ODISHAN SCULPTURAL ARTS OF THIRTEEN GANESHA IMAGES OF THE PURI DISTRICT: A RECENT STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The significance aspect of the Saiva art of Odisha is the analysis of the Ganesha images found in the Puri district. Ganesha is considered to be among the first Hindu deities in India. Ganesha is a popular deity in the Hindu pantheon and is worshipped extensively throughout the entirety of India. In the eastern Indian state of Odisha, Saivism was a prevalent religion. It also affected Lord Jagannatha's kshetra. In Odisha, Saivism reached its height of prominence in the tenth and eleventh century C.E. The Ganesha figures seen in the Hindu temples of the Puri district typically have a kuthara (hatchet), a pot of sweet balls (ladus), a broken tusk, and a rosary in hands. The locations of thirteen Ganesha images of the Puri district are viz; the Lokanatha temple in Puri, the Yameshvara temple in Puri, the Markandeshvara temple in Puri, the Kapala Mochana temple in Puri, the Nilakantheshvara temple of Matiapara, the Baikuntheshvara temple of Puri town, the Bata-Lokanatha temple in Puri, the Nilakantheshvara temple at Gopinathpur, the Siddha Mahavir temple in Puri, the Ganesha temple at the Jagannatha temple complex, the Kanchi Ganesha temple in Puri, the Gatesvara temple in Algum, and the Ganesha image of Ganesvari temple of Bayalishbati. In the Puri district, there is a worship of a variety of Ganesha images of different periods. These statues/images are primarily kept in the parsvadevata niches of Saiva temples. A thorough examination is necessary due to the intricate iconographic details found in the Ganesha images found in the temples of Puri district. The objective of article is to focus on the iconographic elements of the thirteen Ganesha statues found in the Hindu temples of the Puri district in Odisha.

Keywords: Sculptural Art, Images, Iconography, Ganesha, Puri, District

1. INTRODUCTION

The sculptural art of the Ganesha images of the Puri district is the main aspect of the Hindu art of Odisha in India. One of the most well-known gods in the Hindu pantheon, Ganesha is also the most well-known deity of India. In addition to being the god of luck, Ganesha is also known as the Lord of Ganas. The *Aitareya Brahmanas* mention him as one of the first Hindu gods. Hindus see the image of Ganesha as the Lord of Good Fortune. All across India, there is a widespread practice of worshiping Ganesha. The Ganapatya religion was well-liked in medieval Odisha. The district of Puri, along with the district headquarters of the same name, are located in the state

of Odisha. It is precisely situated 59 kilometers southeast of Bhubaneswar, the state capital of Odisha. Odisha is a land of temples and the epic center of Hinduism's panchopasana, so the story goes. Puri's cultural identity has endured over the years and is far more significant than its geographic position. Saivism was the most common and dominating religion in Odisha, an Eastern state of India. On the basis of a good number of extant Saiva temples in Puri district, some scholars suggest that Puri was once a Saiva pitha. Saivism reached its peak in Odisha during the 9th and 11th centuries C.E. when the Somavamsis dominate the political scenario of the sate of Odisha. After the Somavamsi rule in Odisha, Saivism continued to flourish in the Puri district until the early Ganga period. Based on the number of Saiva temples in the Puri town, some scholars suggest that the region of Puri was once a Saiva pitha. The district of Puri is one of the major centers of Saivism in Odisha. The Saiva temples at Puri Dhama show that it was famous as place Saivism. Ganesha images are noticed in the extant Saiva and other temples of Puri. Ganesha images are available in Saiva and other temples of Puri. Here the present writer makes a little attempt to present the sculptural arts of the thirteen Ganesha images of the Puri district in Odisha.

2. METHODOLOGY

In this article, the primary as well as secondary data have been used by author. The data is meticulously collected by author from the gazetteers, original documents, archaeological materials, texts, antiquities, practical observations, photographs and statements from the respondents through the interview methods. To collect data on the artistic aspects of the thirteen Ganesha images of Puri district, books, articles, internet sources, reviews, reports, are utilized and also interpreted in a systematic manner.

3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1



Figure 1 The Sketch of Seated (Asina) Ganesha Image of Odisha **Source** https://www.istockphoto.com/vector/ganpati-with-mouse-for-poster-ganesh-chaturthiengraving-vintage-vector-gm995651610-269491378

Ganesha, also called Ganapati, the elephant headed Hindu god of prosperity, who is traditionally worshipped by the people of Hindu community of India. Various forms of Ganesha images are found to be worshipped in the Puri district. The images of Ganesha are mostly found housed as the side deities of Saiva shrines. The Ganesha images of the Puri district as well as Odisha are divided into four types such as Asina, *Sthanaka, Narutya* and *Devi Sahita* (Mohapatra, 1982, p.48). Before going to the subject, at first we should discuss about the iconographies of the Ganesha images of Odisha.

Ganesha is popular in Odisha as parsvadevata, who functions as one of the sons of Lord Sivaand Parvati (Donaldson, vol. 3, 1986, p. 1032). As the veils are removed, it is appropriate to place his image in the south as the first image born in Pradakshina and the temple faces to east (Donaldson, Vol. 3, 1986, p. 1032). The Ganesha images of Odisha usually have four arms when sitting and standing, eight arms when dancing.

Figure 2

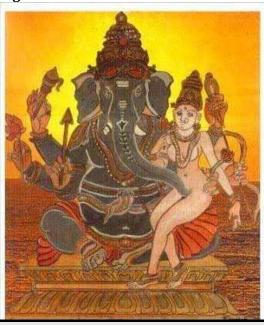


Figure 2 The painting of Deity Ganesha with Devi Siddhi **Source**https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=636204546786751&set=pcb.636230300117509

4. SCULPTURAL ARTS OF THE THIRTEEN GANESHA IMAGES OF PURI DISTRICT

We can infer some information on the iconography of some extant Ganesha images of the Puri district. The four-handed Ganesha images is found in the extant temples of Puri district typically holds a long-handled *kuthara*, a pot of *ladus* (sweet balls), a broken tusk, and a rosary in his hands. The thirteen Ganesha images and their locations that were surveyed by the author are Lokanatha Temple in Puri, Yameshvara Temple in Puri, Markandeshvara Temple in Puri, Kapala Mochana Temple in Puri, Nilakantheshvara Temple at Matiapara, temple of Baikuntheshvara at Puri Srimandira, Bata-Lokanatha Temple in Puri, Nilakantheshvara Temple of Gopinathpur, Siddha Mahavir Temple in Puri, Ganesha Temple of Puri Srimandira, Kanchi Ganesha temple of Puri, Gatesvara temple of Algum, and Ganesha image of Bayalishbati. The Odishan artists had created all of the aforementioned Ganesha images, with the exception of Kanchi Ganesha. We must discuss about the general

iconographic characteristics of the thirteen Ganesha images of Puri district. Below is a brief discussion of the iconographic elements found in the thirteen Ganesha images found from the Puri district of Odisha in Eastern India.

4.1. GANESHA OF LOKANATHA TEMPLE

The Lokanatha temple is located at a distance of about $2\frac{1}{2}$ kms to the west of Sri Jagannatha temple of the Puri town. However, nothing in it suggests that it is that distant from antiquity (Mitra, Vol. II, 1984, p.234). One of the most significant Saiva temples in Odisha is this one. The Ganesha image is the side deity in the southern central niche of the *bada*. The lotus pedestal with two petals has the image mounted on it. His left two hands hold battle axe as well as sweet balls, while his right two hold a broken tusk along with rosary (Mohapatra, 2007, p.177). Mouse, the traditional Ganesha mount, is situated in front of the Nisha shrine on a two-foot tall pillar. The *pidha* order's *nisha* shrine also contains an image of Ganesha. The Ganesha image's iconographic elements reflect the creative elements of medieval Odishan classical art.

4.2. GANESHA OF MARKANDESHVARA TEMPLE

In the Markandeshvara Sahi of Puri, the Markandeshvara temple is located 1½ km north of the Jagannatha temple. It is precisely situated on the southern edge of the Markandeshvara tank, which pilgrims use extensively (Senapati and Kuanr, eds., 1977, p.789). The temple was most likely built before Lord Jagannatha of Puri's current temple was built. The Ganesha image is the side deity in the southern central niche of the *bada*. It is found engraved on the two folded lotus shaped podium. His four hands display rosary, a pot containing *ladus*, broken tusk and a battle-axe (hatchet). The male attendant figure is depicted on each side of the Ganesha image. On the right side of the pedestal is mouse, the god's traditional mount. The trefoil shaped arch, *kirtimukha* design at the apex and the makara head at base are found decorated in the background slab of Ganesha image. The deity's personal ornaments are exquisitely crafted (Mohapatra, 2007, p.198). The hairs on God's head are arranged in spiraling curls. Both side top corners of the slab feature flying *apsaras* holding musical instruments and flower garlands in their hands. The Somavamsi period of Odishan classical art is reflected in the Ganesha image of the site.

4.3. GANESHA OF YAMESHVARA TEMPLE

The most significant Saiva temple of Puri town is the temple dedicated to Yameshvara. Situated precisely in the Gaudabada Sahi, this shrine is half a mile southwest of Puri's Jagannatha temple complex. An elderly temple priest said that the original *parsvadevata* images of Ganesha and Kartikeya were badly damaged and were replaced in the 1980s with new ones. On the southern side, the deity Ganesha resides as the *parsvadevata*. The Ganesha image is installed on the two folded lotus petalled pedestal. He holds a *parasu*, or hatchet, a pot holding *ladus*, a broken tusk, along with a rosary in each of his four hands (Mohapatra, 2007, pp.188-189). The pedestal holding the deity is devoid of any carvings depicting a mouse. The Ganesha image's iconographic elements reflect the creative elements of twentieth-century Odishan art.

4.4. GANESHA OF KAPALA MOCHANA TEMPLE OF PURI

The historic Saiva temple in the Puri district is the Kapala Mocana temple. It is precisely 80 feet from the southwest corner of Sri Mandira in Puri town's Manikarnika Sahi (Mishra, 2003,p.48). The Ganesha image is the side deity in the southern central niche of the *bada*. He is designed on the lotus pedestal with two petals. In his four hands, he holds a pot with *ladus*, a battle axe (hatchet), a broken tusk and a rosary. The black chlorite slab of the deity is bare of any decoration. Prior to the *nisha*-shrine, which is constructed in front of the southern side's central niche, is Mouse, the traditional mount of deity. R.P. Mohapatra claims that the temple's *parsvadevata* images show later workmanship (Mohapatra, Vol. I, 1986, p.172). The Ganesha image's iconographic elements showcase the creative elements of modernday Odishan art.

4.5. GANESHA OF NILAKANTHESHVARA TEMPLE, MATIAPARA

The major Pancha Mahadeva temple of Jagannatha Dhama is the temple of Nilakantheshvara. It is located 400 meters to the northeast of the Gundica temple on the bank of the Indradyumna tank (Mohapatra, 2007, p.211). The *parsvadevata* of the southern side is deity Ganesha. The Ganesha image is found engraved on the podium. A pot of *ladus*, a rosary, a broken tusk, and a *parasu* (hatchet) are all in his four hands. The image is approximately one foot. Mouse, the mount is found at the right of deity. The Ganesha image's iconographic elements show the sculptural art of the Gajapati rule in Odisha.

4.6. GANESHA OF BAIKUNTHESHVARA TEMPLE

The Baikuntheshvara temple is situated in the northern side outer enclosure of Srimandira of Puri and is precisely on the route to Koili Baikauntha. Lord Siva has this temple dedicated to him. Ganesha is the side deity in the southern central niche of the *bada*. The six-armed image Ganesha is designed on the two folded petaled lotus podium. His two upper hands are holding a snake; his two left hands are holding an *ankusha* and a hatchet or *parasu*, and his two right hands are holding a rosary and a broken tusk (Mohapatra, 2017, p. 221). The deity's mount, Mouse, is situated to the right of the pedestal. The Ganesha image's iconographic elements reveal the Odishan sculptural art of the Gajapati age.

4.7. GANESHA OF BATA-LOKANATHA TEMPLE

The Bata-Lokanatha temple is situated ½ km to the southern side of Sri Mandira of Puri. To Lord Siva, it is dedicated. It is known as Bata-Lokanatha because it is located along the Svargadvara Road (Tripathy, 2000, pp. 18-28). Ganesha is the side deity in the southern central niche of the *bada*. Ganesha image is engraved on the lotus podium. The deity is displaying *ladus* in his *upara* left hand, a broken tusk in his upper right hand, a *varada mudra* in his *tala* right hand, and a *parasu* in his *tala* left hand. A mouse, the deity's mount is found in the right of the podium. The Ganesha image's iconographic elements demonstrate the creative elements of late medieval Odishan classical art.

4.8. GANESHA IMAGE OF NILAKANTHESHVARA TEMPLE, GOPINATHPUR

The Nilakantheshvara temple is situated in Puri town's Gopinathpur village, close to the Atharanala Bridge. The image Ganesha is the side deity in the southern central /raha niche of the bada. The Ganesha image is engraved sitting on a mouse, which is the traditional deity's vehicle. The deity ankusa in upara right hand, broken tusk in tala right hand, snake in upper left hand and sweet balls in lower left hand (Mohapatra, 2007,pp.231-232). The deity is about 2 ½ feet in height and it is carved out of kala muguni pathra. The sculptural art of the Ganesha image indicates the Odishan art of the modern period.

Figure 3



Figure 3 Ganesha Image of Nilakantheshvara Temple of Gopinathpur, Puri **Source** The photograph of this Ganesha was taken by the author.

4.9. GANESHA OF SIDDHA MAHAVIR TEMPLE OF PURI TOWN

The Siddha Mahavir temple is located approximately one kilometer northeast of the Jagannatha Dhama temple in Gundica. From a historical perspective, this shrine holds great significance for the state of Odisha. The renowned Rama Charita Manasa's author Tulasi Das is thought to have spent some time here when he visited Puri (Senapati & Kuanr, 1977, p. 191). Pancha-mukhi Ganesha is depicted in a niche on the left side of the Siddha Mahavir temple's jagamohana entrance wall. The artist has carved the deity's slab with exquisite detail. On the ornamental pedestal is the image of Ganesha with ten hands. His right side five hands show chakra, broken tusk, snake, trident and varada mudra, while a bell, a flower, an ankusha, a gada, and a pasa are held by the left five hands. The size of the Ganesha image is 20 inches wide by 34 inches long (Behera & Donaldson, 1998, p123). His body is covered in a sarpayajnopavita. Sitting in lalitasana, his shakti gives him a hug with her right arm and she is clutching a lotus blossom in her left hand (Behera & Donaldson, 1998, p123). The slab's upper part is adorned with greenery. A kalasa, together with stalks as well as foliage, relieves the pedestal of the deity. The Panchamukhi Ganesha's slab is fashioned from kala muguni pathar. The Ganesha image may be assignable to the 13th century C.E. by considering its iconographic features.

4.10. GANESHA OF THE GANESHA TEMPLE OF PURI SHRI MANDIRA

The Ganesha temple is situated inside the southern inner enclosed space of Puri Srimandira. The temple's presiding deity, an eight-handed Ganesha image, is kept in the sanctum. The god's slab is roughly three feet wide and six feet long (Tripathy, 1996, p. 31). The material is black chlorite. There is a carved image of Ganesha in a dancing posture on the two folded lotus petaled podium. In the right of the podium is also engraved with mouse. The deity holds a snake in his upper two hands; three hands on the right side hold a rosary and a broken tusk; one hand rests on his belly; and three hands on the left show a lotus flower, sweet balls, as well as *abhaya mudra*. The attendant figure is engraved on each side of the deity. On the upper surface of the deity's back ground slab, the head of Rahu is adorned. The figures of flying *apsaras* are flanked deity Ganesh. The iconographic features of Ganesha image may be assignable to the sculptural art of the 16th century C.E.

4.11. GANESHA OF KANCHI GANESHA TEMPLE, PURI

The Kanchi Ganesha temple is located inside the western enclosure of Puri Jagannatha temple complex. Ganesha, the temple's presiding deity, is kept in the sanctum. The image is approximately five feet of high and it is made of *kala muguni pathara*. On the ornamental pedestal is a seated image of the four-handed deity Ganesha. He holds Sridha Devi in his left lower hand, *parasu* or hatchet in his *upara* left hand, a broken tusk in his right *upara* hand, and a rosary in his right *tala* hand (Mohapatra, 2007, p. 319). The deity's trunk, or probosci, is in contact with the Devi's shakti. The god is shown here with his spouse Sridha Devi. his mount, mouse. The deity (image) is known locally as Natua Ganesha or Bhanda. According to tradition, the deity Ganesha image was certainly brought from the Kanchi by King Purusottama Deva (Das, 1966, p.301 and see Mohapatra, Vol. I, 1986, p.163). Purusottama Deva had brought this image as a trophy of his victory after vanquishing Kanchi's king Salva-Narasimha Deva (Panigrahi, 1985, pp. 216-217). The Ganesha image's iconographic elements suggest that it was not created by the Odisha artists.





Figure 4 The Ganesha image of Kanchi Ganesha temple of Puri

Source https://www.facebook.com/puridham.in/posts/jai-jagannath-kanchi-ganesha-uchistaganesha-bhanda-ganeshathis-ganesha-temple-i/636230300117509/

4.12. GANESHA OF GATESVARA TEMPLE OF ALGUM

The temple of Gatesvara is situated at Algum in the Satyabadi area of the district of Puri. The image Ganesha is the side deity in the southern central *raha* niche of the *bada*. An eight-armed image of Ganesha is designed in the two folded lotus petalled podium. It has a standing position carving on it. In three of his right hands, he exhibits the *varada mudra*, *akshamala*, broken tusk, and *ladu* in one of his left hands (Mohapatra, 1986, p. 27). Two of the left side's hands of deity are missing. A snake is held by the other two hands on top (Mohapatra, 1986, Vol. I, p. 27). Kirtimukha motif crowns the trefoil decorative arch in the background. On either side of the slab's *upara* corner are two images of *apasara*. They have musical instruments in their hands, such as *jhanja* and *mrudanga*. With a mouse in their hands, two female attendant figures stand either side of the deity (Mohapatra, 2006, pp. 43-44). This deity's lotus pedestal's lower portion is set into the masonry wall. The image Ganesha is carved out of *Kala Muguni pathara*. The Ganesha image's iconographic features reflect the characteristic features of the Somavamsi art.





Figure 5 Ganesha image of Gatesvara Temple of Algum in the Puri district **Source** The photograph of this Ganesha was taken by the author.

4.13. GANESHA IMAGE OF BAYALISHBATI

The most significant Sakta shrine in Odisha's coastal region is the Gangesvari temple, situated on the Pipili-Konarka road in the Puri district, it is two miles southwest of Gop in the village of Bayalisbati. Both cult images and non-iconic figures are elegantly depicted in the sculptures of Bayalisbati's Gangesvari temple. The *parsvadevata* images of Varahi, Ganesha, and a warrior are kept within the central niches of the *bada* of *vimana*. Said to be in a standing position, the Ganesha figure is engraved on the lotus podium with two petals. The deity's slab is made of khondalite. The deity is possessing a rosary in the lower left hand, broken tusk in *upara* right hand, a hatchet in *tala* left hand, and sweet balls in *upara* left (Mohapatra, 2016, pp.180-196). A trefoil arch with a *kirtimukha* motif is noticed at

the apex, which decorates the background of Ganesha's head. The backside slab has a garland carved with *apsara* figures in its upper corners. On the right side of the podium is carved with a mouse. The iconography of Ganesha image indicates the features of the sculptural art of the $13^{\rm th}$ century C.E.

Figure 6



Figure 6 The Ganesha image of Gangesvari temple of Bayalishbati, Gop Block of the Puri district 2nd half of the 13th century CE.

Source The photograph of this Ganesha was taken by the author.

5. CONCLUSION

We can conclude from the above facts that the iconography of Ganesha images of the Puri district helps us understand Odishan Ganesha art, which is found in Eastern India. The majority of the aforementioned Puri district Ganesha images are carved in the standing (*sthanaka*) position and exhibit the elements of the Odishan classical art of the past. The image of six-handed Ganesha of the Baikuntheshvara temple is a good example of medieval Odishan classical art, especially when taken into account of its artistic significance. The artist has carved an exquisite image of Pancha-mukhi Ganesha noticed at the Siddha Mahavir temple of Puri. It is the finest example of Odisha's Ganga art. The iconographic significance of Algum's eightarmed dancing Ganesha image cannot be overstated. With the exception of the Kanchi Ganesha image from Puri, the analysis of the aforementioned Ganesha images shows that Odishan artists made every effort to further the genre of Ganesha art. It is possible that King Purusottama Deva brought the Ganesha image from the Kanchi region as a victory trophy. The Kanchi Ganesha image's iconographic elements differ from those of the Ganesha traditional art style. In this regard, the Puri local custom regarding this image might be partially true. The Puri district's images of Ganesha, which were previously discussed, are revered as parsvadevatas, the shrines' principal deity and frontal side deity. In fact, Odisha's Kalingan school artists created all other images save the one of Kanchi Ganesha. The Gangesvari temple in Bayalishbati has a Ganesha image that dates back to the 13th century CE. The current author has tentatively assigned dates to the surveyed Ganesha images of Puri district based on iconographical features. On the whole, the iconographies of Ganesha images of the Puri district posses a special place in the annals of Saiva art of Odisha.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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