



RANIPUR JHARIAL THE MOST NOTABLE MONUMENT IN WESTERN ODISHA

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The historical architectural monuments are situated in the Titilagarh subdivision of Bolangir district. Really Ranipur and Jharial are two different villages adjacent to each other near which we find the site of tourist and architecture interests in western Odisha. It is about 38 kilometers from Titilagarh on the way to Kantabanji via Sindheikela. It is also approachable by a fair weather road from mudpadar. There is another route through which one can reach to the site from Bolangir (town) Patanagarh and Kantabanji covering a distance of 107 kilometers. The district headquarters of Bolangir (Bolangir town) is well connected by the capital city of Odisha (Bhubaneswar) both by railway services and road services. Many villages like Kausil, Balkhamar Ranipur, Malhasada, Banjupada, Jharial and Bahabal etc. But the site is named after Ranipur and Jharial.

Ranipur and Jharial are situated in a plain land to the south-west of large outcrop of flat rock on which the temples are situated. On the south-western form of the outcrop of rock there is a tank comparably the site is situated in an isolated place.

Among the clusters of temples of Ranipur-Jharial three important monumental temples namely Indralath, Chausathi Yogini and Someswara are of special tourist attraction for their outstanding archaeological segments and monumental architecture. It is, however, unfortunate that their history and chronology still remain undecided and disputed. All these temples have their own precocious in construction, cult, image and stage architecture and gloater.

Indralath Temple

The attractive Indralath temple is situated at the end of village Ranipur excluding a brick temple dedicated to Vishnu in isolation standing posture attract the tourists. It is 60 feet in height and faces the east stand on a plinth of 7 feet high. At present there is one sanctum attached antarala probably the temple was named after the name of the Somavansi king Indraratha. It is a Brahmanical temple.

The platform of the temple is more 90 feet long and 37 feet wide. The size of inner doorway is 3 feet 2 inches and 6 feet and 4 inches. The size of the Garbhagriha is 8 feet 4 inches x 8 feet 4 inches.

The outer doorway is 3 feet 2 inches x 6 feet 1 inch. There were ruins of Mahamandapa or Jagamohan. This temple is Pancharatha in plan which was of later development. The Garbhagriha is a square sanctum of heavy 8'4" x 8'4" feet. (There is Dravidian style of Garbhagriha). The Garbhagriha is supported by four pillars placed in the four corners. The ceiling is carved with lotus flower and at the Garbhagriha and the other at the antarala.

There are three niches on the three sides of the temple (size 1'11" x 3'4"). The brick temple bears similarity with the brick temple of Sirpur (Lakshmana temple) there is some flower-like proportion, projecting porch leading to a single cell in the interior and the whole stand.

We find rich sculptural features in Indralath temple architecture design comparatively bigger to one another and are built out of sandstone.

One can find a Buddha image carved in high relief on a monolithic stone slab.

Between the Rata and Anuratha passages are carved with six Naga pillars two each on the south, west and north wall of the sanctum which is probably Saivite cult (influence). The three floors show windows with niches look like the Buddhist chaitya hall and consist of the image of Varaha, Hanumana and Nrusimha.

On the top of the vimana the amalaka sila is seen without the Sikhara.

On the exterior wall we find Naga column. Below the snake hood there is the human figure down to the heels and snake winds itself around the pillar. The Ardhanarisvara is also found.

We also found three incarnations of Vishnu on the exterior wall such as Buddha, Varaha and Nrusimha killing the demon Hiranyakasyapa. On the western side wall there is the depiction of Krishna killing Kaliya and Hanuman carrying the Gandhamardana hill. Beside all there were a number of damaged figures on the outer wall on the northern wall there is a figure of Urdhalinga Siva in a dancing pose.



Though the temple was dedicated to Vishnu we find a Sivalinga and some image of Ganesha, Parvati and Kanika which are placed inside the sanctum as the deities of the temple. It is the only Siva temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu.

Regarding the age of the temple J. D. Belgar says that the temple was the oldest among all the temples of Ranipur Jharial and it belongs to the 7th or 8th C.A.C.

It has close resemblance with the Lakhmana temple of Sirpur which was also built in brick and dedicated to Vishnu. The temple of Sirpur which was also built in brick and dedicated to Vishnu. The temple was assigned to 1st half of the 7th C.A.C. So this temple was also built during the 7th or 8th C.A.D. Queen Vasata is assigned to have constructed the temple.

Regarding the builder of the temple there is no concluded prediction. According to some scholars the Indralath temple was built by Indralath Trivikram Das in his M.Phil. Thesis assigned a period between c. 650-950 A.C. the temple it queen Vasata was assigned to the construction of the temple the place might have been named as Ranipur.

So, whatever the fact may be the Indralath temple of ranipur Jharial has the credibility to attract a lot of archaeologists and tourists. Here many picnics are also arranged.

Someswar Temple

The Someswara temple an excellent stone edifice is situated on the bank of the tank. It was dedicated to Lord Someswara (Siva) and accordingly the place is famous as Somatirtha. There is also literary evidence like “Kriya Kalapatara”. Tirthakanda of Bhatt Lakshmidhara which mentions “Somaitha” long with the Viraja Purusottama and Mahendra.

Though the temple is in a ruinous condition is still in use and especially in Mahasivaratri a large number of people including a lot of Saivite assemble here. The temple stands on a square platform of 12 feet 2 inches. Facing the east it has garbhagriha and an antarala without any exterior or interior designed with any decorative figure or sculpture.

The building is very massive, the pillars and pilasters with in being heavy and perfectly plain and the several massiveness of the building being intensified exteriorly flat pyramidal root over the mahamandapa and plain undecorated pillars and pilasters. It is Trirath in style. The three vertical sections of the original temple viz, bada, gandi and mastaka. The bada usual pabhaga, jangha and barandi. But the pabhaga is indicated shallow right angle projection instead of a set of moldings jangha is without any decorations. The barandi consists of recessed kanti boarded by molding at the bottom. The gandi is curvilinear and plain.

The garbhagriha is square in plan having a three masonry and above the third masonry garbhamura is placed decorated with lotus and low relief. There is a Sivalinga inside beside a copper snake inside the chamber.

The doorway is well decorated including the sculpture panels. There is the figure of Gajalaxmi on the lintel. There is figure of man wearing sacred Brahmanical threads which is identified with Ganga-Sivacharya the builder of the temple.

The four pillars have Mukhasala is square on plan and have a flat root. There is balustrade railing and the dwarf pillars supported the root of the northern balcony. Pillars and pilasters are plain with a base and bracket capital. There is Nandi in the jagamohana. To the north of mukhasala there is a Durga image.

The inscription on the door lintel of the sanctum helps to give moral ideas to the scholars. It described about 4 deities i.e. Some (Siva), Swami (Kartikeya), Siddheswara (Buddha) and Lakshmi and Someswara was the presiding deity. But no other deities are found in here the shrine except a huge image in Ranipur-Jharial.

Basing upon the character of inscription of Someswara temple of a date of 9th century is assigned to it. According to Mr. K. N. Mohapatra the temple was built in the second half of the 9th C.A.D. Sometime between 850-880 A.D. However according to J.K. Sahu Siddhecharya Gangasiva built the temple during the time of king Janmejaya I (850-680 A.D.) or his son Jajati I (885-925 A.D.).

Apart from this temple there are number of temples and due to the ruinous condition and extensive study is very difficult. But his Someswara temple attracts a large number of Saivite people and many archaeologists and the lover of architecture.

Chausathi Yogini Temple

The Chausathi Yogini temple of Ranipur-Jharial is the one of the most interesting and unique monument of of Ranipur-Jharial. In comparison to antiquities style of work and cult prevalence is unique and interesting. Dr. N. K. Sahu pointed out that the



temple of Chausathi Yogini of the place is of great interest not only from the stand point of antiquity but also its religious significance. This is a hypaethral temple with niches to enshrine 64 yoginis. In Orissa, beside Ranipur-Jharial another hypaethral temple of 64 yoginis was built at Hirapur on the river Bhargavi in Puri district.

There were some aims behind construction of this type of temples. The hypaethral temples were dedicated to a nature deity thought to promote the fertility of the soil of animals and of man. The nature deity was worshipped in the open air place. The temple has no traditional structure of Orissan temple architecture only a central status of divinity was the main motivation behind the worship.

Description

The basic structure of the hypaethral temple is totally different from the Brahmanical or Buddhist structure. None of the contemporary Orissan temples like Parameswar of festival resembles with this temple (Chausathi Yogini).

The temple has no vimana or sikhara, no mandapa or temple's chambers, no garbhagriha or sanctum, no main cult image like linga or phallus or a central status of a divinity and no root at all. The sculpture ornamentation is also different from other traditional Orissan temples.

Locally the Chausathi Yogini temple of Ranipur-Jaharial is known as 'Chakhar Badha' due to its circular shape.

It has a circular wall which bends inward at 8 feet 6 inches height with an entrance facing the east. The length of the outer circumference is 169 feet and 2 inches and inner circumference 145 feet 10 inches. The breadth of this passage is 5 feet 3 inches and height is 5 feet 10 inches.

There is a small pavilion on four pillars in the middle of the enclosure, enshrining an image of three headed eight armed Siva holding in two of his hand snake and a cup hour glass, a sary, skull, trident an indistinctive object has a Nandi; Ganesha stands at his side. The size of the central statue is 2 feet 4 inches width, 4 feet 7 inches height. The size of the central pavilion is 7' x 7' x 2". The plinth is 1'8". About the plinth out is 6 feet 4 inches height. It is made of softish greatest sand stone.

Description of the Yogini Images

In the circular well round the enclosed space there are 64 niches for holding the images of 64 yogini. The size of the each niche is 1' 6" x 3' 2". Out of the 64 yoginis on 48 yoginis are available now. All others are found missing. The entrance was originally rooted by a lintel of a single stone.

All the yoginis are seemed to be alike wearing conical crown. All are same with Hirapur beside the Siva figure in Tandava pose inside the pavilion.

The images of all yoginis depict the idea that they are performing the divine dance encircling the Lord Siva. They may be interpreted as Shakti or Divine (on sort). All the images are of about equal height and made of some stones. In the niches of the temple the following owing are found.

1. A three headed two armed holding a trident on her left hand and a kumbha on her right hand resting on her left knee (Brahmi). 1'3" x 2'4".
2. Vacant (but Belgar mentioned "A two armed female with a lotus in each hand, dancing on the pedestal are seven horses").
3. Vacant (here again Belgar mentioned: "a two-armed female broken and lying on the ground, one hand holds a mace").
4. A two-armed figure, single headed and placing her left hand on her naval, the right arm broken. 1'5 1/2" x 2'6".
5. A two armed lion headed female, carrying a trident on her right hand and a cup in her left hand. (Simhamukhi, S. p.2). 1'4" x 2'9".
6. A two armed figure, holding a noose in her left hand, and a sword in her right hand. 1'3" x 2'1".
7. A four-armed figure: all hand broken. 1'3" x 2'1".
8. Vacant
9. Vacant
10. Vacant
11. A two armed figure, left hand on her left knee, right hand broken. 1'4" x 2'1 1/2".
12. A three headed, four-armed figure. Upper right hand a trident, lower right hand damaged. Upper left hand the rasary. Lower left hand damaged. 1'4" x 2' 5 1/2".
13. A skeleton figure. Right arm damaged. Left arm on her cheek. (Suskodari, S.P. 17) 1'2" x 2' x 2".
14. Vacant



15. A broken image (size of it is bigger than the others. Belgar mentions it in niche number 14, and describes thus: “A six or eight armed female, with one pair of hands she is pulling; wide her mouth, with the remaining unbroken ones she holds an hour glass, a sword, a cup, and she is dancing on a prostrate male figure”.
16. A lion headed for armed figure, eating meat with right hand, 1.4”x2’2¹/₂”.
17. A horse headed figure, four armed, holding in her unbroken hands a club, an hour glass and a rosary. (Hayagrva, S.P. 6) 1’4”x2’7”.
18. Four-armed, not identified holding one Musala on left hand. 1’2”x2’3”.
19. A tiger headed, four-armed, carrying a bow (broken) in her upper left hand; upper right hand arrow, lower right hand a musala lower left hand broken. 1’6”x2’6¹/₂”.
20. Four armed figure, two hand at her breast, two hands broken. 1’5”x2’5”.
21. A cat headed figure, four-armed carrying a sword in the upper right hand, upper left hand broken, lower left hand at her naval as it holding up something lower right hand broken. 1’8”x2’6¹/₂”.
22. An elephant headed, four-armed female, holding in her upper left hand an axe. Other hands broken. 1’4”x2’6¹/₂”.
23. A boar headed, four armed female. Lower left hand and upper right hand folded under her breast. Upper right hand carrying a musala, upper left hand carrying a mala. 1’4”x2’6”.
24. A cow headed, horned, four armed female, all hands broken. 1’4”x2’5”.
25. A four armed figure, upper right is on her knee. Upper left hand on her breast. Lower right hand holds a club, lower left hand holds a cup. 1’4”x2’6”.
26. A four armed female upper left hand on her left ankle. Lower left hand a rosary. Upper right hand damaged. Lower right hand unidentified. (Reset) 1’4¹/₂”x2’4”.
27. A four armed figure. All arms broken. (Rkaskassi), S.P. 21) 1’4”x2’6”.
28. A serpent headed four armed figure. Upper right hand carrying a trident. Other three hands damages. But Beglar gives a full description: “A serpent headed, four armed figure, one hand one her knee, another at her breast, the others hold an alms dish or cup and a trident”. 1’5¹/₂” x 2’5”.
29. A two armed defaced female figure hands damages. 1’4” x 2’6”.
30. A two armed figure, carrying a trident in her right hand, left hand damaged, 1’3” x 2’3”.
31. A two armed figure, holding a trident in her right hand, left hand broken. 1’4” x 2’3”.
32. Missing
33. A two armed female, holding a trident in her right hand, left hand damage. 1’4” x 2’3”.
34. A two armed female figure holding a cup in her left hand. Right hand damaged .1’3” x 2’4”.
35. A two armed female figure holding a trident in her right hand and a cup in her left hand. 1’3” x 2’4”.
36. A two armed female figure both the hands broken (same pose as 34th and 35th). 1’5” x 2’4”.
37. A two armed female figure carrying a trident in the right hand and a cup in her left hand. 1’5¹/₂” x 2’5¹/₂”.
38. A four armed figure, carrying in her upper right hand a trident, lower right hand damaged, upper left hand a sword, lower left hand a cup. 1’5” x 2’5”.
39. A two armed female, both the hands damaged 1’4” x 2’5”.
40. Vacant
41. Vacant
42. A stout two armed female, holding a trident in her right hand. Left hand broken. 1’4” x 2’5”.
43. A two armed female, holding a sword in the right hand and having a child on her knee. (Sisighani, S. P. 34). 1’4” x 2’5”.
44. A horse headed female, for armed, upper right hand holds a trident, lower right hand a severed head. Upper left hand damaged. Lower left hand a severed head. 1’5” x 2’4”.
45. A two armed buffalo faced figure, holding a trident in her right hand, left hand damaged. 1’4” x 2’4”.
46. A four armed female. Upper two hands over her head, lower two hands joined near her naval. 1’3” x 2’5¹/₂”.
47. Deer faced, two armed female figure. On her right hand she holds a sword. The left hand had broken. (Mragasira)
48. A two armed female, holding a trident in her right hand, left hand damaged. 1’2” x 2’5”.
49. A two armed female. In her right hand she is showing Abhaya mudra. Left hand on her knee. 1’4” x 2’2¹/₂”.
50. Vacant
51. “A two armed female in an independent posture, she is rubbing her teeth with a finger of one of her hands for a tooth brush, the other hold what may be either a mirror or a cup”. 1’4” x 2’6”.
52. A two armed female, holding a club, in her left hand. In her right hand she displays Dhananda Mudra. 1.4” x 2/4¹/₂”.
53. Vacant
54. A four armed female. Upper left hand musala. Upper right hand with a club. Lower right hand on her chest. Lower left hand broken. 1’4¹/₂” x 2’10”.



55. A four armed female. Upper left hand a bow, upper right hand an arrow. Lower left hand parasol. Lower right hand damaged. 1'5"x2'10".
56. A two armed female, holding a pair of pincers in the left hand. Right hand damaged. 1'3" x 2'10".
57. A two armed female, holding a noose in the right hand 1'3" x 2'8".
58. Vacant
59. A two armed female, holding a club in right hand and cup in the left hand. 1'4" x 2'8".
60. A two armed female, one hand raised to her forehead. In the left hand side she is holding one mirror. 1'4" x 2'5¹/₂".
61. A two armed female, right hand musala. Left hand 1'3" x 2'6".
62. Vacant
63. Vacant
64. Vacant

The Chausathi Yogini temple consists of total 64 niches. Among this 48 are existing figure, 28 are two armed figure and 20 are four armed figure and rest 16 are vacant.

Differences are found out by the scholars in between Hirapur and Ranipur-Jhariyal shrine of Hirapur is smaller than not of Ranipur-Jhariyal.

Assigning a date to these monuments nearly is controversial matter now.

According to Cunningham on the basis of antiquity and style it was assigned a period in 8th century A.D.

According to K. N. Mahapatra, an earlier date is most possible prior to 9th century A.D. According to some scholars it was the product of local craftsman who built it around 1000 A.D. or 900 A.D. whatever the date may between is a unique temple with artistic design and cut and architecture.

Conclusion

All these discussions conclude that Ranipur-Jhariyal is one of the top most centre of Saktism and Tantrism in Western Odisha. The art, architecture and sculpture of this temple are so unique. It is one among the Chausathi Yogini temple of Odisha. By its beauty thousands of people from different parts of Odisha come to this place to watch out it. So it occupies a special position in Odisha. No doubt Ranipur-Jhariyal occupied a special position in the cultural heritage of Odisha. From very beginning the Bhomakara the Somavani all worshipped Chausathi Yogini in the region. Some historians said this way it influenced of Tantrik Buddhism. Whatever it may be, Ranipur-Jhariyal and the storehouse of natural scene and architectural structure and for this reason it enhances the beauty of Odisha.

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