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## Chandital- A Forgotten Place Of Shaktism In Boudh District Of Odisha

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**ABSTRACT-** The temple is considered as most sacred by the local people. Goddess Chandi, the presiding deity of the temple is regarded as the protectress of that area. From the architectural point of view the present temple of Chandital is not important as it is built in the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century A.D. But the temple contains sculptures datable to early medieval period. The temple of Chandital is consisted of two structures such as *vimana* and *jagamohana*.

**KEYWORDS-** Temple, Sacred, Goddess, Chandi, Presiding, Deity, Vimana, Jagamohana

The temple of Chandital is one of the important Sakta shrines of Boudh district. It is called Siddha Pitha as it is believed that the goddess fulfill the wishes of her devotees. The temple is situated in a small village in the Khuntabandha Gram panchayat area of Boudh district. This temple is located at Chandital village which is close to the right bank of the river Mahanadi. It situated at the distance of about 12 kms from Boudh towards Sonepur on N.H. 57. One has to travel 10 kms on the Boudh-Sonepur National Highway from Boudh town in the western direction to reach Burakata Chhak. From that Chhak one has to go 2 kms to the north in the rural road to reach Chandital temple. The temple is considered as most sacred by the local people. Goddess Chandi, the presiding deity of the temple is regarded as the protectress of that area. From the architectural point of view the present temple of Chandital is not important as it is built in the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century A.D. But the temple contains sculptures datable to early medieval period. The temple of Chandital is consisted of two structures such as *vimana* and *jagamohana*. The structure of *vimana* collapsed due to heavy rain in August 2000. There is an open flat roofed mandap recently built in front of the *Jagamohana*.

**Vimana :**

The *vimana* of the Chandi temple is a *Rekhadeula* and its height is about 25 feet from the surface of the temple complex. The structure of the temple is erected on a platform of 1.5 feet high. It has four parts such as *pista*, *bada*, *gandi* and *mastaka*.

**Jagamohana :**

The *Jagamohana* of the temple has a vaulted roof or semi-cylindrical roof and it is about 10 feet in height from the surface of the temple complex. The outer walls of the *Jagamohana* are completely plain. According to the local people, deities like Chamunda, Uma-Meheswar, Indrani, Kumari, Brahmi, Maheswari, Barahi, Ganesha, and Siva Linga are worshipped inside the *Jagamohana*. Two lions are installed on both sides of *Jagamohana* and they are acting as the *dvarapalas* of the temple.

On the basis of the survived image of Chamunda in the *Jagamohana* hall, S.S. Panda has suggested the existence of the image of Saptamatrika amidst loose sculptures of this temple.<sup>1</sup> All of these sculptures of the temple are briefly described below.

**Indrani :**

The first image is Indrani, the wife of Lord Indra, she is also carved seated in *lalita* pose on a pedestal with right leg pendant. A figure of elephant is carved below the pedestal as her conventional mount. She has two hands, but the right hand is destroyed. She is wearing a *kiritamukuta* on her head and bracelet in her left hand. Flying *vidyadharas* with garlands in hands are carved in the topmost corners of this slab. It measures 71 c.m long and 40 c.m wide. It is made of sand stone.

**Brahmi :**

Next the image of mother goddess Brahmi, the wife of Brahma is carved seated in *lalitasana* on a pedestal with goose as her vehicle. She has four hands. Her hands are damaged along with attributes hold in them. She is wearing a *kiritamukuta* on her head. Her *vahana* swan is carved below the pedestal. Flying *vidyadharas* with garlands in hands are carved in the topmost corners of this slab. It measures 67 c.m long and 36 c.m wide. It is made of sand stone.

**Kaumari :**

The third image is Kaumari, the wife of Kumara or Kartikeya, the god of war. She is sitting in the *lalita* pose on a plain pedestal containing peacock, her conventional mount. She had four handed, now all are missing. Her head is also missing. The image is 38 c.m long and 30 c.m wide. It is made of sand stone.

**Uma-Mahesvara :**

The fourth image of Uma-Maheswara is carved on a stone slab in the sitting posture. Parvati is sitting on the left thigh of Siva. The right leg of Siva is kept on his *vahana* bull and the left leg of Parvati is kept on his *vahana* lion. Both bull and lion are carved on the pedestal. Siva has four hands. The top left hand is shown on the left shoulder of Parvati and lower left hand holds a lotus bud. The right top hand is in *abhaya mudra*. Both Siva and Parvati are wearing *mukutas* on their heads. Flying *vidyadharas* with garlands in hands are carved in the topmost corners of this slab. It measures 66 c.m in length and 36 c.m width. It is made of chlorite stone.

**Varahi :**

The fifth matrika is Varahi, the wife of Varaha. She is a fat pot-bellied female with head of boar and seated in *lalita* pose on a plain pedestal. A buffalo is carved below the pedestal as her vehicle. She has two hands. Her right hand is in *abhaya mudra* while her left hand is holding a baby, who is sitting on her left thigh. The baby is touching her left breast.<sup>2</sup> Hairs on her head are arranged in the shape of snake coils radiating in all direction. The size of the image is 76 c.m long and 37 c.m wide. It is made of chlorite stone.

**Chamunda :**

The sixth image is Chamunda who is shown as sitting on a corpse in the *ardhaparyanka* posture. She has six hands. A garland of skulls is worn around her waist. Her hair is tied like a *jatabhara*. She holds a *sarpa* in the upraised left and right hands over her head. In her lowest left hand is a severe human head. Flower motifs are carved on the topmost corner of this slab. This is a unique image of Chamunda. It measures approximately 69 c.m in length and 37 in c.m width. It is made of chlorite stone.

**Mahesvari :**

The seventh image is Mahesvari, wife of Siva. She is carved in standing posture. She has two hands. Her vahana bull is carved on the pedestal.<sup>3</sup> The size of the image is 92 c.m in length and 36 c.m in width. It is made of sand stone.

**Chamunda :**

Another image of Chamunda is also found in the mandapa. Her hands are broken and her left leg is also destroyed. It measures 58 c.m in length and 28 c.m in width. It is made of chlorite stone.

**Ganesha :**

The image of Ganesha is depicted in the *maharajalila* post. It is beautifully carved on black stone slab. He has four hands. The lower left hand possess a battle axe (*parasu*). His vahana mouse is carved at the bottom of the pedestal. Flying *vidyadharas* with garlands in hands are found in the topmost corners of this slab. He wears a *mukuta* on his head. It measures 79 c.m in length and 32 c.m in width. It is made of chlorite stone.

Beside all these images enshrined inside the temple, a two handed male figure, standing in the *sambhanga* posture is carved on a rectangular stone slab, which is lying outside the temple. The right hand of this male is up-raised while the left hand is hanging below. It seems to be the figure of a *Dwarapala*. One round-shaped *Amalaka* as well as big sized stone blocks are lying scattered here and there outside the temple, which suggest that there was a temple in this site in the remote past, where *Saptamatrikas* along with *Ganesha* and *Uma-Mahesvara* were installed for worship. This is the second site discovered in the upper *Mahanadi* valley, the first being *Belkhandi*, where *Saptamatrika* images along with *Uma-Mahesvara* image were enshrined and worshipped in the same temple.

Most of the scholars of art history accept that the sculptures of this *Chandi* temple belonged to *Somavamsi* period. Local legends ascribe the builder of the shrine to King *Chandihara Yayati II* of *Somavamsi* dynasty who was also the builder of *Chandi* temple at *Belkhandi* and *Ranipur Jharial*. The name *Chandihara Yayati II* (1024 A.D. to 1040 A.D.) suggest that *Yayati II* was a devotee of *Chandi* and *Hara*, this temple exists nearer to the capital of *Yayatinagar* i.e. modern *Jagati*. The original temple of *Chandital* and the existing sculptures might have been made by *Chandihara*, the *Somavamsi* King. So the date of the temple and sculptures can be traced back to 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. According to the name of *Chandihara* the temple is famous

as Chandital temple. The temple preserves a good number of sculptures of different deities which are of great significance. Most of the images found here are Saptamatrika image. People of the neighbouring villages worship these deities with great devotion. Festivals like Makara Sankranti, Pana Sankranti, Dasahara, Sivaratri etc. are regularly observed in this temple with much enthusiasm.

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2. P.K. Singh, “Saptamatrika in the Temple Art of Western Orissa” in P.K. Nayak (ed.), “New Aspects of History and Culture of South Kosala”, New Delhi, 2008, p. 161.
3. *Ibid*, p. 161.

