

**Review Article****A STUDY ON ONE OF THE DVADASHA SAMBHU TEMPLES OF THE PRACHI VALLEY OF ODISHA IN EASTERN INDIA****Dr. Ratnakar Mohapatra<sup>1</sup>**

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*Received: 26.12.2019*

*Revised: 24.01.2020*

*Accepted: 25.02.2020*

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**ABSTRACT**

The aim of this paper is to highlight the artistic features of the Gramesvara temple of Nibharana in the coastal belt of Odisha. The artistic technique and architectural features of the extant Shaiva temples of the coastal-belt of Odisha are the important aspects of the Hindu temple art of Odisha in Eastern India. The extant temples of Prachi valley possess the features of Kalinga style of temple architecture of Odisha. The Prachi Valley region is famous in the coastal belt of Odisha for its Hindu temples/monuments. Out of them one Grameshvara temple of Nibharana is taken here by author for scholarly discussion. The temple of Grameshvara is one of the ancient Shaiva shrines of the Prachi Valley of Odisha in Eastern India. The temple is situated on the bank of the sacred river Prachi and at the centre of the village Nibharana in the Niali Block of Cuttack district. The temple is considered by the local people as one of the “Dvadasha Shambhus” on the bank of river Prachi in the coastal belt of Odisha. The extant sculptures of the Grameshvara temple imply the date of the original temple. In fact, this temple preserves a good number of sculptures of the various sects of Hinduism and a rare image of Lord Rishavanatha of the Jaina pantheon, which prove that the site of the temple is a coordinating place of Saivism, Vaishnavism, Saktism and Jainism. The temple of Grameshvara was renovated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D. by the local Zamindar of that region. The central niches of the three sides of the *bada* of *vimana* of temple are housed with the *parshvadevata* images of Kartikeya, Narayani and Ganesha. It is a peculiar temple where Goddess Narayani is the *parshvadevata* of the northern side instead of goddess Parvati. The artistic

features of the available sculptures of the Grameshvara temple were executed by the artists of the Kalinga school of art of Odisha in Eastern India. Some of the images of Grameshvara temple of Nibharana are famous for their artistic excellence and religious significance. Hence, the temple is undertaken by the present author for the scholarly work in detail. Both the primary as well as secondary data have been utilized here for the writing of the present article.

**Keywords:** temple, Gramesvara, Dvadasha Shambhu, Nibharana, Prachi Valley, Odisha, India.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The temple of Grameshvara is one of the ancient Shaiva shrines of the Prachi Valley in Odisha. The temple is situated on the bank of the sacred river Prachi and at the centre of the village Nibharana in the Niali Block of Cuttack district. It is exactly located at a distance of 54 kms from Bhubaneswar and 5 kms from the Nuahat Bus stand (Ray, 1975, p. 54). The temple is dedicated to "Grameshvara Mahadeva". This temple is considered by the local people as one of the "Dvadasha Shambhus" on the bank of river Prachi (Panda, 1969, pp. 77-81 and see Ray, 1975, pp. 55-56). Other *Sambhus* are Kapilesvara, Gokarnesvara, Vilesvara, Sobhanesvara, Ramesvara, Agnesvara, Amaresvara, Somesvara, Sidhesvara, Nrityesvara and Muktesvara. The place of the Gramesvara temple of Nibharana is surrounded by thick growth of mango, bamboo, and coconut trees. The temple is not so significant architecturally as it is a renovated one. The present temple is built on the ruins of the ancient one. The available sculptures in temple suggest an early date of the original temple. This temple preserves a good number of sculptures of the various sects of Hinduism and a rare image of Lord Rishavanatha of the Jaina pantheon. The temple of Grameshvara, as told by Madhavananda Dixit, the old priest of that temple, was renovated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D. by the Chaudhury dynasty of Gajrajpur of that locality. The present article attempts to highlight the artistic features and designs of the Gramesvara temple of Nibharana of the Prachi Valley of Odisha in Eastern India.



## II. METHODOLOGY

Primary as well as secondary source materials have been meticulously used for the writing of the Gramesvara temple of Nibharana. 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 Gramesvara temple of Nibharana is primarily based on practical field study. The secondary data relating to the present article are Books, Journals, proceedings, Periodicals, Manuscripts, Antiquities, Records, Reports, etc. The data collected from both the primary and secondary sources are critically analyzed and discussed in the present article.

## III. DISCUSSION AND RESULT ANALYSIS

### 3. Grameshvara Temple of Nibharana of Prachi Valley

The temples of Odisha form a class by themselves and these Hindu monuments can be conveniently labelled as “Kalinga style” (Behera, 1993, p.1). The Grameshvara temple of Nibharana is belonging to the Kalinga style architecture of Odisha. It consists of three structures such as *vimana*, *jagamohana* and *natamandapa*. This temple is built in burnt bricks with sand stones at some places. The whole edifice of the temple is thickly plastered with lime mortar. The temple faces to east. Besides the main temple, there are three additional shrines also erected in the temple complex. The local people say that these additional shrines are built in the modern period.

#### 3.1. *Vimana*

The *vimana* of the temple is a *païca ratha pidha deula* and its height is about 25 feet from the surface of the temple complex (Mohapatra, 2017, p.75). It has three vertical parts such as *bada*, *gandi* and *mastaka*. The base of the *bada* measures 16 feet on each side. The *bada* of the *vimana* has four parts such as *pabhaga*, *tala bandhana*, *jangha* and *baranda*. All the component parts of the *bada* are mostly plain. The *bandhana* of the *bada* is decorated with *tankus* in all sides. The central niches of the three sides of the *bada* of *vimana* are housed with the *parshvadevata* images of Kartikeya, Narayani and Ganesha. The image Ganesha is installed as the *parshvadevata* in the southern side. The four armed image of Ganesha is carved in standing posture on a plain pedestal. It is made of stone. The deity Ganesha displays broken tusk

in upper right hand, rosary in lower right hand, a pot of *ladus* in upper left hand and *kuthara* in lower left hand respectively. The mount rat is carved on the right of the pedestal. The backside of the head of the deity is decorated with trefoil arch. The flying *Vidyadhara* figure holding garland is depicted on both side top corners of the slab. The deity Ganesha wears a *sarpayajnopavita* in his body. The slab of the Ganesha image measures 2 feet 1.5 inches in height and 1 foot 1.5 inches in width respectively (Mohapatra, 2017, p.75). Kartikeya is found in the western side as the *parshvadevata*. The four handed image of Kartikeya is carved in *sthanaka* posture on the plain pedestal. The deity Kartikeya holds the rooster cock in upper left hand. The lower left hand hangs downward while the lower right hand is shown feeding the peacock and the upper right hand of the deity is completely broken. Peacock, the traditional mount of the deity is carved on the right of the pedestal. There is a male figure (Deva sena) standing near the peacock on the right of the pedestal. *Vidyadhara* figure is carved on top corners of both sides of the slab. The image Kartikeya measures 2 feet 3 inches in height and 1 foot 6 inches in width (Mohapatra, 2017, p.75). The backside of the head of deity is decorated with trefoil arch. The image Kartikeya is made of hard stone. The presence of both cock and peacock indicate a date of 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. to the icon. Goddess Narayani, as people call that deity at present, is the *parshvadevata* of the northern side. The four armed image of Narayani is shown standing on the plain pedestal. The upper right hand displays *nagapasha*, the lower right hand holds rosary, the upper left hand is broken and the lower left hand is also broken but the attribute of this hand is *gada*, which is intact at present (Mohapatra, 2017, p.76). Diminutive female figure is carved on both sides of the lower part of the slab. These female figures display lotus flower with stalk in the left hands. The left side of the slab of the deity is decorated with full blown lotus flower with stalk. The backside of the head of the deity is decorated with trefoil arch. The flying female figures are finely carved on both the top corners of the slab. The slab of Devi Narayani is also made of chlorite stone. Some portions of the icon are eroded. It shows that the image has not escaped from the climatic cruelties. Garuda figure is carved on the pedestal of the slab and it



is partially worn away. The slab of devi Narayani measures 2 feet 5 inches in height and 1 foot 5.5 inches in width respectively (Mohapatra, 2017, p.76).

The *gandi* of the *vimana* is a pyramidal superstructure and it displays five *pagas* or *rathas*. It consists of two *potalas*; the lower and upper *potalas*, which contain four and three *pidhas* in each respectively. The *kanthi* connects the two *potalas*. The centre of the upper *potala* is projected with *jhapasimha* on each side. Each *pidha* of the *gandi* is decorated with *tankus* in all sides. *Dopichhasimha* and *beki Bhairavas* are completely absent in their respective places above the *gandi*. The *mastaka* of the *vimana* consists of *beki*, *ghanta* (bell-shaped member) above which there is another *beki*, *amalakashila*, *khapuri*, *kalasa*, *ayudha* (trident) placed one above the other respectively. The *Shivalinga* placed within the *Shaktipitha* is worshipped as the presiding deity of the temple, which is known as Lord Grameshvara Shiva. Considering the religious significance of the temple, the *Prachi Mahatmyam* includes it in the group of *Ashta-Shambhus* and *Dvadasha Shambhus* on the bank of river Prachi (Behera & Dhal, 1992, pp. x-xi and see Mahapatra, 1997, pp. 120-121). Inner walls of the sanctum are devoid of decorative elements. The floor of the sanctum is about 3 feet below from the surface of the temple complex. The sanctum also preserves the image of *nagas* made of brass, which are donated by the local devotees to Lord Grameshvara Shiva. The *Shivalinga* is not visible but it is now one foot below the *Shaktipitha*. Steps in the descending order are provided for approaching the sanctum. An image of Chandrashekhara, which was installed during the time of renovation, is found worshipped in the sanctum. This image is considered as the representative deity (*chalantipratima*) of the presiding deity and it is made of brass. The brass image of Hari-Hara is also worshipped here.

The sanctum or *garbhagāha* has only one entrance to the *jagamohana*. The doorway of the sanctum is plain and simple without ornamentation. *Navagrahas* and *Gaja-Lakshmi* image are not found in their respective places of the doorway

### **3.2. Jagamohana**

The *jagamohana* of the temple is a *pidha* (Borner and Ratha Sharma, 1966, p.155) *deula* and its height is about 20 feet from the surface of the temple complex (Mohapatra, 2017, p.77). It has three vertical parts such as *bada*, *gandi* and *mastaka*. The base of the *bada* is square of 13 feet. The *bada* of the *jagamohana* has four parts and all are completely

plain. But the outer wall niches house some ancient sculptures. They are the icons of Narasimha and Varaha, which are placed in the niches of southern side. The four armed image of Narasimha is carved in standing posture on the double petalled lotus pedestal. Here the deity (Narasimha) is depicted in *ugra* posture. His upper two hands are engaged in taking out the entrails of Hiranya Kashyap, the demon. The lower right hand displays *chakra*, while the lower left hand holds a lotus flower. The diminutive female figure holding lotus flower is carved on both sides of the pedestal. The flower medallion is carved on each side top corner of the slab. A diminutive female devotee figure is depicted in the left of the pedestal of deity. The backside of the head of the deity is decorated with trefoil *makaratorana*. The sculpture slab measures 1 foot 3 inches in width and 1 foot 11 inches in height (Mohapatra, 2017, p.77). In another niche of the southern outer wall of the *bada* houses the image of Varaha. The four handed image of Varaha is depicted in standing pose on the double rowed lotus petalled pedestal. The upper right hand holds the hand of a female figure and the lower right hand displays a *chakra*. The upraised left arm bears the figure of goddess Pâthvi. The god is shown as lifting the Goddess Earth (Pâthvi) and placing on the left elbow. Here the goddess Pâthvi is carved seated posture with *aïjalimudra*. The lower left hand holds *sankha*. A diminutive *naga* figure is depicted between the two legs of the deity on the centre of the pedestal. The backside of the head of deity is decorated with trefoil *makara* headed arch and the *kirtimukha* motif at the apex. The smaller lotus rosette is depicted on the top corner of the back slab of deity. The small female figure is carved on the lower part of both sides of the slab. Both sides of the pedestal are decorated with lotus with stalk. The *alamba* designs are found on the pedestal. The slab of the Varaha image measures 1 foot 1 inch in width and 1 foot 10 inches in height respectively (Mohapatra, 2017, p.78). Observing the Varaha images in the different places of the Prachi Valley including this image, P.K. Ray is of the view that the Varaha cult was very much popular in the Prachi Valley (Ray, 1975, p.68).

The northern wall of the *bada* of the *jagamohana* contains three images in its niches. They are two Trivikrama images and the other is Astika-Jaratkaru image. The four handed image of Trivikrama is depicted in standing posture on a double petalled lotus pedestal. The upper right hand holds mace, the lower right hand possesses lotus, the upper left hand shows *chakra*, and the lower left hand holds conch respectively. The left uplifted leg touches the

figure of Lord Brahma. The right leg is firmly set on the pedestal i.e. on the earth. The back side of the head of the deity is decorated with trefoil arch; *makara* head at both the ends and the *kirtimukha* motif on the top. The flower medallion is carved on the top corner of the slab. There is a *Balidana* scene depicted beneath the uplifted leg of the deity on the pedestal. The diminutive female attendant figure is carved on both sides of the deity in the lower part of the slab. The image Trivikrama measures 1 foot in width and 1 foot 9.5 inches in height respectively (Mohapatra, 2017, p.78). This image is made of stone. Another image of Trivikrama is housed in a niche of the *pabhaga* portion of the northern side *bada* of *jagamohana*. He displays *sankha* in upper right hand, *gada* in left lower hand, *padma* in upper right hand and *chakra*, in lower right hand respectively. There is a *Bali-Vamana* episode depicted beneath the uplifted left leg of deity. The four handed deity Trivikrama is carved in standing posture on the pedestal. This image is made of soft sand stone. So it is now in semi worn condition. There is a stone slab which contains an image of Astika-Jaratkaru and it is housed in a niche of the northern side outer *bada* wall of the *jagamohana*. The slab of the deity is made of soft sand stone. It is also eroded by exposed to nature. According to the temple priest, all images including this image belonged to the earlier period when the main *deula* of this temple was constructed. The image Jaratkaru is carved in *ardhaparyanka* pose on the pedestal. Here Astika is depicted in seated posture on the left lap of Devi. Here Devi Jaratkaru holds the legs of Astika in her right hand and the left hand lies upon the shoulder of Astika. The right arm of Astika lies on the shoulder of devi Jaratkaru and the left hand rests on the pedestal. Scroll work is finely carved on both sides of the slab. The branches of the *Sunee* tree are carved on the backside of the head of deity. Standing female figure is depicted on either side top corner of the slab. A female devotee figure is carved in kneeling posture on the left side top corner of the slab. The sculpture slab measures 1 foot 5 inches in width and 2 feet 1 inch in height respectively (Mohapatra, 2017, p.79).

The *bada* of the *jagamohana* is surmounted by the pyramidal superstructure. The *gandi* of the *jagamohana* consists of three flat shaped *pidhas*. The centre of the middle *pidha* is projected with *jhapasimha* on the northern and southern sides of the *gandi*. The centre of the upper *pidha* of the eastern side is projected with a larger *jhapasimha* as comparison to the *jhapasimha* of the middle *pidha*.

The *mastaka* of the *jagamohana* consists of usual elements of the Odishan *pidha deula*. Here the *ayudha* of the *mastaka* is completely missing.

Inner walls of the *jagamohana* are rigorously plain. Bull, the conventional mount of the presiding deity is found installed on the octagonal pillar of 2 feet high and it is noticed at the right side corner of the floor of the *jagamohana*. Two rare images are found preserved inside the *jagamohana* hall. They are the images of Narayana and Rishavanatha. 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* in upper right hand, *sankha* in lower right hand, *gada* in upper left hand and *chakra*, in lower left hand. 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 *aijalimudra*. 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 decorated with trefoil arch, *makara* head at both end and the *kirtimukha* motif at the apex. 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 3 feet in height and 1 foot 8 inches in width respectively (Mohapatra, 2017, p.79). 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. Garuda, the usual *vahana* of the deity is found installed on the south-west corner of the *jagamohana*. The figure of Garuda is hewn in kneeling posture on the pedestal and it is about 1 foot 6 inches in height (Mohapatra, 2017, p.80). Both the hands of Garuda are in *anjali mudra*.

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 (Panda, 1969., p.74). The 'Prachi Valley Report' records it as an image of Parçvanatha of the Jaina pantheon (Ray, 1975, p.54). 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. *Cauri* bearer figure is depicted standing posture on both sides of Lord Risavanatha in the attitude of rendering service (Mohapatra, Vol.I, 1986, p.152). The backside of the head of deity is decorated with trefoil arch, which is surmounted by the 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 *Vidyadharas* 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 *jaöa*, 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 3 feet 3.5 inches in height and 1 foot 8 inches in width respectively (Mohapatra, 2017, p.80). The image of Lord Risavanatha is made of black chlorite stone. Observing the image of Lord Risavanatha, R.P. Mohapatra remarks that stylistically the image can be placed in the Ganga period ( Mohapatra, Vol.I, 1986, p.152). 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 *jagamohana* has two doorways; one on the eastern side and another on the southern side. Both the doorways of the *jagamohana* are mostly plain. The eastern side doorway of the *jagamohana* is adorned with the *navagraha* slab, which contains the images of nine planets. They are carved seated in *yogasana* pose with usual attributes in their hands. The southern side doorway of the *jagamohana* is bereft of decorative elements.

### **3.3. Natamandapa**

The *natamandapa* of the temple is a *pidha / pirha deula* (Bose, 1931,



p.185). and its height is about 20 feet from the surface of the temple complex(Mohapatra,2017,p.81). It has three vertical parts such as *bada*, *gandi* and *mastaka*. The base of the *bada* of the *natamandapa* is rectangle and it measures 26 feet in the north-south directions and 16 feet 3 inches in east-west sides respectively. The *bada* of the *natamandapa* is completely plain. An image of Varaha is housed in a niche of the northern side outer wall of the *bada*. The four handed image of Varaha is carved *alidha* pose on the pedestal, which is adorned with a prostrate body of a female figure. There is a *naga* figure depicted on the right side of the pedestal. His raised right foot is shown trampling the head of the *naga* figure. His left foot is placed on the tail of the *naga*. The upper right hand of the deity supports the left upraised arm, which bears the image of goddess Pāthvi. The lower right hand holds *chakra*, and the lower left arm possesses *sankha*. The slab of deity measures 8 inches in width and 1 foot 5 inches in height respectively(Mohapatra,2017,p.81). Observing this Varaha image Karuna Sagar Behera and T.E. Donaldson remark that the image of Varaha can be dated to the late 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D.(Behera and Donaldson, 1998, p.136). Iconographical features of the Varaha image indicate that the icon may belong to the artistic tradition of the Somavamsi period.

The niche of the southern outer wall of the *natamandapa* contains an image of Ganesha. The four handed image of Ganesha is carved in standing posture on the double petalled lotus pedestal. He displays usual attributes like broken tusk, a pot of *ladus*, *kuthara* and rosary in his hands. The image of Ganesha is about 1 foot in height. There is a balustraded window fixed in the central niche of the southern outer wall of the *bada* of *natamandapa*. The *gandi* of the *natamandapa* is pyramidal in shape. It consists of three flat shaped *pidhas*, arranged in descending order. The entire *gandi* of the *natamandapa* is completely plain. The *mastaka* of the *natamandapa* consists of *beki*, *amalakashila*, *khapuri* and *kalasa*. Here the *ayudha* of the *mastaka* is missing.

Inner walls of the *natamandapa* are mostly plain. There is an image of Vishnu (Madhava) inserted in a niche of the northern side inner wall of the *natamandapa*. Although the image Vishnu is not so big but the slab of deity is exquisitely carved with decorative elements. All the Vishnu images, which are noticed in the Prachi Valley region, are locally worshipped as Madhava. So this Vishnu image is also considered by the local people as the image of Lord Madhava. The four handed image of Madhava is carved in standing posture on *vishvapadma*.

The deity exhibits *chakra*, in upper right hand, *varada mudra* in lower right hand, *sankha* in upper left hand and *gada* in lower left hand respectively. Garuda, the usual vehicle of the deity is carved on the left side of the pedestal. Small figure of a female is depicted on the right side of the lower part of the slab of deity. The backside of the head of deity is decorated with tri-curved arch; *makara* head at the base and the *kiritmukha* motif at the apex. Flying feminine figure holding garland is depicted on both sides of the trefoil arch. The centres of both sides of the slab are lavishly decorated with scroll work. The slab of the deity measures 1 foot in width and 1 foot 10 inches in height respectively. The sculptural features of the deity indicate the influence of Ganga Art. The presence of Madhava images in the different places of the Prachi Valley including Nibharana suggest that Madhava cult was very much popular in that Valley during the medieval period.

An image of Akhandalamani Shiva belonging to the modern period is being worshipped in the south-east corner of the *natamandapa*. The image Akhandalamani is depicted seated in meditation.

The *natamandapa* has three doorways, which are devoid of decorative embellishments. The structure of the *natamandapa* has been built in the later period of the main *deula* (*vimana*).

### **3.4. Additional Shrines**

Besides the above structures, there are other three additional structures found inside the temple complex. These shrines are of Lord Vishnu, Lord Balunkeshvara-Shiva and Goddess Durga. Architectural point of view, these three minor shrines are not so attractive. But these shrines preserve good specimens of the sculptures of various deities in their respective sanctums.

**A. Shrine of Lord Vishnu:** The additional shrine of Lord Vishnu is a small *pidhadeula* and its height is about 23 feet from the surface of the temple complex. The shrine of Lord Vishnu is located on the northern side of the main *deula*. It has four vertical parts such as *pishta*, *bada*, *gandi* and *mastaka*. The shrine faces to east. The central niches of the three sides of the *bada* of the shrine are housed with the *parshvadevata* images of Madhava, Narasimha and Vishnu.



Madhava is the *parshvadevata* of the southern side, Narasimha is the *parshvadevata* of the western side and Vishnu is the *parshvadevata* of the northern side respectively. The *gandi* of the shrine is a pyramidal superstructure. The *mastaka* of the shrine consists of the usual component parts of the Odishan *pidhadeula*. The sanctum preserves the image of Lord Vishnu as the presiding deity of the shrine. This image is also worshipped as Madhava. The four armed image of Vishnu is carved in standing posture on the double petalled lotus pedestal or *visvapadma*. The deity exhibits *sankha* in upper right hand, *padma* in lower right hand, *gada* in upper left hand and *chakra*, in lower left hand respectively. Garuda, the custom way conveyance of the deity is carved to the right of the pedestal. There is a female devotee depicted on the opposite side of the Garuda figure. A female figure is decorated on the basement of both sides of the slab. Another female figure is found carved at the centre of 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 Shiva are chiseled 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 1 foot 9.5 inches in width and 3 feet 5 inches in height respectively (Mohapatra, 2017, p.83). The image of Lord Vishnu is made of chlorite stone. The face is oval, the chest is broad and *kirita 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. The god stands in *samabhanga* attitude.

There is another small image of Vishnu preserved on the *simhasana* of the sanctum of that additional shrine. Here the deity is shown holding the as usual attributes viz; *sankha*, *chakra*, *gada* and *padma*.

Besides these two, another stone slab containing an image of Lord Madhava Vishnu is found in the sanctum of the shrine. The four handed image of Vishnu is found in standing posture on a *vishvapadma*. Female attendant is carved on both sides of the deity. The backside of the head of the deity is decorated with trefoil arch crowned by the *kirtimukha* motif. A female figure holding garland is depicted on both sides of the trefoil arch. Female devotees are carved at the base of the pedestal. They are



depicted in kneeling posture with folded hands. The slab of the deity measures 1 foot 6 inches in width and 2 feet 11 inches in height (Mohapatra, 2017, p.84). Madhava images are found in most of the places of the Prachi Valley, which reveal the predominant Vaishnava influence in the religious life of the people of the Prachi Valley (Ray, 1975, p.64).

**B. Shrine of Lord Balunkeshvara Shiva:** The shrine of Lord Balunkeshvara is found erected on the southern side of the main *deula*. The shrine is a small *pidhadeula* and it is about 12 feet high. It has usual architectural parts of the Odishan *pidhadeula*. The sanctum of the shrine preserves the *Shivalinga* within the *Shaktipitha* as the presiding deity, which is known to the people as Lord Balunkeshvara Shiva. There are four detached sculptures found preserved inside the sanctum of the shrine. They are Narasimha, Trivikrama and two Varaha images. All the images are carved with textually prescribed attributes in their respective hands.

**C. Shrine of Goddess Durga:** The shrine of goddess Durga is noticed in the south of the temple complex. The shrine is a *pidhadeula* and its height is about 25 feet from the floor. It contains the principal architectural parts of the Odishan *pidhadeula*. The sanctum of the shrine preserves an image of ten armed Mahishamardini Durga as the presiding deity. This image is also worshipped as the “Pishtha Devi” of that village (Ray, 1975, p.59). The ten armed image of goddess Durga is shown striding over *Mahisasura* who emerged in human form from the decapitated body of the buffalo. Lion, the mount of the deity is shown pouncing upon the demon from the left. Of the ten hands of the presiding deity, the five in right hands hold sword, arrow, disc, trident and dagger and the left five hands display bow, shield, battle axe, snake and one pressing the head of the demon. The figure of *Mahisasura* is fittingly armed with sword, shield and short dagger. R.P. Mohapatra who visited the temple, has seen the ten armed image and described as such (Mohapatra, Vol.I., 1986, p.152). The worship of Dashabhuja Mahishamardini Durga was very familiar in the Prachi Valley. Similar Dashabhuja Mahishamardini Durga images are worshipped as *Pishtha Devi* in the different places of the Prachi Valley. They are at Ambapara, Someshvara, Adaspur, Dalavada, Pitapara, Lataharana, Niali and at Jogeswarpur (Ray, 1986, p.59.). In Prachi Valley like the worship of Madhava, the worship of Durga was also popular. Madhava temple contains the image of Durga. It suggests that the prevalence of Durga-Madhava cult in this area. The Dashabhuja Mahishamardini Durga image of Ambapara near Chaurasi not only suggests the date of the image but also represents a good specimen of the

Odishan craftsmanship. A small inscription is also found engraved at the pedestal of the Durga image of Ambapara. Palaeographically, the inscription of the image is assignable to the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century A.D.(Das,1958,p.36).Iconographically, the present image of Dashabhuj Mahishamardini Durga of the Grameshvara temple complex of Nibharana closely resembles with the icon of Ambapara. So the icon may be placed in the same time period.

The central niches of the three sides of the *bada* of the shrine are housed with the *parshvadevata* images of Durga, Ganesha and Varaha. The *ashta-bhuja* Durga is the *parshvadevata* of the northern side. The images of Ganesha and Varaha are the *parshvadevatas* of the southern and western sides of the *bada* respectively. A *mithuna* figure is found inserted in the niche of the southern outer wall of the shrine. The *gandi* of this additional shrine is pyramidal in form. The *mastaka* of the shrine consists of *beki*, *ghanta*, above which are *beki*, *amalakashila*, *khapuri*, *kalasa*, *ayudha (chakra)*, kept one above the other. The *jagamohana* of the additional shrine has a flat roof and it is about 12 feet in height. A figure of lion is found installed on a raised pedestal of one foot high in the *jagamohana*. Daru images of Lord Jagannatha ‘Trinity’ installed in later date are also being worshipped in the south-east corner of the *mukhasala* of that additional shrine. The additional structures are later additions to the temple complex.

### **3.5. Boundary Wall**

The temple complex is enclosed by a boundary wall, which is made of burnt bricks. It was built in 1997/98 A.D. by the efforts of the villagers. The boundary wall measures 98 feet on the northern and southern sides while the eastern and western sides measure 109 feet respectively(Mohapatra,2017, p.86). It has three gates; one on each side of the east, north and west. All these gates of the temple complex are plain.

### **3.6. Date of the Temple**

There is no authentic historical record regarding the exact date of the construction period of the Grameshvara temple of Nibharana. The present temple is undoubtedly a renovated temple of the Prachi Valley. The old priest of the temple informs that the original temple was constructed before the building of Jagannatha temple of Puri. Observing the iconographic features of the extant sculptures of the temple, R.P. Mohapatra opines that those sculptural figures may belong to the artistic tradition of the Ganga period(Mohapatra,

1986,p.152). By a comparative study of the iconographical details and artistic treatment noticed in some of the sculptures of Grameshvara temple and of some early temples of the Prachi Valley it may be inferred that the original Grameshvara temple of Nibharana can be assigned a date of 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century A.D.(Mohapatra,2017,p.86).

Now, the temple is being managed by *Badapanda* Madhavananda Dixit and his family of that village.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

We can conclude from the above discussion that the present temple is completely a renovated temple. Considering the religious significance, the Gramesvara temple of Nibharana is said by local people as one of the 'Dvasa Sambhus' of the Prachi valley of the coastal belt of Odisha in Eastern India. Though the architectural features of the temple is not so important but from the artistic and religious points of view, it is one of the important Saiva shrines of the valley of river Prachi in Odisha. The temple complex preserves a good number of sculptures of the various deities of the different sects of Hinduism. A good specimen image of Rishabhanatha of Jaina pantheon is very important from the artistic point of view. Presence of Goddess Narayani image as the *parshvadevata* of the northern side indicates that the local devotees insert it at the time of renovation. Most probably, original side deity Parvati was detached /damaged from that place for which local devotees haphazardly inserted it for worship in later. The artistic features of the extant sculptures of the Gramesvara temple of Nibharana represent the Kalinga School of art of Odisha in Eastern India. In fact, presence of sculptures of various deities of the temple proves the fact that the site is a coordinating place of Saivism, Vaishnavism, Saktism and Jainism. Most of the extant sculptures of the Gramesvara temple possess the artistic features of the Odishan Classical art of the Ganga period. From the artistic points of view, the Gramesvara temple of Nibharana occupies a prominent place in the history of Hindu art of Odisha in Eastern India.

#### **Acknowledgement**

I acknowledge with grateful thanks to Prof. P.K. Nayak(Guide), Prof. K.S. Behera (late), Prof. C.R. Mishra (late), Prof. Prof. K.K. Basa, Dr. B.K. Ratha, Prof. H.K. Satapathy, Prof. Deepak K. Behera, 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, Odisha who encouraged me for the writing of this article.

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