

Research Article**AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON TWO HINDU MONUMENTS OF THE COASTAL BELT OF ODISHA IN INDIA****Dr. Ratnakar Mohapatra¹**

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present article is to highlight the architectural features along with the religious significance of the two Shaiva temples of the coastal belt of Odisha in Eastern India. The art and architectural designs of the Shaiva monuments of the coastal belt of Odisha are important aspect of the Hindu art of Eastern India. The Hindu monuments of the coastal belt of Odisha represent the Kalinga style architecture of India. Most of the medium size Hindu temples of the coastal belt of Odisha have not been dealt by the art historians. Here, two new Shaiva temples of the coastal belt of Odisha have been taken by the author for present discussion. They are such as 1. Kshemanatha temple of Bankihati and 2. Nilakanthesvara temple of Nilakanthapur. The earlier art historians have not dealt with these two temples in their respective scholarly works. These two monuments need intensive study for art historians and archaeologists to undertake research works. Though the first temple is mainly dedicated to Lord Kshemanatha Siva, however still some old loose sculptures of the various deities of Hindu pantheon are found to be preserved in its complex. The Nilakanthesvara temple of Nilakanthapur is one of the renovated monuments of that locality. The presence of Narasimha image in the eastern side *bada* wall of the *jagamohana* of the Nilakanthesvara temple of Nilakanthapur suggest that the shrine is associated with Vishnavism. Kshemanatha temple at Bankihati and the Nilakanthesvara temple of Nilakanthapur are made in the design of *pidha* type temple of the Kalinga style architecture of Odisha. Both the primary and secondary sources have been methodologically utilized for the writing of the present article.

Keywords: Hindu, monuments, temple, architecture, Shaiva, Coastal belt, Odisha, India

I INTRODUCTION

The coastal belt of Odisha is famous in India for its historic monuments of different sects of Hinduism. A good number of Shaiva temples are found to be erected in the different places of the coastal belt of Odisha. Shaivism was the dominant religion in the coastal-belt of Odisha from the 7th century onwards and reached the peak of its glory during the Somavamsi period in the 10th-11th century A.D. (Behera & Donaldson, 1998, pp.29-31). Odisha is famous as the land of temples and the Odishan builders have developed not only a special nomenclature of their own but a distinct style of building art known as the 'Kalinga style' (Das, 1958, p.9). The coastal belt of Odisha is famous as a place of Shaivism prior to the development of Vaishnavism on that sacred soil. Most of the imposing monuments found in the coastal belt of Odisha are dedicated to the honour of Lord Shiva. Some of the Shiva temples have also been erected in the modern period. The extant Hindu temples of the coastal belt of Odisha represent the Kalinga style architecture of Odisha. The Odisha temple style

architecture is divided into four types such as *rekha*, *pidha (bhadra)*, *khakhara* and *Gauriya* (Bose, 1931, p.78). Odishan temples form a class by themselves and these Hindu monuments can be conveniently labelled as “Kalinga style” (Behera, 1993, p.1). All the extant Saiva temples of the coastal belt of Odisha represent both the *rekha* and *pidha* types of the Odishan temple architecture. Most of the medium size temples of the coastal belt of Odisha have not been dealt by the art historians. Here, two new Shaiva temples/monuments like Kshemanatha temple of Bankihati and the Nilakanthesvara temple of Nilakanthapur of the coastal belt of Odisha have been taken here for discussion. The present article is to focus on the artistic and architectural features of the above two Shaiva temples/monuments of the coastal belt of Odisha in Eastern India.

II METHODOLOGY

Both the primary and secondary sources have been used in the writing of present article. The primary data have been collected through Gazetteers, Texts, unpublished thesis, the practical observation, public opinions, hearsay accounts and interview methods during the period of experimental field survey. The collected data with regard to the art, architecture and religious significance of the Kshemanatha temple of Bankihati and Nilakanthesvara temple of Nilakanthapur of the coastal belt of Odisha is primarily based on practical observations through the empirical study by the author. The secondary data relating to the present article are Books, Journals, Periodicals, Manuscripts, Antiquities, Records, Reports, etc. The data collected from both the primary and secondary sources are utilised in the present article.

III. DISCUSSION AND RESULT ANALYSIS

3. Two Hindu Monuments of the Coastal Belt of Odisha

The coastal belt of Odisha was filled with rapid flow of Shaivism as evidenced by the presence of a number of Shaiva monuments of the Hinduism. Out of all the extant Shaiva monuments of the coastal belt of Odisha, two temples have been taken here by the author for discussion. These two Shaivite temples are noticed in the Cuttack and Puri districts of the state of Odisha in Eastern India. The names and sites of these temples are such as 1. Kshemanatha temple of Bankihati and Nilakanthesvara temple of Nilakanthapur. It is known from the practical field study that these two Shiva temples of the coastal belt of Odisha have been renovated in the 20th century. The descriptions of different aspects like art, architecture along with religious significance of the above two Shaiva temples of the coastal belt of Odisha are briefly discussed below.

3.1. Kshemanatha temple of Bankihati

The temple of Kshemanatha is one of the important Shaiva shrines of the Prachi Valley in Odisha. It is located at the village Bankihati in the Niali Block of the Cuttack district. This temple is situated about 7 kms from Niali Bazar and also 7½ km from the Prachi river (Mohapatra, 2017, p.257). Architectural pattern of the temple suggests that it was possibly built in the post-Gajapati period of Odishan history. Although the temple is primarily dedicated to Lord Kshemanatha Siva, but still it's complex preserves some old loose sculptures of the various deities of Hindu pantheon. The temple has been completely renovated in 1970's by the efforts of villagers (Mohapatra, 2017, p.258). This temple consists of two structures such as



vimana and *jagamohana*. It is built in sand stones. The earlier art historians have not dealt with this temple in their respective scholarly works in detail. So it is completely a good temple for the scholarly works. Hence a modest attempt has been made by the present author to highlight the detailed art and architecture of the temple of Kshemanatha.

The *vimana* of the temple is a *saptarathapidhadeula* and its height is about 30 feet from the surface of the temple complex (Mohapatra, 2017, p.258). It has fourfold vertical divisions such as *pistha*, *bada*, *gandi* and *mastaka*. The *pistha* is about 1 foot high and it is bereft of decorative elements. The *bada* (Borner and Rath Sarma, 1966, p. 142) has four component parts, which are devoid of sculptural elements. The base of the *bada* measures 19 feet 4 inches in the eastern and western sides and 18 feet in the southern and northern sides respectively (Mohapatra, 2017, p.258). The *bada* is mostly undecorated except the central niches of the three sides.

The central niches of the three sides of the *bada* are housed with the *parsvadevata* images of Ganesha, Kartikeya and Parvati. The four armed image of Ganesha is carved in *vajraparyankasana* pose on the pedestal. The bottom part of the pedestal is decorated with jackfruits and *dhupadanis*. He holds broken tusk in upper right hand, rosary in lower right hand, hatchet (*parasu*) in upper left hand and a pot of *ladus* in lower left hand respectively. The image Ganesha is made of sand stone. It measures 2 feet 5 inches in width and 4 feet 3 inches in height respectively (Mohapatra, 2017, p.258). The deity wears a *sarpayajnopavita* in his right knee. The image Kartikeya is the *parsvadevata* of the western side. The two handed image of Kartikeya is carved in *lalitasana* pose on the peacock. The image is slightly different from other Kartikeya images of Odisha. The right hand of deity lies on his right knee while the left hand holds a staff (*danda*). The male attendant figure is depicted on both sides of the head of deity. The image Kartikeya is eroded by nature. The backside of the head of deity is decorated with *prabhamandala*. He wears a sacred thread in his body. The image Kartikeya is made of sand stone. The slab of deity measures 2 feet 3 inches in width and 4 feet 3 inches in height respectively (Mohapatra, 2017, p.257). Devi Parvati is the *parsvadevata* of the northern side. The four armed image of



Devi Parvati is carved in standing posture on the pedestal. She displays rosary in upper right hand, *varada mudra* with lotus mark in lower right hand, trident in upper left hand and *sankha* in lower left hand. Lion, the conventional mount of Devi Parvati is found depicted on the right of the pedestal. The decorated arch is found carved above the head of Devi Parvati. The slab of Devi Parvati measures 2 feet 3 inches in width and 3 feet 8 inches in height respectively (Mohapatra, 2017, p.259). A new lion figure is installed in front of Devi Parvati. Stylistically, all the side deities are assignable to the late medieval period. The iconographic features of the above *parsvadevata* images contain the features of the Odishan classical art of the 18th century A.D. (Mohapatra, 2017, p.250). These three *parsvadevata* images are housed in the *pidhamundi* niches and they are the

original side deities of the temple. The *baranda* of the *bada* is devoid of decorative elements.

The *gandi* of the *vimana* is a pyramidal superstructure and it continues the *saptaratha* plan of the *bada*. The *gandi* consists of seven flat shaped *pidhas*. Each *pidha* is

decorated with *tankus* in all sides. The centre of the *rahapaga* of each side is decorated with *pidhamastaka* design, which is surmounted by the *jhapasimha*. *DeulaCharini* figures are inserted in the four cardinal directions of the *beki* above *rahas*. *Dopichha* lions are fixed on the top of *kanikapagas* of the *gandi*. The *mastaka* of the *vimana* consists of *beki*, *amalakasila*, there is another *beki*, *amala*, *khapuri*, *kalasa* (Bose, 1931, p.182), *ayudha* (trident) and *dhvaja*.

The sanctum preserves the *Sivalingam* within the *Saktipitha* as the presiding deity of the temple. The *Sivalinga* is dedicated to Lord Kshemanatha Siva. There is another *Sivalinga* named Balunkesvara found worshipped near the presiding deity. A brass image of Chandrasekhara is being worshipped in the sanctum. An image of Trivikrama-Vishnu is found housed in the backwall niche of the sanctum. The lower part of the image is missing. He holds as usual attributes in his hands. A stone *chakra* is found preserved in the north-west corner of the *garbhagriha*. Presence of the image Trivikrama and stone *chakra* indicate that these were possibly used in the nearby ruined Vaishnava shrine, which has not existed now. The sanctum has one doorway towards the *jagamohana*. The doorway is completely plain. Recently, the *navagrahas* are firmly inserted in the architrave above the doorway lintel. All the *grahas* are depicted in *yogasana* posture with usual attributes in their hands.

The *jagamohana* of the temple is a flat roof structure and it is open. The height of the flat roof is about 14 feet from the surface of the temple complex. Bull, the conventional mount of deity is found installed on the square sized pillar of 3½ feet high. It is noticed at the floor of the *jagamohana*. The *jagamohana* also preserves some old sculptures. Really, the attributes in the hands of some deities are not clearly visible. So, it is very difficult to identify all the images properly. The iconographic features of the available images in the *jagamohana* are being mentioned below.

Parvati: The four armed image of Devi Parvati is carved in seated posture on the double sectional pedestal. She displays rosary in upper right hand, *varada mudra* with lotus mark in lower right hand, the upper left hand holds an indistinct object and the lower left hand is broken from the elbow portion. Lion, the conventional mount of deity is partly visible on the front side of the pedestal and it is not clearly visible. The head of Devi Parvati is completely mutilated by nature. The image Parvati is made of sand stone. It measures 1 foot 4 inches in width and 1 foot 10 inches in height respectively (Mohapatra, 2017, p.260). It is eroded by nature. The iconographic features of Devi Parvati indicates the artistic features of the late Ganga art of Odisha. Really, this Parvati image is earlier than the present temple of Kshemanatha.

Mahisamardini Durga: The eight armed image of goddess Durga is carved in standing posture and she is piercing the heart of Mahisasura by a trident. Attributes in the most of the hands are not clearly visible. Lion, the conventional mount of deity is found on the right of the pedestal. The image of goddess Durga is made of sand stone and it is eroded by nature. This image measures 1 foot 11½ inches in width and 4 feet in height respectively (Mohapatra, 2017, p.260). The iconographic features of the goddess Durga indicate the late Ganga art of Odisha.



Matsya: The two armed image of Matsya is carved in standing posture on the pedestal. Both the hands are broken from the elbow portions. Two human figures are depicted on both sides of the deity. Matsya is one of the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu. He wears a garland in his body. The image Matsya is made of sand stone. It measures 1 foot 7 inches in width and 2 feet in height respectively (Mohapatra, 2017, p.260). Such type of the Matsya image is rare in the whole Prachi

Valley. The presence of this Matsya image points out that the people of the Prachi Valley were also worshipping the *Dasavatara* images of Lord Vishnu.

Lord Bhairava: The two armed image of Lord Bhairava is carved in dancing posture on the pedestal. The lower part of the slab is buried under the floor of the *jagamohana*. He wears a garland of human skulls in his body. The image Bhairava is made of sand stone. The slab of deity is mutilated by nature.

Risi Figure: The two armed image of *risiis* carved in *padmasanaposture* on the double sectional pedestal. He holds a *japamala* in right hand found near the chest. Both the hands are carved depicted near the chest in *jnanamudra*. A diminutive broken human figure is found depicted on the right of the slab. The image of *risiis* made of sand stone and it is about 1½ feet in height.

Unidentified Male figure: A two armed unidentified male deity is carved in standing posture on the pedestal. A diminutive female figure is found depicted on the right of the pedestal. The right arm of this deity displays *varada mudra* and the left hand holds a dagger. The image is made of sand stone. It is about 2 feet in height. All the preserved sculptures in the *jagamohana* hall are possibly earlier than the construction of present temple.

Additional Shrine: Besides the main temple, there is an ajbest roof shed noticed at the south-east corner of the temple complex. It preserves three separate *Sivalingas* in the names of Gramesvara, Rudresvara and Banesvara respectively. This shrine is found erected in front of the *jagamohana*. Bull, the mount of Lord Siva is installed before the additional shrine.

Boundary Wall: The temple complex is enclosed by a boundary wall, which is made of laterite blocks and bricks. It has two gates, one on the eastern side and another on the western side respectively.

Date of the temple: There is no authentic evidence regarding the exact date of the construction period of Kshemanatha temple of Bankihati. The local tradition says that the temple of Kshemanatha was built before the attack of Kalapahara on Odishan Hindu temples. In this regard, HansanathSahoo opines that present Kshemanatha temple of Bankihati was built in the 18th century. Initially, this temple was a thatched shrine. On the basis of the architectural pattern and iconographic features of the *parsvadevatas*, the construction period of the present Kshemanatha temple of Bankihatican be tentatively assigned to the early part of the 18th century A.D.(Mohapatra, 2017, p.261). The available old sculptures of the *jagamohana* indicate that they were possibly used in the earlier than the construction of present temple.

Now the temple is being managed by a local committee of that village.

3.2. Nilakanthesvara temple of Nilakanthapur

The temple of Nilakanthesvara is one of the Saiva shrines of the Prachi Valley in Orissa. It is located at the village Nilakanthapur in the Kakatpur Block of the Puri district. This temple is situated about 2 kms from the Kakatpur Block Office and also 2 kms from the river Prachi (Mohapatra, 2017, p.203). The temple consists of three structures such as *vimana*, *jagamohana* and *bhogamandapa*. Here the *natamandapa* of the temple is open without any structure. The *bhogamandapa* of the temple is recently built by the efforts of villagers. The temple of Nilakanthesvara is not so important from the architectural point of view but it preserves some



sculptures of the medieval period. The earlier Nilakanthesvara temple has been renovated in 1960's by the untiring efforts of the villagers (Mohapatra, 2017, p.257). This temple is built in sand stones and burnt bricks. It faces to east.

The *vimana* of the temple is a *pidhadeula* and its height is about 25 feet from the surface of the temple complex(Mohapatra, 2017, p.204). It has three parts such as *bada*, *gaëdi* and *mastaka*. The *bada* of the *vimana* is devoid of decorative elements. The base of the *bada* measures a square of 16 feet 6 inches. The central niches of the three sides of the *bada* are housed with the *parsvadevata* images of Ganesha, Kartikeya and Parvati. Ganesha is the *parsvadevata* of the southern side. The four armed image of Ganesha is carved in standing posture on the pedestal. He holds a pot of *ladus* in upper left hand, *parasu* in lower left hand, rosary in lower right hand and the upper right hand is broken from the elbow portion(Mohapatra, 2017, p.204). Mouse, the conventional mount of deity is not found depicted on the pedestal. The image Ganesha is made of sand stone. It measures 1 foot 4 inches in width and 2 feet 3 inches in height respectively (Mohapatra, 2017, p.204).



Kartikeya is the *parsvadevata* of the western side. The two armed image of Kartikeya is carved in standing posture on the double sectional pedestal. Peacock, the conventional mount of deity is found depicted on the right of the pedestal. He holds the rooster cock in left hand and the right hand of deity is feeding the peacock. Debasena figure is depicted lifting the legs of the rooster cock. The image Kartikeya is made of soft sand stone and it is eroded by nature. It measures 1 foot 1 inch in width and 2 feet in height respectively (Mohapatra, 2017, p.204). Devi Parvati is the *parsvadevata* of the northern side. The four armed image of Devi Parvati is carved in standing posture on the double petalled lotus pedestal. She holds full blown lotus flower in upper right hand, stalk of the lotus flower in upper left hand, lotus bud in lower left hand and the lower right hand possesses an indistinct object. The backside of the head of deity is decorated with trefoil arch. The image Parvati is made of sand stone. It measures 1 foot 2 inches in width and 2 feet ½ inch in height respectively(Mohapatra, 2017, p.204). The image Parvati is housed in the *pidhamundi* niche. There is a *rekha* type of miniature *nisa*-shrine recently built in front of Devi Parvati. Lion figures are installed on both sides of the *nisa* shrine. The roof of the *nisa* shrine is supported by two pillars, which are decorated with *chauri* bearer figures.

The *gandi* of the *vimana* is a pyramidal superstructure and it displays five *rathas* or *pagas*. The pyramidal superstructure consists of five flat shaped *pidhas* and each *pidha* is decorated with *tankus* in all sides. The entire *gandi* is devoid of sculptural figures. *DeulaCharini* figures and *dopichha* lions are not found in their respective places above the *gandi*. The *mastaka* of the *vimana* consists of *beki*, *ghanta*, above which there is another *beki*, *amalakasila*, *khapuri*, *kalasa*, *ayudha* (trident) and *dhvaja*(Donaldson, 1985 & 1986, Vol. III. p.1183)

The sanctum preserves the *Sivalingam* within the *Saktipitha* as the presiding deity of the temple. The *Sivalinga* is dedicated to Lord Nilakanthesvara Siva. Inner walls of the sanctum are completely plain. The sanctum has one doorway towards the *jagamohana*. The doorway is bereft of decorative elements. A four armed figure of goddess Lakshmi is depicted in standing posture on the right side wall of the doorway of the sanctum. She displays lotus in upper right hand, full blown lotus in upper left hand, lotus bud in lower left hand and *abhaya mudra* in lower right hand respectively (Mohapatra, 2017, p.205).

Sandhisthala

There is a *sandhisthala* noticed between the *vimana* and *jagamohana* of the temple. The northern side *sandhisthala* wall niche is housed with an image of Ganesa. The image Ganesa is made of sand stone. The four armed image of Ganesha is carved in standing posture on the pedestal. The image Ganesha may be the original side deity of the said temple(Mohapatra, 2017, p.205). It is mutilated by nature or by any other forcible element. Attributes in the three hands are not clearly visible. The lower left hand holds *parasu* (hatchet). The slab of deity measures 1 foot 1 inch in width and 2 feet 2 inches in height respectively (Mohapatra, 2017, p.205). The southern side *sandhisthala* wall niche is housed with the two armed image of Lord Siva, which is carved in standing posture. The right hand displays an indistinct object while the left hand holds trident respectively. The deity wears a garland of beads in his body. It measures 1 foot 7 inches in height(Mohapatra, 2017, p.205). Iconographic features of this Sivaimage indicate the post Ganga art of Odisha.

The *jagamohana* of the temple is a *pidhadeula* and its height is about 23 feet from the surface of the temple complex(Mohapatra, 2017, p.205). The *bada* of the *jagamohana* is mostly undecorated. The base of the *bada* measures 17 feet 10 inches on each side. The lower part of the *bada* is bereft of decorative elements while the upper part is decorated with scroll work and human figure holding stalk of the lotus. The central niche of the *bada* of *jagamohana* on the northern side is housed with a Brahma image. The two armed image of Lord Brahma is carved in *ardhaparyankasana* pose on the pedestal(Mohapatra, 2017, pp.205-206). The right hand displays rosary and the left hand holds *kamandalu* respectively. He wears a necklace of beads in his neck. The image Brahma is made of sand stone and it is about 1½ feet in height. The eastern side *bada* wall of the *jagamohana* contains two images; one is Narasimha and another is unidentified broken image of a male deity/figure (Mohapatra, 2017, p.206). These two images are housed in the niches of the wall.



Narasimha: The four armed image of Narasimha is carved in standing posture on the double petalled lotus pedestal. The upper right hand is broken, the lower right hand is also broken from the elbow portion, the upper left hand holds *gada* and the lower left hand is tearing the heart of Hiranya kashyap, the demon(Mohapatra, 2017, p.206). Most probably, the lower two hands were engaged to take out the entrails of Hiranya Kashyap. Garuda, the conventional mount of deity is not found on the pedestal. Full blown lotus flower is carved on both side top corners of the slab. The image Narasimha is made of chlorite stone. It measures 2 feet in width and 3 feet 1 inch in height respectively(Mohapatra, 2017, p.206). Iconography of the Narasimha image indicates the Odishan classical art of the Ganga period.



The eastern side outer *bada* wall niche of the *jagamohana* is housed with an unidentified image of a male deity. The priest of the temple traces it as the image of Nandi. This image is carved in kneeling posture on the double sectional pedestal. The right hand of it is broken from the arm portion while the left hand is broken from the wrist portion. On the basis of tradition, the local people say that the image was broken by Kalapahara, who attacked the Hindu temples of Odisha in the 2nd half of the 16th century A.D. The image measures 2 feet 9 inches in height and it is made of soft chlorite stone (Mohapatra, 2017, p.206). The lower parts of the legs of the image are encircled with snake. The backside of the head of this image is decorated with

prabhamandala, which is carved in two sections. Each section of *prabhamandala* is decorated with coil of matted hairs.

The *gandi* of the *jagamohana* is a pyramidal superstructure and it consists of five flat shaped *pidhas*. Each *pidha* is decorated with *tankus* and scroll work in all sides. The centre of the middle *pidha* on the southern and the northern sides are projected out by *jhapasimha*. The second *pidha* from the lower on the eastern side is projected with three *simhas*. Out of these, one *jhapa simha* is on the central *paga*. Above the *jhapa simha* of the eastern side is projected with a royal figure mounted on the horse. The intervening recesses between the *pidhas* are relieved with scroll work. *Dopichha* lions are fixed on the top of *kanikapagas* of the *gandi*. The *mastaka* of the *jagamohana* consists of *beki*, *ghanta*, above which there is another *beki*, *amala*, *khapuri*, *kalasa* flanked by inverted parrots, *ayudha* (trident) and *dhvaja*. The northern side inner wall of the *jagamohana* is depicted with the *navagrahas*. All the nine planets are designed in *yogasana* pose on the lotus pedestal. They are depicted with as usual attributes in their hands. Other three sides inner walls are bereft of decorative elements.

Three bull figures are found installed in front of the doorway of the sanctum. These bulls are noticed inside the *jagamohana*. They are being considered as the conventional mounts of Lord Nilakanthesvara Siva. The *jagamohana* has one doorway towards the east. The doorway of the *jagamohana* is devoid of decorative elements. The *natamandapa* of the temple is open without any structure. Recently, a pillared flat roof is built in front of the *jagamohana*. It is being used as the *bhogamandapa* of the temple. The flat roof structure is about 14 feet high from the surface of the temple complex.

Boundary Wall : The temple complex is enclosed by a boundary wall on the three sides except the east. The boundary wall is built in burnt bricks and it is about 3 feet in height.

Date of the Temple : There is no authentic evidence with regard to the exact date of the Nilakanthesvara temple of Nilakanthapur. The local tradition says that the temple of Nilakanthesvara was built before the attack of Kalapahara to the Hindu temples of Odisha. On the basis of the architectural pattern and sculptural features of the *parsvadevatas*, the construction period of the Nilakanthesvara temple can be tentatively assigned to the 15th-16th century A.D. (Mohapatra, 2017, p.207). Now, the temple is being managed by a local committee of that village.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

We can conclude from the abovediscussion that the site of Kshemanatha temple of Bankihati is an important Shaiva shrine of the Prachi Valley. Though the present temple is constructed in the modern period, but it preserves some good sculptures of the medieval period. The *parsvadevatas* of the temple indicates the Odishan art of the modern period. Ganesha, the *parsvadevata* image carved in *vajraparyankasana* pose is drawn the special attention of the scholars as well as art historians. In fact, the eight armed image of goddess Durga of the *jagamohana* hall is an ancient /old sculpture of the site. The two armed Matsyaimage of the temple site is a rare specimen sculpture, which is very important from the religious point of view. The available of Saivitedeities, images of Matsya and goddess Durga prove that the Kshemanathatemple site is really a co-ordinating place of Saivism, Saktisma and Vishnavism. Considering the religious significance, Kshemanatha temple of Bankihati can be considered as an important Shaivashrine of the Prachi Valley in Odisha. It is known from the fact that the Nilakanthesvara temple of Nilakanthapur is a renovated Saiva shrine of that locality. The presence of Vaishnavite deities/images like Narasimha, Lakshmi and Brahma image indicates that the shrine is a co-ordinating place of Brahminical faith. The Narasimha image found in the temple complex possibly belonged to the ruined

Vishnu temple, which stood at the adjacent area of Kakatpur in the remote past. The earlier temple of Nilakanthesvara has been completely renovated in the second half of the twentieth century. The architectural patterns and sculptural features of the *parsvadevata* images suggest the medieval temple art of Odisha. From the religious and artistic points of view, the Nilakanthesvara temple is one of the important Saiva shrines of the Prachi Valley in Odisha. On the whole, the architectural features of the Kshemanatha temple of Bankihati and Nilakanthesvara temple of Nilakanthapur are the good specimens of the Kalinga Style temple architecture of the coastal belt of Odisha in Eastern India.

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