

Garjat States of The Undivided Cuttack District in Odisha

Abstract

The Garjat States of the undivided Cuttack District exhibit distinct art and architecture. Among the existing temple architecture the Singhanatha temple belongs to 9th Century A.D. The temple of Dhableswar was built during the reign of Gajapati Prataprudra Dev in 16th century A.D.

Keywords: Singhanatha temple, Dhableswar temple

Introduction

Singhanatha Temple

Among the oldest temples of the Garjat states, Singhanath is very famous. It is supposed to be built during the reign of the Bhauma Karas having peculiar features. The temple is named as Singhanath in the age of Purana which was set up by Laxman, the younger brother of Rama. According to local legend the hill was named as "Singhachala" and on the foot of the hill the deity was set up. Hence he has been termed as Singhanath.(1) Though T.E.Donaldson has written that the temple is named as Singhanath due to the mixed figure of human body and it's lion figure. It indicates the mixed figure of Siva and Vishnu.(2) The image thus incorporates the Nrusingha aspect of Vishnu and testifies to the oneness of the two gods though demonstrating the superiority of Siva.

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Date of the Singhanath Temple

The temple belonged to 9th century A.D. Its sculptures are marked by deep carving. The limbs of the figures are carved in a better way. The hands and legs too nit appear separate entities. The figures are not stocky. The elongated vimanika crowning the paga niches, for examples, represents a tradition between the earlier Vajra-Mundi design and the later Khakhara-Mundi which becomes a standard decorative feature. (3)

Location

Singhanatha is situated (Longitude: 850-22'51' East, Lattitude ; 200-22'15" North) in the heart of Mahanadi near Baramba (LeftBank), Baideswar (Right Bank). Ramanath, Baidyanath and Singhanath are situated on a triangular form. Picturesque set up of this temple is approachable by boats from the village Gopinathpur, 6 Km from Baramba. (4)

Ecosystem

The temple is situated on the bank of river Mahanadi on foot hill. The hill is approximately 50 metre in height from the bed of the river. The temple creates an illusion of small island having pleasant scenic beauty around it.

Rituals

Regarding the daily routine work, the Tini Dhupa (Three Rituals) and Pancha Abakash (Five worship) are carried on. The temple opens at 4.30 A.M. The priests bath the God and Snana Abakash starts with Mangala Alati in the morning at 7 A.M. Mangala Alati is followed by Ballabh Abaksh (Breakfast) of the God. At 10 A.M Sakala Dhupa (Morning Rituals) starts with Khechudi and Dalma. In Mid-Day Dhupa the God is offered Arna, Khechudi, Dalma, , Khiri, Enduri, Kaker. In the afternoon Snana

Abakash again starts. This time God is offered Dahi Pakhala, (Curd Rice). At 8.30 P.M. Badasinghara Abakash along with Santipana rituals are performed. After every ritual betel is offered. At last the temple is closed for the next day. (5)

Legend

According to legendary thought of the Dandi Ramayan composed by Balam Dash, these three temples (Ramanath, Baidyanath and Singhanath) were set up by Rama, Sita and Laxman. Ramanath was worshipped by lord Rama. So also Baidyanath was worshipped by goddess Sita and the Singhanath was worshipped by Laxman. Some are of the opinion that the hill was the safety space of Lions. So it was named as "Singhachala". The hill is in the heart of river Mahanadi. So the name of the deity was designed as "Singhanath". There is a local legendary talk about the Sita Kunda (Ditch) dug by the arrow of Laxman for the thirst of mother Sita. Also there is a shine foot print of Rama, Laxman and Sita. There is a secret Gumpha behind the Raghunath temple of the hill. People believe that no one has arrived up to bottom of the cave till yet and only the sages were in meditation inside it from the time immemorial. There is also another temple called Banadurga with the same sculptures found in the south bank of Mahanadi very nearest to Raghunath Temple. (6) The temple was built in the 9th century when Orissa was under the reign of Kesari dynasty. It was the supreme will of lord Singhanath what was directed to Lalata Keshari to build a temple for him in the heart of Mahanadi (Singhachal hill).

The temple faces towards east. It is considered as one of the finest specimen architecture of Odishan style. The temple has Rekha Viman and terraced roof Jagamohana of transitional phase of temple style of Kalingan order. It is unique for its sculptural embellishment of both the Saivaites and Vaisnavite culture. The Bada is triratha in plan with a thin Stambha and the Gandi is Pancharatha in plan.

Festivals

The most attractive festival of Lord Singhanatha is "Makara Sankranti" known as Balisinghasana Jatra initiated by Madhab Chandra of the then king of Baramba. Thousands of people are gathered in the mela from Banki, Baramba, Narasinghpur, Athagarh, Tigiria and all over Odisha. Now the Mela is expanded up to five days. In the first day of Makara Sankranti, Makara Chaula (a mixture of white rice powder, cheese, milk, coconut, cardamom and panchamruta) is offered to Lord Siva and the Prasad was distributed among the devotees. A new flag also is tied up at the top of the temple. (7) Sivaratri is also another attractive festival of Singhanath. It is a picturesque side of the temple at night. Devotees in each and every side of the temple offer light and candles to fulfill their ambition. The heart of night at 12, Mahadipa was raised as an insignia of surrender to lord Siva. Other festivals are Shitala Sasthi (A marriage anniversary lord Siva & Parvati), Kartika Purnima in which the entire month becomes crowdie and visitors from each and every corner of state comes with their Kirtan Mandali and observe gorgeously with spiritual dance with their specific orchestra. Another rare festival, Harihar Veta is observed in Chandan Yatra for 21 days started from Akshaya Trutia to the end of the Chandan

Festival. The deity comes and adorned with Palinki to the palace of Baramba. Procession is made twice a day i.e. one is in the evening and another is at night. (8)

The chief deity Lord Singhanath is surrounded by Astasambu i.e. Somnath, Malayanath, Kulenath, Lokanath, Balunkeswar, Aisaneswar & Jambeswar in the temple compound. In the out skirts of the temple there is a temple of Baishnavi. The importance of this temple lies in the vegetarian Bhoga all through the year. Another Temple towards the south west corner of Singhanath named as Raghunath built by king Narayan Chandra Birabara Mangaraj in honour of his Dikhya Guru Janaki Ballabha Das. There are also four caves where dedicated devotees stay from time to time in meditation to full-fill their ambition. There is an arrow-dug ditch made by Laxman to satisfy the thirst of Goddess Sita on the north side of the hill. Though it is unbelievable still some water is found inside this ditch. Therefore the people for simple faith offer Bangles, Sindur and flower into this ditch. Locally, it was called Sitakunda. (9)

Dhableswar Temple

The temple Dhableswar is another great Saiva Pitha of the Gujrat State of Athagarh in the undivided Cuttack district. It is very famous in Odisha.

LOCATION:

The temple of Dhableswar is situated on a small island in the left side of the Mahanadi river in the revenue Mouza of Mancheswar in Athagarh Garjat State of Cuttack district. In order to reach the place one has to get down at Nuapatna crossing on the Cuttack-Sambalpur road. From there conveyance is available up to Mancheswar Ghat. Ferry service from the Ghat to the Dhableswar temple is available throughout the day. Another route to approach the temple is through a boat journey of five kilometres from Chahata Ghat near Cuttack city on the Mahanadi right. Dhableswar is 37 Km from Cuttack and bus service is available up to Mancheswar from Cuttack and Athagarh. A fast passenger train from Bhubaneswar to Talcher halts at Gbantikhal Station and Dhableswar temple is 8 Km from this railway station. Now a suspension bridge over Mahanadi has connected the temple. (10)



Legend

One third of the island (46 acres) of Dhableswar is covered by Shrubby forest and with the surrounding water of the Mahanadi, it gives a scenic picture. The Dhableswar Pitha is well known as an old Saivite centre. The Padma Purana and the Linga Purana gives references to this Saivite centre. According to Padma Purana, Lord Indra killed Demon Namuchi and in order to get rid of the sin of killing a

Brahmin (Namuchi was a Brahmin) took bath near this Iceland. Indra founded a Siva Linga on the Iceland and the same is said to be the present Dhabaleswar. Popular stories are also prevalent among the people of Odisha about Dhabaleswa. According to one such maxim, a poor Brahmin stole a black bullock of a rich man. Lord Dhabaleswar in order to save the poor man change the colour of the bullock in to white for which the lord is known as Dhabaleswar (The white God). Another maxim said that the place was found covered by white Malati flower and nourished by the milk of the white cow. This was brought to the notice of the Gajapati Maharaja who named it Lord Dhabaleswar after the Siva Linga was unearthed from that place. It is also said that Gajapati Purusottam Dev built the temple for his queen Padmabati to worship lord Dhabaleswar on this picturesque Iceland.(11)

Temple Plan

The temple was constructed by the rulers of the Athagarh Garjat State. The present temple, completely renovated, stands on an elevated land in western side of the island. Much of the renovation work of the present temple was done during the Maratha period. The Viman is in Pancharatha rekha order with pyramidal Jagamohan in front. The Siva Linga in the Garva Griha is below the ground level. The Viman and Jagamohan are buried under the ground up to the Pabhaga level. Both structures are heavily plastered. In order to reach the Siva Linga one has to descend the series of masonry steps. A wooden Mandap has been constructed over the Siva Linga to protect it from the nuisance of birds. (12)

Decorative Motive

The outer walls of the Viman and the Jagamohan are set with carving of Gajasimha, Gajavidalas dancing couples and amorous couples. The six armed and three headed Kartikeya image recovered from this Iceland is a unique specimen of Orissan iconography and art treasure. They represent characteristic features of later Somavansi period. (13)

Fairs And Festivals

The shrine attracts a large number of people particularly during festive occasions. The gathering reaches climax on the 14th day of Kartika (Oct, Nov), the Bada Ossa when a big Mela is held here in honour of the presiding deities. Besides, Makara Sankranti, Siva Ratri, Sital Sasthi are some of the important festivals of lord Dhabaleswar.

Suspension Bridge

Another attraction of the Dhabaleswar temple is the Suspension Bridge which connects the temple. It was built in 2000. There are two such bridges at Risikesh- 'Laxman Jhula' & ' Rama Jhula' having the length of 140 metres and 200 metres respectively. However, the length of Dhabaleswar Jhula is 254 metres. It is the longest suspension bridge in our country. This bridge facilitates for the coming of the devotees to pay their reverence to lord Dhabaleswar. Now it is a great place of pilgrimage for the people of Odisha and also out side states. (14)



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13. Fig-1, Lord Dhabaleswar Temple of Athagarh State.
14. Fig-2-India's Longest Suspesion Bridge over river Mahanadi connection Dhabaleswar Temple.