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Presiding Deity Images From the Shakta Temples of Prachi Valley in Odisha: A Recent Study

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Introduction

The images of MahisamardiniDurga, Parvati, Chandi, Chamunda, Mangala, Kakatei, Varahi, Kali, Charchika, Bhagavati, Chitresvari, etc. are found to be worshipped as presiding deities of the Shakta shrines of Odisha as well as Prachi Valley. Really, Shaktism had a dominant influence over the religious life of the people of the Prachi Valley, which is located in the coastal-belt of Odisha. The Prachi is an ancient river and it is considered as most sacred by the people of Odisha.¹ A good number of Shaktaimages are found to be preserved in the Shakta shrines/temples of the Prachi Valley. The extant Shakta images of the Prachi Valley suggest that the Valley was popular place of Shaktism during the medieval as well as modern period. Shakta images are found to be worshipped with various names in different places of the Prachi Valley. Out of these, some images are the masterpiece sculptures by considering their iconographic significance. The surviving Shakta temples of the Prachi Valley preserve the presiding deities, which are very important both from the artistic and religious points of view. Most of the surveyed presiding deity images of the Shakta temples of Prachi Valley represent the Odishan classical art of the medieval period. The iconographic features of all the presiding deities of the extant Shakta temples of Prachi Valley have not been seriously documented by the earlier art historians in detail. Hence, a modest attempt has been made in this article to highlight the detailed iconographic features of the presiding deities of the Shakta temples of the Prachi Valley. The present article is based on the practical field study with meticulous observation made by the present author.

Presiding Deity Images of the Shakta temples of Prachi Valley

The iconographic features of all the extant presiding deities of the Shakta temples of Prachi Valley are clearly mentioned below.

1. Varahi of Chaurasi

The sanctum of the Varahi temple of Chaurasi preserves the image of two-armed Goddess Varahi as its presiding deity. The Varahi temple of Chaurasi is one of the important Shakta shrines of the Prachi Valley in the coastal-belt of Odisha. This temple is situated on the right bank of river Prachi, about nine miles from Gop on the road towards Kakatpur.² It is also exactly located at a distance of 1½ kms from the Amareswar chhak

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of the main road, which lies between Nimapara and Kakatpur of Puri district. The two-armed image of Goddess Varahi is carved seated in *lalitasana* pose on a plain footed pedestal. Her right foot resting on the crouching buffalo carved on the pedestal. She displays a skull-cup (*kapala*) in left hand and a fish in right hand (Pl. No.1). She has a pot-belly and the head of a boar. The third eye of the Goddess is prominently shown on the forehead. Her lower garment hangs over their left foot. Hairs on her head are arranged in spiral curls and rises inwards. The plain halo is oval behind her head. The figures of *vidyadhara*s holding garlands are finely carved on both side top corners of the slab. The presiding deity is partially fixed into the wall of the sanctum. It measures 6 feet 1 inch in height and 2 feet 9 inches in width.³ On the basis of iconographic features, the image of presiding deity (Goddess Varahi) may be assignable to the first half of the 10th century A.D. It is a unique image of Varahi in the coastal-belt of Odisha. According to the *Kaula* doctrine observed in this shrine, consecrated to Goddess Varahi who represents the *Jnana* aspect of the *Devi*.⁴ K.S. Behera and T.E. Donaldson have mentioned that the *Tantric* nature of Varahi worship is particularly evident on the Varahi temple at Chaurasi where erotic rituals, many of which include 'Kapalika' participants.⁵ J. N. Banerjee has remarked, "it seems that the cult of Varahi flourished as an adjunct of *Tantric* form of *Shakti* worship in medieval India, especially in eastern and central part of India".⁶ The iconography of *Varahi* image of Chaurasi represents the Odishan classical art of the Somavamsi period.

2. Ambika of Kenduli

The sanctum of the Ambika temple of Kenduli-Deuli (Kenduli) preserves an image of Ambika as its presiding deity (Pl. No. 2). The Ambika temple is situated at the village Kenduli under the Balipatna Police Station of the Khordha district. The present temple is completely a renovated temple of that locality.⁷ The local people say that the present temple has been rebuilt within 40 years before the present. The cleaning works of the site conducted by K. N. Mahapatra, the retired Superintendent of Archaeology has brought to view two beautiful images, according to him, are known as Ambika and Jagesvari, supposed to have been worshipped inside the dilapidated brick temple.⁸ Now, the temple is under the protection of the Odisha State Archaeology Department, Bhubaneswar. The modern temple has been erected on the ruined plinth of the earlier temple. The ruins of the site yielded an inscribed slab, palaeographically dated to the 12th-13th centuries A.D.⁹ A few earlier scholars like R.P. Mohapatra has identified it as the image of Chandi.¹⁰ The two armed image of Ambika is carved in *padmasana* pose on the double petalled lotus pedestal. The slab of the presiding deity is installed on the *simhasana* of 1½ feet high. The right arm is broken from the elbow portion. A bunch of five mangoes are depicted on the side of her right hand. Perhaps, She had displayed stalks of these mangoes in her right arm. The left arm of *Devi Ambika* holds lotus flower, which is depicted near the left side arm of *devi Ambika*. The bottom part of the pedestal of the presiding deity is decorated with female devotees with musical instruments. The middle portion of the pedestal is carved with scroll work and female devotees. Lion figure is also depicted on the left of the pedestal. The backside of the head of the presiding deity is decorated with seven hooded serpent. *Apsara* figure is depicted on both side top corners of the slab. The image *Ambika* measures 3 feet 6 inches in height and 1 foot 8 inches in width respectively. The image of presiding deity is made of black chlorite stone. T.E. Donaldson has remarked that the image of presiding deity was made in the late 11th century or early 12th century A.D.¹¹ Iconographical features of *Devi Ambika* indicate the artistic tradition of the Odishan classical art of the Ganga period.

3. Durga of Motia

The sanctum of the Durgatemple of Motia preserves the image of goddess Durga as the presiding deity. The Durgatemple of Motia is one of the important Shakta shrines of the Prachi Valley in the coastal belt of Odisha. It is situated at the village Motia in the Niali Block of the Cuttack district. This temple is located about 5 kms from Amaresvara on the left bank of the river Prachi.¹² The four armed image of goddess Durga is carved in standing posture on the double petalled lotus pedestal (Pl. No.3). She displays *chakra* in upper right hand and *shankha* in upper left hand. The lower two hands hold the trident, by which, she is piercing the heart of *Mahisasura* as on the detached Durga image of the Gangesvari temple of Bayalishbali.¹³ The head of

Mahisasura is depicted detached from his body. Lion, the conventional mount of goddess Durga is carved on the left of the pedestal. Observing the iconography of the presiding deity, T.E. Donaldson remarks that *chakra* and conch testify to the strong Vaisnavite influence permeating the area of this time.¹⁴ Hansanatha Sahoo is also of the view that the presiding deity is ornamentally decorated but the presence of Champaka flower garland suggests it to Vaisnavite affiliation.¹⁵ He also says that the attributes of *shankha* and *chakra* in upper hands identify it as Durga-Madhava.¹⁶ Two female attendant figures are flanked on both sides of goddess Durga. The backside of the head of deity is carved with trefoil arch, *makara* head at the base and the *kirtimukha* motif at the apex. *Apsara* figure holding garland is depicted on both side top corners of the slab. The dazzling appearance and the archaic of attacking the demon create sensational feelings in the minds of visitors.¹⁷ The image of Durga is made of black chlorite stone. It measures 3 feet 1½ inches in height and 1 foot 10 inches in width respectively. The presiding deity is installed on the *simhasana* of 1½ feet high. The back wall of the sanctum near the presiding deity is decorated with trefoil arch, *makara* head at the base and the *pidhamastaka* design at the apex. Some of the earlier scholars opine that the image of presiding deity is a rare specimen of the Odishan art.¹⁸ H.C. Das is of the view that the presiding deity of Motia is one of the best representative specimens of the Ganga period.¹⁹ The image of goddess Durga of Motia contains the artistic features of the Odishan classical art of the 13th century A.D.

4. Durga of Kudapatna

The sanctum of the Durga temple of Kudapatna preserves the large sized image of Goddess Durga as the presiding deity. The temple of Barabhuja Durga of Kudapatna is one of the important Shakta shrines of the Prachi Valley in Odisha. It is situated at the village Kudapatna in the Balipatna Block of the Khordha district. The temple is located about 5 kms from Niali on the left bank of river Prachi. It is built on the ruins of the earlier temple. The original temple of Barabhuja Durga was a brick monument of the Prachi Valley.²⁰ The twelve armed image of Goddess Durga is carved in *urga* posture on the plain pedestal. She is depicted piercing the neck of *Mahisasura* by a trident. Lion, the conventional mount of Goddess Durga is carved on the right of the pedestal. *Mahisasura*, the demon is depicted on the pedestal of the slab. The right side six hands of Goddess Durga display *khadga*, lotus, trident, *varadamudra*, an indistinct object and the backside hand is empty. The left side six hands hold shield, *gada*, bow, bell, snake and the backside hand is blank. The image of Goddess Durga is made of chlorite stone. It measures 5 feet 5 inches in height and 2 feet 3 inches in width.²¹ Among all the extant Durga images of the Prachi Valley, the twelve handed Durga image of Kudapatna is unique image from the iconographical point of view. Observing the iconography of the presiding deity, Hansanatha Sahoo remarks that the image is an art of Bhaumakara period.²² Another stone image of eight armed Goddess Durga is also found on the left side of the presiding deity. The eight armed image of Goddess Durga is carved in standing posture on the pedestal. This image is made of chlorite stone. The right side hands of Devi display *khadga*, trident, lotus stalk and *chakra* while the left side four hands hold rosary, bow, snake and one hand holds the hair of *Mahisasura*. Lion, the conventional mount of Devi is carved on the right of the pedestal. The *Mahisasura* figure is depicted on the pedestal. The image of *astabhuja* Durga measures 3 feet 4 inches in height and 1 foot 10 inches in width. Besides, there is a brass image of Mahisamardini Durga on the right side of the presiding deity. This image is considered as the *chalantipratima* of the presiding deity. The image of presiding deity is adorned with the *makara* headed arch supported by the pillar on each side. The presiding deity is installed on the *simhasana* of 2 feet high.

5. Durga of Adaspur

The Durga temple of Adaspur is one of the old Shakta shrines of the Prachi Valley in Odisha. It is situated about 37 kms from Bhubaneswara on the left bank of river Prachi. This temple is located at the village Adaspur in the Kantapara Block of the Cuttack district. The sanctum of Durga temple preserves the image of Goddess Durga as the presiding deity (Pl. No.4). The ten armed (*Dasabhuja*) image of Goddess Durga is worshipped as the "Budhi Thakurani", which stylistically can be dated to the 10th-11th century A.D.²³ She puts her uplifted right foot on the rump of the decapitated buffalo while her left foot is placed on the back of her

mount (lion). Goddess Durga displays trident in one of her left arms and other four of the left side are broken. The right side arms hold spear, *ankusa*, snake, etc. This image is made of black chlorite stone. Stylistically, the image is closely related to the examples at Pitapara and Ambapara.²⁴ Iconography of the Durga image of Adaspur contains the artistic features of the Odishan classical art of the Somavamsi period. Really, the ten armed image of Goddess Durga of Adaspur is a masterpiece sculpture of Odisha from the artistic point of view.

6. Rama-Chandi of Narisho

The temple of Rama-Chandi is one of the Shaktashrines of the Prachi Valley in Odisha. It is located at the village Narisho in the Balipatna Block of the Khordha district. The temple is situated at a distance of about 2 kms from the Niali Bazar and ½ km from the river Prachi.²⁵ The sanctum of the temple preserves the image of goddess Rama-Chandi as its presiding deity. The four armed image of Goddess Rama-Chandi is carved in standing posture on the plain pedestal. The upper right hand displays an indistinct object, the lower right hand holds a staff (*danda*), the upper left hand exhibits a *padma* and the lower left hand holds a *ladu* (sweat ball) respectively. The image Rama-Chandi is made of sand stone. It measures 3 feet 1 inch in height and 1 foot 7 inches in width respectively.²⁶ The background of the slab of deity is decorated with trefoil arch, which is supported by circular pillar on each side. The iconography of the goddess Rama-Chandi represents the artistic features of the late Ganga art of Odisha.

7. Hara-Chandi of Bisimatri

The sanctum of the Hara-Chandi temple preserves the image of goddess Hara-Chandi as the presiding. The temple of Hara-Chandi is located at the village Bisimatri in the Nimapara Block of the Puri district. This temple is situated about 2 kms from the Charichhak and 3 kms from the Prachi river.²⁷ The two armed image of goddess Hara-Chandi is carved in standing posture on the pedestal. She holds *japamala* in right hand and snake in left hand respectively. The head of goddess Hara-Chandi is surmounted by seven hooded serpent. The image Hara-Chandi is made of sand stone and it is about 2 feet in height. Iconographical features of the presiding deity suggest the image of Manasa, the mother of snakes. The presiding deity is installed on the *simhasana* of 1 foot high. The slab of the presiding deity is surmounted by the *makara* headed arch, which is supported by two circular pillars on both sides. The *makara* headed arch is crowned by the *pidhamastaka* flanked by inverted parrots. The iconographical features of the image of goddess Hara-Chandi represent the artistic tradition of the Odishan art of the medieval period.

8. Kakatei of Kakatpur

The temple of Kakatei is a small Shakta shrine of the Prachi Valley in Odisha. It is situated on the northern side of the Mangala temple complex of Kakatpur. The local tradition says that the village Kakatpur has derived its name from its titular deity Kakatei.²⁸ The priests of the temple opine that initially the Goddess Kakatei was being worshipped under a tree. In subsequent period, a temple has been erected for the shelter of goddess Kakatei. The sanctum preserves the image of goddess Kakatei as the presiding deity of the temple. The goddess Kakatei is generally considered by the local people as the Gramadevi of Kakatpur. The four armed image of Goddess Kakatei is carved in *padmasana* posture on the double petalled lotus pedestal. She displays *panapatra* in upper right hand, *varada mudra* in lower right hand, the stalk of lotus flower in lower left hand and the upper left hand is broken. The bottom part of the pedestal is decorated with female devotees in kneeling posture. The image of Kakatei is made of sand stone. The local tradition says that Goddess Kakatei is earlier than the Goddess Mangala of Kakatpur. Iconographic features indicate that the image Kakatei is older than the image of Kakatpur Mangala. Two horses are found worshipped on both sides of the Goddess Kakatei. The presiding deity is installed on the *simhasana* of 1½ feet high.

9. Mangala of Kakatpur

The temple of Goddess Mangala is situated at Kakatpur, which exactly located on the left bank of the sacred Prachiriver, about 50 kms to the north-east of the Jagannatha temple of Puri. This temple is also 22

kms from Nimapara on the Nimapara-Astharanga road.²⁹ From the religious point of view, this shrine possesses a unique place in the cultural history of Odisha. The sanctum of the temple preserves the fine image of Goddess Mangala as the presiding deity of the temple. The stone slab of Goddess Mangala is about 6½ feet in height and 3½ feet in width respectively.³⁰ The entire slab is made of black chlorite. The four armed image of Devi Mangala is carved in *lalitasanapose* on the double petalled lotus pedestal. She holds *chakra* or full moon in upper right hand, rosary (*japamala*) in lower right hand, lotus bud (*padmakalika*) in upper left hand and the lower left hand displays an indistinct object. According to old priests of the temple, the hand is in *gananaposture*. R.P. Mohapatra has remarked that the lower left hand of the Goddess displays *varadamudra*.³¹ The lower left hand possibly shows *gananamudra*. The right leg of Goddess Mangala hangs downward while the left bent leg is placed on the pedestal. The Vaisnavite emblems like *shankha*, *chakra*, *gada*, and *padma* are distinctly carved on the pedestal. A number of female devotees are also found on the basement of the pedestal. They are depicted in kneeling posture with *anjali mudra*. The backside of the head of goddess Mangala is decorated with trefoil arch crowned by the *kirtimukhamotif*. *Vidyadharas* and flying *apsara* figures holding garlands and musical instruments are finely depicted on both side top corners of the slab. The left side centre of the slab is carved with the stem of lotus flower. The female figures holding *chauri* and flywhisk flank the base of trefoil arch. Scroll work is finely carved on the lower part of the pedestal. The presence of emblems like *shankha*, *chakra*, *gada*, and *padma* clearly suggest that the presiding deity is associated with Vaisnavite faith. A series of devotees are noticed on the bottom part of the pedestal. They are depicted in kneeling posture with *anjali mudra*. The backside of the head of Goddess Mangala is decorated with trefoil arch crowned by the *kirtimukhamotif*. *Vidyadharas* and flying *apsara* figures holding garlands and musical instruments are finely depicted on both side top corners of the slab. The left side centre of the slab is carved with the stem of lotus flower. The female figures holding *chauri* and flywhisk are also flanked on either side base of the trefoil arch. The Goddess Mangala is exquisitely carved and richly bejewelled. The slab of Goddess Mangala has been installed on the *Shaktipitha*, which has sixteen corners. In fact, the Mangala image of Kakatpur is a masterpiece sculpture of Odisha. Considering the iconographic features, the image of Goddess Mangala can be assignable to the Ganga art of Odisha.³² This image is quite different from other Mangala images of Odisha, because, there is neither lion nor *Mahisasura* figure in it. In this connection, Radha Charana Panda refers that the image of presiding deity is not the image of *Utkaladesa* and it was probably brought from any overseas country as per the local tradition.³³ The artists of the Mangala image of Kakatpur might have concentrated wholeheartedly to make this image more successful. From the artistic point of view, the image Mangala of Kakatpur is regarded as a unique sculpture in every respect and very rare in iconographic world. It can be presumed that the image Mangala of Kakatpur was certainly made by the Odishan artists considering its iconographic features. The style and iconographic features of the Mangala image really exhibits a superb specimen of the Odishan classical art of the Ganga period. The Vaisnavite emblems carved in the slab suggest that the presiding deity (goddess Mangala) is closely associated with Vaisnavite faith, due to which, she is considered by devotees as 'Parama Vaisnavi'. The goddess Mangala is also locally worshipped as the 'Ista Devi' of the people of Prachi valley.

10. Dakshina-Chandi of Mangalapur

The sanctum of the Dakshina-Chandi temple preserves the image of Goddess Dakshina-Chandi as the presiding deity. The temple of Dakshina-Chandi is situated at the village Mangalapur in the Kakatpur Block of the Puri district. This temple is located about 1 km from Kakatpur on the left bank of the river Prachi. It is completely a renovated temple. The eight armed image of Dakshina-Chandi is carved in standing posture on the plain pedestal. The image Dakshina-Chandi is made of sand stone, which is locally called *Baulamalapathara*. She holds trident, *shankha*, *gada* and *khadga* in her right side hands. The left side hands of the goddess displays trident, snake, arrow and the lower left hand hangs downward. Lion, the conventional mount of goddess Dakshina-Chandi is carved on the left of the pedestal. Here a demon in the form of animal body is found depicted on the right side of the pedestal. Goddess Dakshina-Chandi is piercing the heart of demon by

trident. The backside of the head of deity is decorated with circular *prabhamandala*. The image Dakshina-Chandi has been made in 1990 by the local artist. It measures 2 feet 11 inches in height and 1 foot 6 inches in width respectively. The present presiding deity belongs to the twentieth century A.D. Besides the presiding deity, there is also an old stone slab containing an image of two armed Goddess Chandi. She holds trident in right hand and *panapatra* in left hand respectively. The two armed image of Goddess Chandi is carved in dancing posture on the plain pedestal. This image is made of sand stone and it is assignable to the medieval period. The slab of deity is eroded by nature. Most probably, the old Chandi image of the sanctum is the original DakshinaChandi/presiding deity of that temple.

11.Charchika of Narasinghpurhat

The temple of Charchika is a small Shakta shrine of the Prachi Valley in Odisha. It is located at the village Narasinghpurhat in the Gop Block of the Puri district. This temple is situated about 1½ kms from Nuahat and 8 kms from Kakatpur. The sanctum of the temple preserves the image of goddess Charchika as the presiding deity. She is being considered as the *Gramadevi* of that village. The image Charchika is carved in seated posture on the double petalled lotus pedestal. The pedestal of the slab is carved with prostrate body of a corpse. Mouse is also found depicted on the pedestal. The backside of the head of goddess Charchika is decorated with an elephant figure. Due to covering by clothes and restriction, the detailed iconographic features of the presiding deity could not be documented by the present author at the time of survey. The slab of the presiding deity is inserted in the back wall niche, which is decorated with *makara* headed arch. The iconographic features of the Charchika image represent the Odishan classical art of the medieval period.

12. ChandaghantaChamunda of Nuagaon

The temple of ChandaghantaChamunda is located at a distance of ½ km from the Niali Bazar on the left bank of the river Prachi. The temple is a single structure, which is dedicated to goddess ChandaghantaChamunda. The sanctum of the temple preserves the sixteen armed image of Chamunda as the presiding deity. She displays *khadga*, *dambaru*, *ankusa*, *chakra*, arrow in the right side five hands and the attributes in other three hands of the right side are not clearly visible. The left side four hands hold trident, snake, *panapatra*, severed head (*chinnamastaka*) and the attributes in other four hands of the left side are not completely visible. Now, it is very difficult to count the hands as most of the hands emerge from the elbows, not from the shoulder.³⁴ She is carved in *ardhaparyanka* pose on the pedestal. One of her legs is on the pedestal and the left leg knee raises upwards and its foot is placed on the pedestal. Here the dead body (corpse) below her is not visible at present. Goddess Chamunda wears a garland of human skulls in her body. The image Chamunda is made of sand stone. The presiding deity is locally worshipped as ChandaghantaChamunda. The sixteen armed image of Chamunda may be assignable to the early Somavamsi art of Odisha by considering its iconographical features.

13.Durga of Ambapara

The Durga temple of Ambapara is one of the small Shakta shrines of the Prachi Valley in Odisha. It is situated at the village Ambapara in the Niali Block of the Cuttack district. The temple is located at a distance of about 3 kms from the Yogesvarapurchhak of the main road, which lies between Charichhak and Astaranga. Although the temple is a small modern shrine but it preserves a good specimen of the Durga image of the Odishan classical art of the Somavamsi period. The sanctum of the temple preserves the image of Goddess Durga as the presiding deity (Pl. No. 5). The ten armed image of goddess Durga is carved in standing posture. Her right foot is placed on the hind part of the buffalo, which is lying down with its severed head while her left foot is on the back of her lion, which is ferociously attacking the demon.³⁵ She is depicted in *ugra* posture. The right side hands of goddess Durga hold *khadga*, arrow, *chakra*, trident and one hand is broken. The left side five hands display *parasu*, bow, bell, shield and *nagapasa*, which lies on the neck of *asura*. The image of Goddess Durga is made of black chlorite. The pedestal of the slab is engraved with a small inscription. The inscription is written in Sanskrit language and it is the characteristics of the 9th-10th centuries A.D.³⁶ The image

of this Bhattarika (presiding deity) is carved out by the sculptor Yuvaraka.³⁷ The presiding deity's image measures 2 feet 6 inches in height and 1 foot 2 inches in width. It is installed on the *simhasana* of 2 feet high. Stylistically and iconographically, the Durga temple of Ambapara is a unique and preserves masterpiece sculpture of medieval Odisha.

14. Chitresvari of Chitreswari

The temple of Chitresvari is one of the important Shakta shrines of the Prachi Valley in the coastal belt of Odisha. It is situated at the village Chitreswari in the Kakatpur Block of the Puri district. This temple is located about 20 kms from Kakatpur and 5 kms from the Balidokanachhak of the main road, which lies between Konarka and Kakatpur. The temple is exactly situated on the right bank of the river Kadua, a tributary of the river Prachi. It is completely a renovated temple. The sanctum of the temple preserves a good specimen of the image of Goddess Chitresvari as the presiding deity. The four armed image of Chitresvari is carved in *padmasana* posture on the double petalled lotus pedestal. She displays *ankusa* in upper right hand, *nagapasa* in upper left hand, *varada mudra* in lower right hand and *abhaya mudra* in lower left hand respectively (Pl.No. 6). The head of goddess Chitresvari is surmounted by the eight hooded serpent. The image of goddess is made of black chlorite stone. It measures 2 feet 10 inches in height and 1 foot 6 inches in width respectively. Observing the image of presiding deity, H.C. Das opines that the image Chitresvari may be assignable to the Somavamsi period.³⁸ The image Chitresvari contains the artistic features of the Odishan classical art of the medieval period. Goddess Chitresvari has earned name and fame as an important Shakta deity like Goddess Mangala of Kakatpur. In medieval period, she was being considered as the goddess of navigation by the people of Prachi Valley.

Conclusion

Thus, it is known from the above discussion that all the extant presiding deities of the Shakta shrines of Prachi Valley possess the artistic features of the Odishan art of the medieval period except the DakshinaChandi temple of Mangalapur, which belongs to the modern period. From the artistic point of view, the Varahi image of Chaurasi is a unique image of in the coastal-belt of Odisha. The iconography of the Varahi image indicates the artistic features of the Odishan classical art of the Somavamsi period. Iconographical features of Devi Ambika of Kenduli suggest the artistic tradition of the Ganga art of Odisha. Goddess Durga image of Motia displays *chakra* and conch, which testify to the strong Vaisnavite influence. Similarly, the presence of Champaka flower garland suggests it to Vaisnavite affiliation. The excellent appearance of Durga image of Motia and its artistic carving of attacking the demon generate amazing feelings in the minds of visitors. The Durga image of Motia is one of the best representative specimens of the Ganga art of Odisha. Among all the extant Durga images of the Prachi Valley, the twelve handed Durga image of Kudapatna is unique image from the iconographical point of view. Considering the artistic features, the ten armed image of Goddess Durga of Adaspur is a masterpiece sculpture of Odisha. The iconography of the goddess Rama-Chandi image of Narisho represents the artistic features of the late Ganga art of Odisha. The iconographical features of the image of goddess Hara-Chandi of Bisimatri represent the artistic tradition of the Odisha classical art of the medieval period. Iconographic features of the image Kakatei indicate that it is older than the image Mangala of Kakatpur. In fact, the Mangala image of Kakatpur is a masterpiece sculpture of Odisha. Considering the iconographic features, the image of Goddess Mangala can be assignable to the Ganga art of Odisha. The presence of emblems like *shankha*, *chakra*, *gada*, and *padma* clearly suggest that the presiding deity Mangala is associated with Vaisnavite faith. The image of Goddess Mangala is exquisitely carved and richly bejewelled. This image is quite different from other Mangala images of Odisha, because, there is neither lion nor *Mahisasura* figure depicted here. The DakshinaChandi image of Mangalapur has been made in 1990 by the local artist. Most probably, the old Chandi image of the sanctum of the DakshinaChandi temple of Mangalapur is the original presiding deity of that shrine. The sixteen armed Chandaghanta Chamunda image of Nuagaon may be assignable to the early part of the Somavamsi period by considering its iconographical features. The ten armed image of goddess Durga of Ambapara is a unique and masterpiece sculpture of medieval Odisha. The pedestal of the

slab of Durga image of Ambapara is engraved with a small inscription, which is written in Sanskrit language belongs to the 9th-10th centuries A.D. The image Chitresvari of Chitreswari displays the iconographic features of the Odishan classical art of the medieval period and it is a rare sculpture in the whole Prachi Valley as well as Odisha. The iconographic features of all the presiding deities of above Shakta temples of Prachi Valley represent good specimens of the Odishan sculpture masterpieces. All the images of presiding deities of Shakta temples of Prachi Valley are exquisitely made by the artists of the Kalinga School of art. On the whole, the iconographic features of the presiding deities of the Shakta temples of Prachi Valley occupy a prominent place in the history of Shakta art of Odisha.

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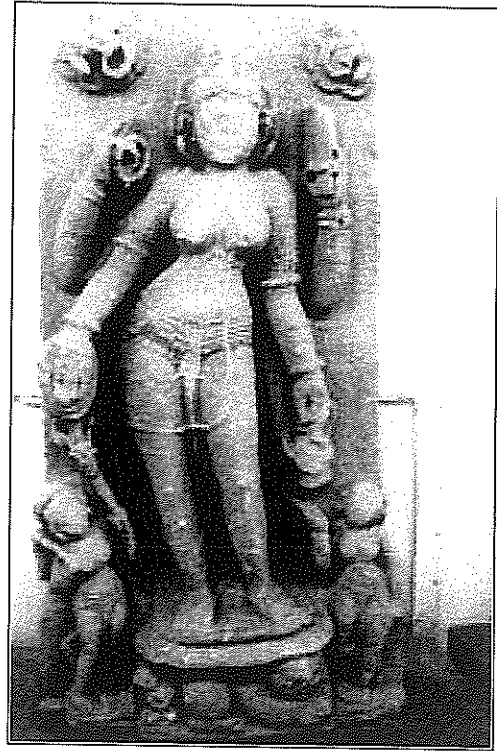
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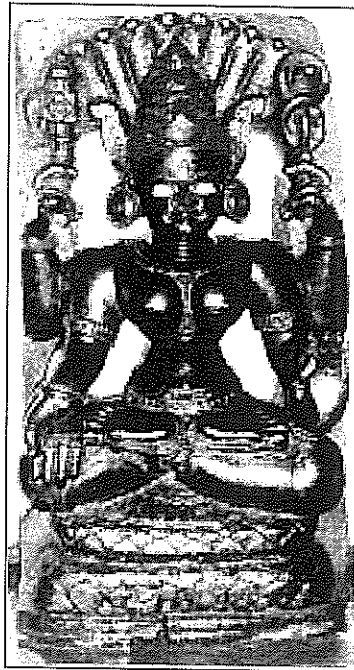


Pl.1
Mahisamardini, Benisagar



Pl.2
Simhavahini Durga, Ichagarh

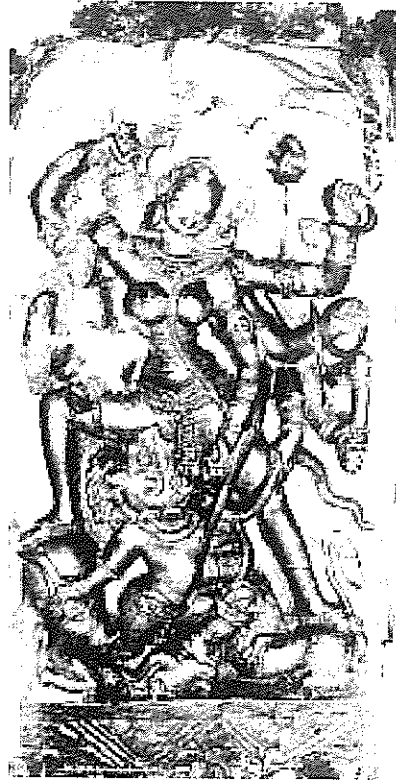
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Pl.5
Chitresvari, Chitresvari
Temple, Chitresvara



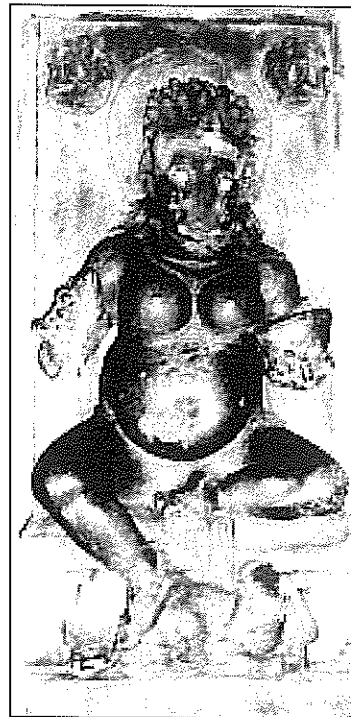
Durga, Durga Temple,
Ambarara



Durga, Durga Temple,
Adaspur



Ambika, Ambika
Temple, Kenduli



Pl.1
Varahi, Varahi
Temple, Chaurasi