshvara image of the alingana type is noticed in the Siddhesvara temple of Mudgal. It is a masterpiece sculpture of Prachi valley by considering its unique iconographic features. On the stylistic ground, the Narayana image of Ishvaranatha temple of Narisha suggest the artistic features of the Ganga art of Odisha. The image Vishnu (Madhava) noticed in the natamandapa of the Rameshvara temple of Sohagpur was possibly brought from any nearby ruined Vishnu temple, which is not existed till today. Iconography of the Vishnu image of Rameshvara temple contains the artistic features of the Odishan art of the Ganga period. Most of the images of the Sava temples of Prachi valley mentioned in the fact are ornately bejewelled with the different types of ornaments like kiritamukutas, necklaces, necklets, armlets, anklets, bracelets, dangling ear rings, beaded sacred threads, girdles, etc. The body ornaments of the rare images of the Saiva temples of Prachi valley rightly represent the traditional art style of Odisha in Eastern India. From the artistic point of view, the above images are the fine workmanship of the Odishan sculptors of the medieval period. On the ground of style and iconography, the extant rare images of the Saiva temples of Prachi valley discussed above can be rightly considered as Sculpture masterpieces of Odisha in Eastern India.

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