

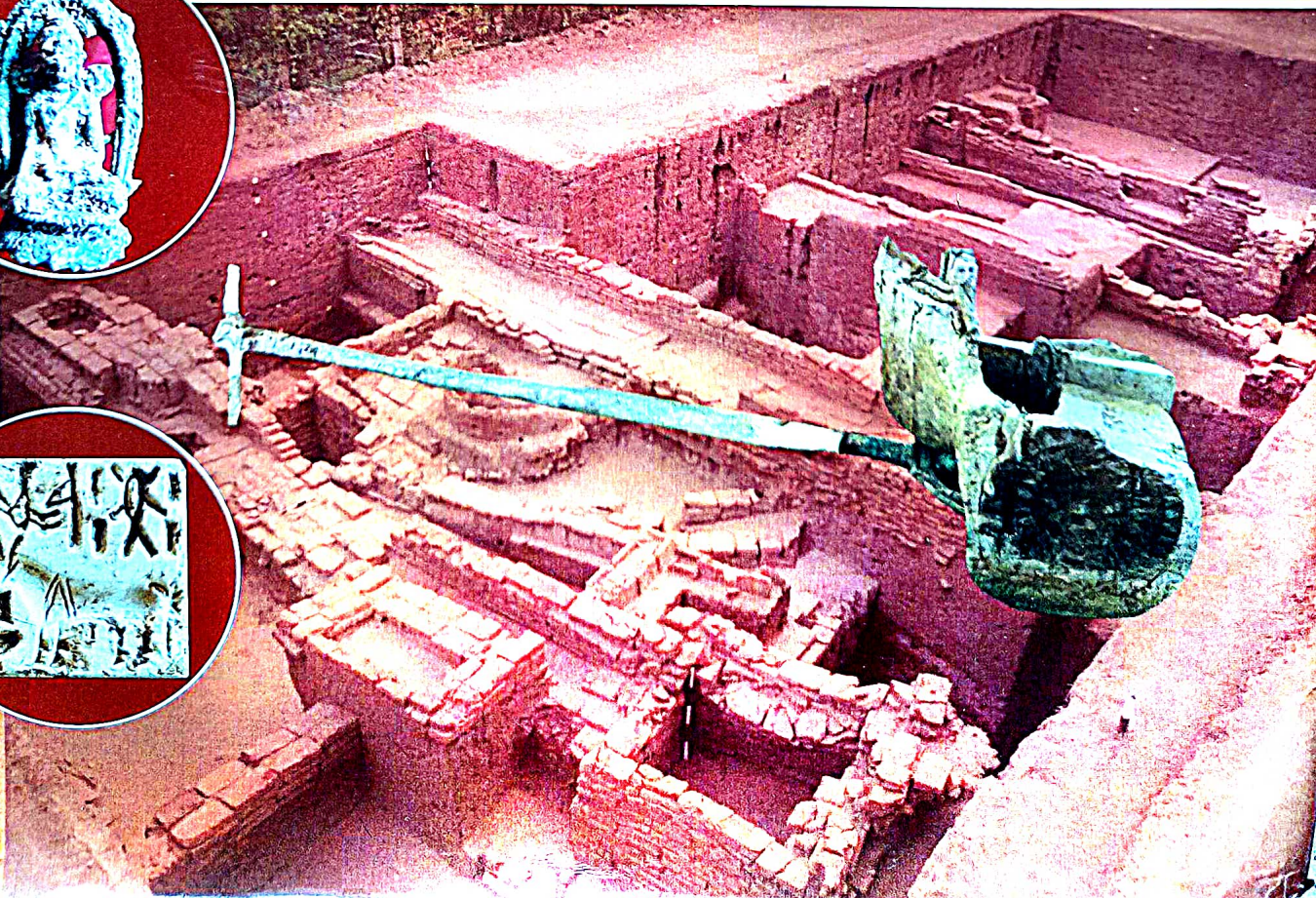


AŚOKŚRĪ

*Recent Researches on Archaeology, Art,
Culture and Epigraphy*
Prof. Asok Nath Parida Felicitation Volume

Set of 2 Vols.

Sanjay Acharya
Nanda Kishor Swain
Atula Kumar Pradhan



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VOLUME-II

Editors

**Sanjay Acharya
Nanda Kishor Swain
Atula Kumar Pradhan**



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Kartikeya Images from the Dvadasa Sambhu Temples of Prachi Valley in Odisha: A Recent Study

Ratnakar Mohapatra¹

Introduction

The region of Prachi Valley is famous for its historic antiquities and religious sanctuaries in Odisha as well as Eastern India. A good number of Saiva temples are found to be existed in the different parts of the Prachi Valley. The extant Saiva temples of the Prachi Valley suggest that the Valley was popular as a place of Saivism during the medieval as well as modern periods. The Prachi Valley is located around the Prachi river in the coastal-belt of Odisha. The Prachi river lies in between the rivers Kushabhadra and Devi in the eastern part of Odisha. Kartikeya, also known as Skanda, Kumara, is the Hindu god of war. He is the second son of Lord Siva and Parvati, brother of Ganesha. Kartikeya is essentially brave, intelligent and perfection personified, because of which he is being worshipped as the god of war and victory. Kartikeya is an ancient god, traceable to the Vedic age, archaeological evidence from the 1st century A.D. The iconography of Kartikeya is represented as a youthful god, riding or near a peacock, dressed with weapons sometimes near a rooster. Kartikeya has either one head or six, depending on the artists. The iconographical study of Kartikeya images of Prachi valley is one of the fascinating aspects of the Odishan Saiva art. Most of the Kartikeya images of Odisha are shown in the role of *parsvadevata* in Siva temples. Kartikeya is usually shown in standing (*sthanaka murti*), seated (*asina murti*) on his peacock mount and riding forms (*Yanaka murti*). Kartikeya generally has his coiffure arranged in the *sikhandaka* mode, consisting of looped-meshes, characteristic of boyhood and is richly bejewelled with the foremost ornament being the *vyaghranakha*, necklace of tiger-claws and tortoise pendants. He holds the *shakti* in one of his hands and is accompanied by his peacock-mount who frequently trod on a serpent. Towards the end of the 9th century A.D., the *kukuta* (rooster cock) is added as an attribute, which he holds in one of his hands. On later standing images, the *kukuta* is invariably held in the major left hand near his hip while a small image of Devasena stands below holding its feet with her uplifted right hand. The region of Prachi valley is one of the important centres of Saivism in Odisha. Various types of Kartikeya images belonging to different periods are found to be worshipped throughout the whole Prachi valley, where these

1. Lecturer in History, KISS University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha – 751024.

images are mostly housed in the *parsvadevata* niches of the Saivite temples. The iconography of the Kartikeya images of Odisha is an interesting study for the art historians. Hence, the present author has meticulously documented all the Kartikeya images, which are housed as *parsvadevatas* in the Dvadasa Sambhu temples of the Prachi valley. This paper attempts to highlight the detailed iconographic features of the Kartikeya images of the 'Dvadasa Sambhu' temples of the Prachi valley.

Most of the earlier dilapidated Siva temples of the Prachi Valley have been renovated in the last quarter of the 20th century and a few in the first decade of the present century. Among the extant Saiva temples of the Prachi Valley, twelve temples are locally considered as "Dvadasa Sambhus".¹ They are such as 1. Amaresvara temple at Amaresvar, 2. Gramesvara temple at Nibharana, 3. Angesvara temple at Pitapara, 4. Somesvara temple at Samesvar, 5. Sovanesvara temple at Nuagaon, 6. Andha-Kapilesvara temple at Kapilesvarpur, 7. Nrityesvara temple at Nasikesvara, 8. Ramesvara temple at Tola-Gopinathpur, 9. Gokarnesvara temple at Kantaparasasana, 10. Belesvara temple at Bhapur, 11. Siddhesvara temple at Mudgala and 12. Muktesvara temple at Daluakani. The last *Sambhu* (Muktesvara of Daluakani) is not found existed till today and its temple (shrine) is naturally submerged in the sea.

Kartikeya Images of the Dvadasa Sambhu Temples of Prachi Valley

The extant Kartikeya images of the Dvadasa Sambhu temples of the Prachi valley give us an idea about the iconography and the typical Odishan mode of representation. The existed Kartikeya images of all the Dvadasa Sambhu temples of the Prachi valley generally display *varada mudra*, divine spear often called *shakti*, sword, javelin, trident, mace, discus, *dambaru*, arrow, bow, feeding the peacock, holding rooster cock, etc. in his hands. The Kartikeya image of each Sambhu temple is artistically depicted as one headed youthful god and dressed as warrior. The detailed iconographic features of the Kartikeya images of the Dvadasa Sambhu temples of the Prachi valley are being mentioned below.

1. Kartikeya of Amaresvara Temple of Amaresvara

The Amaresvara temple is located on the right bank of the river Prachi at a distance of 60 kms from Bhubaneswar.² It is also about 3 kms from Charichhak on the left side of Nimapara-Astaranga road. The central niches of the three sides of the *bada* of *vimana* of Amaresvara temple are housed with the images of Ganesha, Kartikeya and Hara-Parvati. Kartikeya is the *parsvadevata* of western side. The two handed image of Kartikeya is carved seated on the back of the peacock. Peacock, the conventional mount of deity is installed on the double petalled lotus pedestal. The right hand of the deity holds arrow and the left hand possesses a bow. The background slab of the deity is decorated with criss-cross designs. There is neither human figure nor *apsara* found on the upper part of the slab. The image Kartikeya is made of black chlorite. It measures 6½ inches in height and 1 foot 3 inches in width. The iconography of this Kartikeya image represents the artistic features of the Odishan classical art of the Somavamsi period.

2. Kartikeya of Gramesvara Temple of Nibharana

The temple of Gramesvara is situated on the bank of the sacred river Prachi and at the centre of the village Nibharana in the Niali Block of the Cuttack district. It is exactly located at a distance of 54 kms from Bhubaneswar and 5 kms from the Nuahat Bus stand.³ The central niches of the three sides of the *bada* of *vimana* of the Gramesvara temple are housed with the *parsvadevata* images of Kartikeya, Narayani and Ganesha. Kartikeya is founding in the western side as the *parsvadevata*. 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 (Devasena) 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 respectively.⁴ The backside of the head of deity is decorated with trefoil arch. The image Kartikeya is made of granite stone. The existence of both cock and peacock suggests a date of 10th/11th century A.D. to the image of Kartikeya. The iconography of this Kartikeya image represents a fine workmanship of the Odishan artists of the Somavamsi period.

3. Kartikeya of Angesvara Temple of Pitapara

The temple of Angesvara is situated, 3 kms distance from the Amaresvara Chhak, at the Village of Pitapara in the Naili Block of the Cuttack district. This temple is also located about 61 kms away from Bhubaneswar on the northern bank of the river Prachi.⁵ The central niches of the three sides of the *bada* of *vimana* of Angesvara temple are housed with the *parsvadevata* images of Ganesha, Kartikeya and Devi Parvati. The image Kartikeya is the *parsvadevata* of the western side. The four handed image of Kartikeya is carved in standing posture on the double petalled lotus pedestal (Pl.45.1). The image Kartikeya is made of sand stone. The upper right hand of deity holds *shakti*, the lower right hand feeding the peacock, the upper left hand possesses a rooster cock and the lower left hand lies on the back of rooster cock. Peacock, the conventional mount of deity is carved on the right of the pedestal. Devasena is depicted lifting the feet of the rooster cock. Flower medallion is carved on both side top corners of the slab. The image Kartikeya measures 1 foot 5 inches in width and 2 feet 8 inches in height. The iconography of this Kartikeya image contains the artistic features of the Odishan classical art of the Somavamsi period.

4. Kartikeya of Somesvara Temple of Samesvara

The temple of Somesvara is one of the ancient Saiva shrines of the Prachi Valley in Odisha. It is located at a distance of 1½ km from Kakatpur in the Puri district.⁶ The central niches of the three sides of the *bada* of *vimana* of Somesvara temple are housed with the *parsvadevata* images of Devi Parvati, Kartikeya and Ganesha. All the side deities are carved out of chlorite stone and these are housed in the *pidha mundi* niches. Kartikeya is the *parsvadevata* of the western side. The four armed image of Kartikeya is carved in standing posture on the double petalled lotus pedestal (Pl.45.2). The upper right hand of deity is broken from the elbow portion, the lower right

hand displays *varada mudra*, the upper left hand holds the rooster cock whose head is completely missing and the lower left hand lies on the comb (tail) of the rooster cock. Devasena is lifting the legs of the rooster cock. Diminutive female attendant figure is carved on both sides of the slab. The backside of the head of deity is decorated 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 right side bottom part of the pedestal of deity is decorated with full blown lotus flower and a human figure. The image Kartikeya measures 3 feet 3 inches in height and 1 foot 9 inches in width respectively.⁷ The iconography of this Kartikeya image possesses the artistic features of the Odishan classical art of the early Ganga period.

5. Kartikeya of Sovanesvara Temple of Nuagaon

The temple of Sovanesvara is one of the important Saiva shrines of the Prachi Valley in Odisha. It is situated about 1 km from the Niali Bazar in the district of Cuttack. The temple is located at the village Nuagaon near Niali and it is about 50 kms from Bhubaneswara on the left bank of river Prachi.⁸ The central niches of the three sides of the *bada* of *vimana* of the Sovanesvara temple are housed with the *parsvadevata* images of Ganesha, Kartikeya and Parvati. Kartikeya is the *parsvadevata* of the western side. The four armed image of Kartikeya is carved in standing posture on the double petalled lotus pedestal (Pl.45.3). He displays an indistinct object in upper right hand and *varada mudra* with a small lotus mark in lower right hand. The upper left hand holds the rooster cock and the lower left hand lies on the tail of the rooster cock. Devasena is lifting the legs of the rooster cock. Peacock, the conventional mount of the deity is carved on the right of the pedestal. There is a small attendant figure holding a staff depicted on the right of the pedestal near the peacock. Diminutive male and female figures are flanked on either side of the deity on the lower part of the slab. They are depicted in the *pidha mundi* niches. The *gaja vidala* figure is carved at the centre of both sides of the slab. The backside of the head of the deity is decorated with trefoil arch crowned by the *kirtimukha* motif. Small images of Ganesha and Parvati are flanked on either side base of the trefoil arch. *Vidyadhara* and *apsara* figures holding garland, *chamara* and musical instruments are depicted on both side top corners of the slab. The image Kartikeya measures 4 feet 6 inches in height and 2 feet 4 inches in width. There is a *nisha* shrine of the *pidha* order erected in front of the Kartikeya image. The image Kartikeya is notable for its fine workmanship. The iconography of this Kartikeya image possesses the artistic features of the Odishan classical art of the Ganga period.

6. Kartikeya of Andha-Kapilesvara Temple of Kapilesvarpur

The temple of Andha-Kapilesvara is situated about seven kms from Adaspur, at the village of Kapilesvarpur in the Niali Block of the Cuttack district. The temple is considered by the local people as one of the "Dvadasa Sambhus" on the bank of river Prachi. The central niches of the three sides of the *bada* of *vimana* of the Andha-Kapilesvara temple are housed with the *parsvadevata* images of Ganesha, Kartikeya and Parvati. Kartikeya is the *parsvadevata* of the western side. The four handed image of Kartikeya is carved in standing posture on the double petalled lotus pedestal (Pl.45.4). The upper right hand of deity is broken from the wrist, the lower right hand is completely broken, the upper left hand holds the rooster cock and the lower left hand lies on the tail of the

rooster cock. Peacock, the conventional mount of deity is carved on the right of the pedestal. The backside of the head of deity is decorated with trefoil arch; *makara* head at the base and the *kirtimukha* motif at the apex. *Apsara* figure is depicted on both side top corners of the slab. The image Kartikeya is made of sand stone and it is eroded by nature. The slab of deity measure 4 feet 4 inches in height and 2 feet 1 inch in width respectively.⁹ The iconography of this Kartikeya image indicates the artistic features of the medieval period.

7. Kartikeya of Nrityesvara Temple at Nasikesvara

The temple of Nrityesvara is situated about 4 kms from the Ananda Bazar Chhak, at the village Nasikesvara in the Kakatpur Block of the Puri district. The central niches of the three sides of the *bada* of *vimana* of the Nrityesvara temple are housed with the *parsvadevata* images of Ganesha, Kartikeya and Devi Parvati. All the side deities are housed in the *rekha mundi* niches. Kartikeya is the *parsvadevata* of the western side. The four handed image of Kartikeya is carved in standing posture on the double petalled lotus pedestal. Peacock, the conventional mount of the deity is carved on the right of the pedestal (Pl.45.5). The deity Kartikeya displays *gada* in upper right hand, which is broken, the lower right hand is feeding the peacock, the upper left hand holds the rooster cock and the lower left hand is broken from the wrist portion. Devasena is depicted lifting the legs of the rooster cock. Both side top corners of the slab are carved with full blown lotus flower. The image Kartikeya is made of sand stone. It measures 1 foot 3 inches in height and 8½ inches in width respectively. The iconography of this Kartikeya image possesses the artistic features of the Odishan classical art of the medieval period. Another similar small sized four armed image of Kartikeya is also found to be worshipped on the left side of the deity Kartikeya.

8. Kartikeya of Ramesvara Temple of Tola-Gopinathpur

The temple of Ramesvara is situated at the village Tola-Gopinathpur in the Niali Block of the Cuttack district. The temple is about 54 kms far away from Bhubaneswar on the Nakhara-Madhava road.¹⁰ The central niches of the three sides of the *bada* of *vimana* of the temple are housed with the *parsvadevata* images of Ganesha, Kartikeya and Devi Parvati. All the side deities are housed in the *pidha mundi* niches. Kartikeya is the *parsvadevata* of the western side. The four handed image of Kartikeya is carved in standing posture on the double sectional designed pedestal (Pl.45.6). He displays trident in upper right hand, *dambaru* in upper left hand, rooster cock in lower left hand and the lower right hand is feeding the peacock. Peacock, the conventional mount of deity is carved on the right of the pedestal. Devasena figure is depicted lifting the legs of the rooster cock. The full blown lotus flower is decorated on both side top corners of the slab. The image Kartikeya is made of sand stone. It measures 1 foot 11 inches in height and 1 foot 1 inch in width respectively.¹¹ The iconography of the Kartikeya image indicates the artistic features of the modern period.

9. Kartikeya of Gokarnesvara Temple of Kantaparasasana

The temple of Gokarnesvara is one of the Saiva shrines of the Prachi Valley in Odisha. It is located at the village Kantapara Sasana in the Niali Block of the Cuttack district. The temple is situated on the left bank of river Prachi and it is about 1 km from the Kapilamuni *Asrama*. The

central niches of the three sides of the *bada* of *vimana* of temple are housed with the *parsvadevata* images of Ganesha, Kartikeya and Devi Parvati. Kartikeya is the *parsvadevata* of the eastern side. The two armed image of Kartikeya is carved in standing posture on the plain pedestal. The right hand of deity is depicted feeding the peacock while the left hand holds the rooster cock. Devasena is lifting the feet of the rooster cock. The image Kartikeya is made of granite stone. It measures 1 foot 6 inches in height and 1 foot 2 inches in width respectively. The iconography of the Kartikeya image suggests the Odishan classical art of the medieval period.

10. Kartikeya of Belesvara Temple of Bhapur

The temple of Belesvara is situated about 2 kms from Kapilamuni Asrama on the western bank of river Prachi, at the village Bhapur in the Balipatna Block of the Khurda district. This temple is considered by the local people as one of the “Dvadasa Sambhus” of the Prachi Valley. The site of the temple is variously known as *Antarvedi*, *Manikarnika tirtha* and *Prayaga tirtha*.¹² The central niches of the three sides of the *bada* of *vimana* of the temple are housed with the *parsvadevata* images of Ganesha, Kartikeya and Parvati. Kartikeya is the *parsvadevata* of the western side. The four handed image of Kartikeya is carved in standing posture on the plain pedestal. The upper right hand of deity holds trident, the lower right hand is feeding the peacock, the upper left hand displays *dambaru* and the lower left hand holds the rooster cock. Peacock, the conventional mount of deity is noticed on the right of the pedestal. Devasena is carved lifting the feet of the rooster cock on the left of the pedestal. Here the deity Kartikeya wears a garland in his body. The image Kartikeya measures 1 foot 6 inches in height and 1 foot 1½ inches in width respectively. It is made of sand stone. The iconography of this Kartikeya image contains the features of the Odishan classical art of the medieval period.

11. Kartikeya of Siddhesvara Temple of Mudgala

The temple of Siddhesvara is situated about 5 kms from Jiunti on a bifurcation away from the Kakatpur-Astarang road.¹³ The temple is located at the village Mudgala in the Astranga Block of the Puri district. Lord Siddhesvara of that shrine is considered as one of the *Dvadasa Sambhus* on the bank of river Prachi. The central niches of the three sides of the *bada* of the *vimana* are housed with the *parsvadevata* images of Ganesha, Kartikeya and Devi Parvati. Kartikeya is the *parsvadevata* of the western side. The two armed image of Kartikeya is carved in standing posture on the double petalled lotus pedestal. Both the hands of the deity are broken from the elbow portions. Peacock, the conventional mount of deity is depicted on the right of the pedestal. The head of peacock is completely missing. Devasena figure is carved on the opposite side of the peacock on the pedestal. The lower part of the pedestal is decorated with scroll work. The backside of the head of deity is decorated with trefoil arch. Flying *apsara* figure is depicted on both side top corners of the slab. The image Kartikeya measures 1 foot 7 inches in height and 10½ inches in width respectively. The entire slab of deity is recently fixed on the body of peacock, which is completely a modern cement work. The iconography of this Kartikeya image indicates the Odishan classical art of the Gajapati period.

Conclusion

Thus, it is known from the above discussion that the iconographic features of the extant Kartikēya images of the Dvadāsa Sambhu temples of Prachi valley enlighten our idea with regard to the Kartikēya art of Prachi valley as well as Odisha. Out of the Twelve Sambhu (*Dvadāsa Sambhu*) temples, the last one i.e. Muktesvara temple of Daluakani is submerged in the sea. So, the Kartikēya image of the last Sambhu temple is not mentioned in the subject. Considering the iconographic features, the Kartikēya image of the Sovanesvara temple is one of the masterpiece sculptures of Odisha. Most of the Kartikēya images of the Dvadāsa Sambhu temples of the Prachi valley are carved in standing (*sthanaka*) posture and a few is depicted in seated posture. All the above surveyed Kartikēya images of the Prachi valley are one headed god and they contain the artistic features of the Odishan classical art of the medieval and early modern periods. On the basis of the iconographical features, the dates of the above Kartikēya images of the Dvadāsa Sambhu temples of the Prachi valley have been tentatively assigned by the present author. The study of the above Kartikēya images of the Prachi valley reveals that the Odishan artists had tried at best for the progress of Kartikēya art. The iconographies of the above surveyed Kartikēya images of the Prachi valley symbolize the attributes of hunter, warrior and philosopher. In all the Saiva temples of the Prachi valley, *Kartika purnima* is celebrated by girls and newly married women on the full moon day after *Vijayadasami* and it is dedicated to Lord Kartikēya. Lord Kartikēya is worshipped in the *Dvadāsa Sambhu* temples throughout the year. On the whole, the iconographic features of the Kartikēya images of the Dvadāsa Sambhu temples of the Prachi valley rightly represent the Odishan classical art of the medieval and modern period and they also possess an important place in the history of Kartikēya art of Odisha.

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Notes and References

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