

A SYMBOLIC WORSHIP OF SMARTA LINGAS IN SOUTH KOSALA

Brijesh Rawat

Assistant Professor, Department of History and Archaeology,
 Dr. Shakuntala Mishra National Rehabilitation University, Lucknow-226017.
 Email - rawat.brijesh11@gmail.com

Abstract: South Kosala situated in the modern Chhattisgarh has remained a powerful and wealthy kingdom since ancient times. Here archaeological remains in huge abundance have been obtained of the religions related to Jainism, Buddhism and Brahmanism. The majority of various distinctive sects of Brahmanism are the characteristic of this region. There was profuseness of worshipping and method of worshipping numerous gods and goddesses related to the different sects like Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Shakti cult. Various forms of Shivalinga and its worshipping custom too have been obtained from this place. Out of these is a distinctive form known as *Smata linga*. The remains of this have been found in symbolic form also. Various kinds of symbols are incised on the *yonipeetha* through which probably the new information regarding the construction of *Smata linga* can be gathered.

Key Words: South Kosala, Symbol, Worship, Siva, Shaiv, Smart Linga, Pinda, Kalchuri Chedi, Yajurveda.

1. INTRODUCTION-

A significant example of composite figures is the development of *Panchayatana linga* in plastic art wherein the deities such as *Surya, Devi, Vishnu, Siva and Ganesh* shown separately in different faces. Such type of carvings through art symbolize the mutual respect and religious similarities, tolerations among five principal religious sects viz. *Saiva, Shakta, Vaishnava, Surya and Ganapatya*. The above mentioned tendency reflects in *panchayatana* worship or *panchopasana* where five deities said to have worshipped.

2. DESCRIPTION:

Situated in the heart of India the land of South Kosala (modern Chhattisgarh) is a very much significant state in the sphere of culture and archaeology. Prior to creation of a separate state in the year 2000 it was a part and parcel of Madhya Pradesh. Geographical extension of Chhattisgarh is lies between Long. 17° 46' to 24° 8' N; Lat. 80° 15' to 84° 24' E with a total area of about 1,35,133 sq. Km. Presently in this newly created state the south-eastern part of Madhya Pradesh (i.e. Raipur, Bilaspur, Durg, Rajnandgaon, Raigarh, Ambikapur, Jagdalpur and few other districts) are located within its territorial boundary.¹ Surrounded by Mekala, Mahendragiri, Machka Sihawa and Shuktiman (Shuktimat) hill ranges, the region is irrigated by river Mahanadi and its tributaries. The region witnessed the glorious tradition of friendship and toleration since ancient days. History also corroborates the simultaneous propagation as well as development of Brahmanism, Vaishnavism, Shaktism, Buddhism and Jainism in this land. Accordingly during the recent archaeological exploration in under mentioned sites of Chhattisgarh state some stone carved members have been come into noticed which may be correlated with *Panchadevopasana* or *Smarta Linga*.²

2.1. Tuman, district-Korba, Lat. 22° 34' 19" N; Long. 82° 25' 21" E

The Kalachuris of Tripuri established their suzerainty in South Kosala in *circa* 900 A.D. The Bilhari stone inscription of Yuvrajdev II² mentions that after the death of Kokkal (about 878-888 A.D.) Shankargan (famous Mugdhatunga) became the ruler of Chedi dynasty. Thereafter defeating the Somavamsi ruler of South Kosala he established his sway over Pali and appointed his younger brother as the Governor of that region.³ Though it was not evident by the inscriptional records, its capital city was situated at Tuman which was considered as the first capital city of Kalachuris in South Kosala. 1st Issue of digging some square carved members of stone brought into lime light. On its four corners of upper side there was the depiction of four Siva Lingas encircled by a snake like feature.⁴ In addition to this there is the carving of four circular elevated *pindas* surmounted by a fifth *pinda*. Remains of such feature is considered as the *Panchadevopasana* or *Smarta Linga* belonging to *circa* 10th – 11th Century A.D. during Kalachuri period (fig.1).

2.2. Pali, district- Korba, Lat. 22° 22' 24" N; Long. 82° 19' 25" E

The archaeological site of Pali has yielded some stone carvings of *Sarvatobhadra* form. (fig. 2) *Sarvatobhadra* signifies presence of gods and goddesses in four cardinal directions and their well wishes to the creatures. On its four sides deities may be worshipped in sequence by which it accomplishes the concept of circumambulation. Here also carving of four nos. of Siva Lingas on the four corners encircled by a snake is noticed. Out of the four circular *pindas* and surmounting fifth *pinda* carved at the centre in different levels, only two levels are survived whereas remaining

upper parts were broken. On the ground of artistic features the object may be datable to the early phase of Kalachuris in South Kosala.

2.3. Malhar, district- Bilaspur, Lat. 22° 53' 47" N; Long. 82° 16' 52" E

According to the Stone inscription of the Kalachuri ruler Prithvidev II dated to Kalachuri *samvat* 915 (1163 A.D.) found from Malhar the ancient name of Malhar was Mallal. Another stone inscription dated in *samvat* 919 (1167 A.D.) found there mentioned the place as Mallalapattan which indicates about its trade contact.⁵ Another concept is that Mallal is probably derived from Mallari which is an epithet of Lord Siva. In *Purana* there is the description about a demon named as Mallasur, by killing said demon Siva assumed the title Mallari. In ancient South Kosala there is a good number of evidence of worship of Siva. From the study of above mentioned records the origin of Malhar may be taken into consideration probably from Mallari, Mallal and Mallar. Among the stone pieces under reference found at Malhar mention may be made about the form of *Sarvatobhadra*, *Yoni Pitha* and square pieces (fig.3). At the base of this *Sarvatobhadra* there is the depiction of images of gods whereas *Panchadevopasana* or *Smarta Linga* is carved symbolically on the upper part. There is absence of carving of snake but at the central part four circular *pindas* and surmounting fifth *pinda* are depicted befittingly in different levels, of which only three levels are survived presently. In the type of *Yoni Pitha* there is carving of four circular *pindas* at the centre surmounted by the fifth one (fig.4 & 5). So far the square type is concerned the four *pindas* and the surmounted fifth one is carved at the central part as in the case of *Yoni Pitha* type. But similar carvings are found at four corners as well as at the centre. Such objects are datable to circa 11th- 12th Century A.D. of Kalachuri period.

2.4. Madkudvip, district-Mungeli, Lat. 21° 50'19" N; Long. 81° 56' 59" E

There are two convincing points about the naming of the site Madkudvip. First one is that Madku in fact is the corrupt form of *Mandukya* or *Manduka*.⁶ According to local traditions during the *Upanishad* period it was the site of meditation of the great sage Mandukya and most probably he composed his book *Mandukyopanishad* at this place. As per the second one the literary meaning of Manduka is frog. Surrounded by river water the island looks like the shape of a swimming frog. Though both the logics are close to the words Madku, Mandukya or Manduka, the first one is much more convincing to accept. Archaeological excavation of this site was carried out by the Department of Archaeology & Culture, Govt. of Chhattisgarh under the Direction of Shri Prabhat Kumar Singh during the field season 2010-11. The stone member under discussion retrieved from the site is carved on its upper part with four Siva *Lingas* at the four corners encircled by a snake. The central part is carved with four circular *pindas* surmounted by a fifth *panda* (fig.6). Such object recovered from this site has the close resemblance with that of Tuman. This object may be datable to circa 12th Century A.D. of Kalachuri period. The *Smarta Linga* found from the excavation of Madkudvip is considered as important as the Kalachuri ruler Prithvidev I in his Amoda Copper Plate mentioned that he has established the *Vankeshwar Chatushkika* (*Tuman ke Devashrivankesva (shva)*) at Tuman and donated village on this auspicious occasion.⁷ *Chatushkika* may be co-related here with the *Smarta Linga*.

2.5. Barsur, district- South Bastar Dantewada - Lat.19° 08'11" N; Long.81° 24' 41" E

The carved stone object found from the *mandapa* part of Ancient Sculpture at Danteshwari temple, Barsur may also be taken in the category of *Smarta Linga* of *Panchadevopasana*. But this one is different from above mentioned objects since it is carved at the centre of stone piece with only four numbers of circular *pinda* where three are at the base and fourth one is at the top. Here the fifth *pinda* is absent. This artifact may be ascribable to circa 12th Century A.D. of the time Chhindak Nagvanshi rulers.

We find the historical and archaeological evidences about the emergence of communal feelings and differences of opinions occurred in ancient period from time to time. The *Brahmanas* and *Shramanas* during the reign of Mauryan emperor Asoka quarreled for fanaticism and the incident was mentioned and vehemently blamed in the rock inscriptions of Asoka. The Kushana and Gupta rulers put emphasis on *Samanvayavad* and during the post Gupta period because of impact of another concept *Tantra* and *Advaitavad* ⁸ of Shankaracharya as well as concept of *Panchadevopasana* accelerated it. The *Puranas* and *Dharmasashtras* also highlighted about *Samanvayavad* to a great extent and provisions are made in *shilpashastra* for carving of idols. Accordingly it clears that hybrid and composite figures have taken its shape with the inspiration of concept of religious toleration. Worship of images as well as symbols was in prevalence during the *Vedic* period as we found mention about the popularity of images of terracotta as well as stone in the contemporary literatures. There is the clear description of image worship or symbol worship in *Satapatha Brahmana* (14.2.2.54), *Yajurveda* (37.3-10) and *Vedic hymns of Prana pratistha*. Use of words such as '*druti*' '*rayi*' and '*ashman*' in respect of stone images is an important aspect. Accordingly, it was found during the *Vedic* period that there were a good number of carving of images expressing the concept of believing in god and its wide spreading. Probably such iconography has become an important subject of Pancharatra *Agamas* in subsequent period.⁹ The place of worship of vedic-puranic *panchadeva* (Vishnu, Siva, Surya, Devi and Ganesh) always considered as important in the history of Art

and Indian religion. Of which the imagination or concept of first four deities are found only in the *Vedic* literature. Though the antiquity of concept of Ganesh can't be assessed clearly, in ancient religions (especially from Post Gupta period) this deity got an important status. There are a lot of literary evidences available about the *panchadevas* in various forms. In the ancient great epics (*Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*), *Puranas* as well as the literatures of Post Gupta periods there is the reference of worship of *panchadevas* and their forms. Apart from the *Smritis* the *puranas* also mention about the worship of *panchayatana* and *panchopasana*.¹⁰ For example, in *Padma purana* we get the reference that, worship/prayer by the devotees of Surya, Siva, Ganesh, Vishnu and Shakti reached to the almighty in such a way that, as the rain water flows to the final destination i. e. ocean through the rivers.

Sourascha shouva Ganesha Vaishnavah shaktipujakah

Mameva prapnuvantiha varshapah sagaram yatha. Padma purana, Uttarkhand, 9/63

The *smarta* comparable with *puranas* has also an important role in the sphere of religious toleration. It has originated the concept of *panchayatana* worship where worship of five *hindu* deities (*panch devatas*) was its main subject matter. The practice of *panchayatana* worship of *smarta* is evident from the medieval temples where in addition to a central shrine there is the concept of four separate shrines at four corners. Accordingly, under such plan the number of shrines is calculated as five. In this type of temple the *prana-pratistha* of five deities are performed separately. Dr. Banerjee had invited the attention of scholars towards the worship of *panchayatana siva linga* which is prevalent in the north eastern part of India. There was also a *Saiva* cult in the *smarta* of medieval period where its tutelary deity is a *Siva Linga* at the centre and depiction of image of Ganapati, Vishnu, Parvati and Surya on its four faces. It appears to be a *chaturmukha linga* but practically it represents these five principal *hindu* deities in iconography. In the *panchayatana* temple installation of the deity is at the centre, *pradakshina* starts from the centre in sequence. In the *panchayatana* temple dedicated to Surya the image of Surya installed at the centre and the *pradakshina* should be done in sequence with the installation of Ganesh in the east, Vishnu in the south, Shakti in the west and Siva in the north direction. In the case of *panchayatana* temple of Ganesh, image of Vinayaka at the centre and as per the aforesaid sequence Shakti, Siva, Vishnu and Surya; in Vishnu *panchayatana* the image of Vishnu at the centre and following the above sequence Ganesh, Surya, Shakti and Siva; in the *panchayatana* of Shakti the image of Shakti at the centre and as per the sequence the image of Siva, Vinayaka, Surya and Vishnu are installed in their respective directions. According to previous pattern in the *Siva panchayatana* the image of Siva at the centre and Surya in the east, Vinayaka in the south, Shakti and Vishnu in the west and north direction respectively. *Mandan* states that only by the installation and worship of the deities in such pattern the desires may fulfill¹¹ contrary to this may caused severe harms.

Suryo vinayako vishnuchandi shambhustathaiva cha

Anukramena pujyante phaladah syuh sadarchane.

To achieve the boon from the of deities their worship should be done in the order starts from Surya first thereafter Ganesh, Vishnu followed by Chandika and finally Mahadev (Siva).

Panchadevopasana or worship of *smarta* started in the Gupta period, but it was propagated and spread in subsequent periods. The main objective of this form of worship during the Gupta period was to unify the followers of *brahmanical* religion by avoiding the communal feelings and establish a healthy Indian society. The wide propagation of *smarta* worship by Kumaril and Adi Shankar during the Post Gupta period was undertaken with a view to stop the communal supremacy and fanaticism in different cults of *hindu* religion and unite them for their cause as well as to give a break to the influence and popularity of Buddhism. During the early medieval period the purpose of *smart* worship by the Kalachuris and Chandel rulers was to eradicate the existing communal and caste feelings in contemporary *hindu* society and its concrete solution as well as to create a sense of Nationality among the people.

3. CONCLUSION:

Though the feeling of toleration (*Samanvayavad*) was in existence in Hindu religion, such concept gained popularity during the Gupta period because of the liberal attitude of the Gupta rulers.¹² As a result, the practice of *panchadevopasana* was originated. During the Post Gupta period by the initiative of Adi Shankaracharya worship of *smarta* was propagated and promoted in large scale, because this form of worship was favourable to *Vedant* or *Ekeshwarvad* (Monotheism) formulated by him.¹³ The *smarta lingas* may be divided into two types. Among the first type only five circular *pindas* are there and in the second type apart from these five *pindas*, depiction of the sixth one having a smaller size at the central part of back side can be noticed, but mention may be made that archaeological evidence of *smarta* of second category has not been found so far. In the first type five circular *pindas* symbolizes the *panchadevas* such as Siva, Vishnu, Ganesh, Surya and Shakti while in second one in addition to above *panchadevas* the sixth god Kartikeya is shown through a miniature *pinda*. In the *smarta* worship generally five deities are worshipped

only, but by the impact of Adi Shankaracharya known as *Shanmatsthapanacharya*¹⁴ worship of Karttikeya also started with *panchdevas*. But in the region of South Kosala no such remains has been come into notice till date in archaeological context.

REFERENCES:

1. Nigam, Lakshi Shankar, *Dakshina Kosal ka Aitihāsik Bhugol*, Sharda Publishing House, Delhi, 1998, p.9
2. Sharma, Rajkumar, 1998, *Kalachuri Rajvansh Aur Unka Yug*, Part I and II, Aryan Books International, New Delhi, 1998, p.106
3. Mirashi, Vasudev Vishn, *Kalachuri Naresh Aur Unka kal*, Madhya Pradesh Shasan, Sahitya Parishad, Bhopal, 1965, p.35
4. *Varima*, Manviki evam sahitya, Ist Issue, Lucknow, 2010, p. 3
5. Bajpai, K. D. & S. K. Pandey, *Malhar*, Department of Ancient Indian History & Archaeology, University of Sagar, 1977, p. 3
6. Singh, Prabhat Kumar, *Madkudvip Utkhanan*, Sanchalanalaya, Sanskriti evam Puratattva, Chhattisgarh Shasan, 2013, p.1
7. Jain, Bal Chandra, *Utkirna lekh*, Sanchalanalaya, Sanskriti evam Puratattva, Chhattisgarh Shasan, 2005, p. 66 & 69
8. Sinha, Harendra Prasad, *Bharatiya Darshan ki Ruprekha*, Motilal Vanarasidas, Delhi, 1993, p. 320-21
9. Pandey, Prabhaskar, *Supratika Prachin Bharatiya Kala Mein Pratik*, Sharda Publishing House, Delhi, 2001, p.6
10. Ray, Bharati Kumari, *Panchadevon ki mishrit murtiyan*, Lok Baharti prakashan, Allahabad, 2004, p.150-51
11. Jugnu, Shrikrishna, *Devta Murtiprakaranam*, New Bharatiya Corporation, Delhi, 2003, p.xii
12. Mani, B.R. and Saran, S.C., *Purabharati*, Part I, Sharda Publishing House, Delhi, 2006, p. 230
13. *ibid*, p. 231
14. *ibid*, p.232

PLATES



Figure 1; Smartalinga, Tuman



Figure 2; Sarvatobhadra



Figure 3; Smartalinga, Malhar



Figure 4: Smartalinga, Madkud



Figure 5; Sarvatobhadra Smartalinga, Malhar



Figure 6; Smartalinga, Madkud