Imitation or Syncretism or Selective Appropriation?

Studying Religious Equations between Brahmanical Religions and Buddhism in the poly-religious landscape of Early Medieval Orissa

Umakant Mishra

1. Religious Landscape of Early Medieval Orissa

The early medieval period from 5th to 12th centuries AD witnessed several changes in the religious landscape of early medieval Orissa. The brahmanical religions began to construct huge temples in various eco-niches. Temples began to perform several roles in the cultural eco-niches of micro and meso regions. First, temple formed nuclei of appropriation and integration of autochthonous cults. Eschmann’s analysis of the Hinduisation of autochthonous cults in Orissa is one primary example of the role of temple (Eschmann 1978: 84). Further, temple acted as the foci of popularisation of various brahmanical cults. In Orissa, we see the evidence of several cults – Shakti, Saiva, Vaisnava in this period. While temple building in the Indian context can be predated to 2nd century BC, it was only after 5th century AD that temple building became an important component of brahmanical religions. Third, temple also acted as the foci of agricultural expansion. There are not many evidence of land grants to temples in Orissa but epigraphic reference points out to the land grants to brahmanas who were given land grants to perform certain functions in the temple.

From religious standpoint, in addition to this process of temple-building, cult appropriation, integration and cult popularisation through pilgrimage, another important development was the emergence of tantric cults. The original source of its origin is not exactly known - it might be from the indigenous practices prevalent in communities in which agricultural expansions took place in early medieval Orissa. The primary locus of the tantric movements- was outside the structural boundary of the existing religions- not in temple, brahmanical mathas or viharas of Buddhist monastery, but in charnel ground. Ronald Davison’s influential book on social aspect of Indian esoteric Buddhism locates Buddhist esoteric movements in the changing feudalisation of polity and decline of patronage to Buddhist establishments due to decline of guild in early medieval India. Buddhism due to the decline of patronage from guild, had to depend on royal patronage and mandalise its institution and religion (Davidson 2004).

2. Buddhist response

Buddhism of Orissa responded to these changes in the cultural landscape of the period by trying to make it more instrumental and laity oriented. Instrumental actions are those behaviours, which are oriented “to changing the state of the world as a means to the end of one’s subjective experience (Southwold, 1983: 185). If a prayer, a spell, in its correct formulation tends to achieve the purpose for which it was recited, will be characterised as instrumental. To take an instance, if a childless woman goes to Hariti and worship her in the correct manner, perform the enjoined rituals, we will conclude that the prayer is an instrumental mean to achieve the desired end i.e. to get a child. The desired goal (getting a child) leads to change in one’s subjective experience. Prayer or performance of rituals in this situation will be considered as an instrumental means while the deity performs an instrumental role.

Vajrayāna Buddhism catered to the need of the masses by inventing Buddhism, where one finds numerous Buddha, bodhisattvas, gods and goddesses, both in peaceful
and wrathful moods. Each god and goddess was assigned an instrumental role to fulfil the everyday needs and aspirations of the masses. The germ syllable (*bijamantra*) of each deity is believed to possess magical powers and recitations of these *mantras* guarantee fulfilment of desires. It also incorporated other elements of the period, viz. incorporation of deities from brahmanical religion, incorporation of motifs and symbols from it, incorporating tribal, Tantric-goddess tradition to its fold as well as developed an elaborate ritual structure

3. Vajrayāna as a religion of laity: Instrumental Buddhism

Vajrayāna tried to respond to the changes in brahmanical religion by making it more laity oriented. For the average populace, who constituted the base of a widely spread religion, the saliency of existential wants predominated over other objectives. The Buddhist deities seem to cater to these needs. A poor man prays to Vasudhara to give him plenty. An infertile lady worships Hariti for conception. Vajrayāna Buddhism developed a vast structure of pantheon, from Buddhas to *dakini*, who fulfil these existential needs of people. The *Sadhanamala* and other texts refer to instrumental functions of each deity. The following table represents instrumental functions of these deities.

**Table 1: Instrumental functions of Buddhist divinities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Buddhist deities</th>
<th>Instrumental Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buddhas</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhas</td>
<td>Dipankara</td>
<td>Islanders’ deity favouring merchants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bhaisajyaguru</td>
<td>Healer Buddha; worshipped for curing illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vajrapani</td>
<td>God of Rain (i) provide elixir of life (ii) to cure snake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodhisattvas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodhisattvas</td>
<td>Avalokitesvara</td>
<td>Saviours. As savours he saves from eight or eleven fears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avalokitesvara in feminine form</td>
<td>Worshipped by woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manjusri</td>
<td>(i) For learning (ii) destroys ignorance (iii) god of Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sankhananga Manjusri</td>
<td>for bewitching woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arogyasali Lokesvara</td>
<td>God of healing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simhanada Lokesvara</td>
<td>Invoked to cure leprosy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cintamani Lokesvara</td>
<td>God of Wealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ksitigarbha</td>
<td>Master of six world of Desire (i) God of Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Akasagarbha</td>
<td>God of Wealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hariti</td>
<td>Goddess of fecundity, prevents small pox, protects kitchen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goddesses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goddesses</td>
<td>Aparajita</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trailokyavijaya</td>
<td>Goddesses of ghosts Conqueror of evil spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AstamahabhayaTara</td>
<td>Saviouress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Janguli</td>
<td>Cure snake-bite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kurukulla</td>
<td>For bewitching lovers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vajra-Sarasvati Goddess of wealth, learning  
Vasudhara Goddess of abundance  
Parnasabari Small pox  
Usnisavijaya Goddess of transcendental wisdom  
Mahamayuri Invoked in snake bite  
Prajnaparamita Goddess of Intelligence  
Yamantaka Invoked to conquer death  
Hayagriva God of horse traders  
Mahakala God of wealth and hearth  
Jambhala God of Wealth

4. Diversity in Buddhist pantheon: The Mandala Answer

These changes in Buddhism brought about expansion in Buddhism in Orissa. While Buddhist sites are spread both in coastal and Upland regions, these sites reveal vertical growth in Buddhist pantheon. In Orissa, fifteen forms of Avalokitesvara, nine forms of Manusri, 12 forms of Tara, Five Dhyani Buddhas, Gautama Buddha and his life (descend from heaven, eight great spectacle ), numerous other gods and goddesses associated with one of the five Dhyani Buddhas have been found in various sites of Orissa.

Both the votive stupas and independent sculptures indicate the Buddhist cults of the period. Buddhist innovation in the form of instrumental deities, rituals, dharanis needed to be accommodated within the Buddhist schema. Mandala provided the answer to accommodate these innovations in Buddhism. Numerous stupa and sculptural mandalas have been found from Udayagiri, Ratnagiri, Laitigiri and other places of Orissa.

A mandala is an arrangement of deities conceived of in sets laid out along the axes of cardinal points around a centre (Gellner 1996:190). A mandala is divided into five sections, while on the four sides of a central image or symbols are disposed, at each of the cardinal points, four other images or symbols are placed (Tucci 1970). The Avalokitesvara Padmapani image Inscription at Khadipada records that the image was a pious dedication of the mahamandlacarya paramaguru Rahulacari during the reign of Subhakaradeva (Ghosh 1942: 247-8). Donaldson in his authoritative book deals with these mandalas in the sculptures of Orissa and Udayagiri’s stupa was built in Mahakrunagarbhodbhva mandala.

In Orissa, these deities were found in many places. In terms of diversity of pantheon structure Orissa outnumbers the most important sites of India. The following table represents these forms of various gods, goddesses and Bodhisattvas.

**Table 2: Tārā and her Different forms in Orissa**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Different forms of Tārā</th>
<th>Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tārā in <em>lalitasana, varada mudra</em></td>
<td>Lalitgiri, Ratnagiri, Achutarajpur, Solampur, and other places (129)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Standing Tārā</td>
<td>Lalitgiri, Ratnagiri, Solampur, etc. (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Astamahabhaya Tārā</td>
<td>Sheragarh (1), Ratnagiri (2)– 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Simhanada Tārā</td>
<td>Ratnagiri (3), Sheragarh (1), Bhubaneswar (1), —(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Khadiravani Tārā</td>
<td>Jarka (2), Tikiria Temple in Banpuru, Achutarajpur, Ratnagiri, Baneswaras, Choudwar, Sundargram—(9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Mahattari Tārā</td>
<td>Ratnagiri (2), Achutarajpur, Tiadisahi, Baudh, -- (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Mahasri Tārā</td>
<td>Bhubaneswar- (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Dhanada Tārā</td>
<td>Kapilesvara Temple in Bhubaneswar, Varaha temple Jaipur, brought from Solampur, Baseli Thakurani at Bania Sahi in Cuttack, Kapila Prasad 1 – (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Four-armed Sita Tārā</td>
<td>Solampur – 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Four-armed DurgotTārāni Tārā</td>
<td>Lalitgiri, Ratnagiri (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Vajra Tārā</td>
<td>Ajodhya, Ratnagiri (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Cintamani Tārā</td>
<td>Nagaspur, Adaspu-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total -12</strong></td>
<td><strong>178</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: Figure in parentheses refers to number of sculptures)

**Table 3: Forms of Avalokiteśvara**

| 1. Cintamaničakra Avalokiteśvara | Ajodhya, Ratnagiri, Siddhesvara Temple – 3 |
| 2. Cintamani Lokeśvara | Khutia temple, Ajodhya -1–, Bhubaneswar (OSM), Ratnagiri, 3 |
| 3. Khasarpana Lokeśvara | In different places –17 AchuTārājpur, Balasore, Bhainchua, Baneswarnasi, Ranibandha, Mudupur, etc. |
| 4. Lokanatha | Udayagiri (3), Jaipur, Kapila, Solampur, Bhubaneswar, Ramesvara in Baudh |
| 5. Harihara (?) Lokeśvara/ Avalokita in Dharmacakra-mudra | Kolaganiri, Balasore, Choudwar – 4 |
| 7. Sadaksari | Ratnagiri – 2 |
| 8. Jatamukuta | In different places -38 |
| 9. Sankhanatha | Baudh, Udayagiri now in San Francisco Museum, Mudgala 1 –4 |
| 10. Amoghapasa Lokeśvara | Solampur, Udayagiri, Ratnagiri (4) –6 |
| 11. Sugatisandarsana Lokeśvara | Udayagiri (Patna Museum), Cuttack, Dharmasala – 3 |
| 12. Halahala Lokeśvara | Achutarajpur, Meghesvara Temple in Bhubaneswar –2 |
| 13. Standing Lokeśvara and Seating Lokeśvara in conventional mode | In different places –37 |
| 14. Visnu-Lokeśvara | Siddhesvara temple at Jajpur – 1 |
| 15. Simhanatha Avalokiteśvara | Baneswarnasi 1 |
| **Total (14)** | **130** |
Table 4: Forms of Manjuśrí

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Location Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Siddhakavira</td>
<td>Ratnagiri (bronze) – 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dharmasankha samadhi</td>
<td>Ratnagiri – 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dharmadhatuvagisvara</td>
<td>Aragarh – 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Arapacana Manjuśrí</td>
<td>Ratnagiri 2, Achutarajpur 1, Kusinga 1, Khiching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Baripada Museum) 1 – 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Manjuvajra</td>
<td>Amarprasadgarh – 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Manjuvara</td>
<td>Ratnagiri (5), Khiching (3), Nagaspur (1),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vajragiri (1), Kalyanpur (1) – 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Manjughosa</td>
<td>Ratnagiri monolithic stupa – 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Maharajalila Manjuśrí</td>
<td>Ratnagiri (3), OSM (1), Paschimesvara Siva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>temple in Talcher (1) – 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Vajrarāga</td>
<td>On the back slab of Aksobhya and Amitabha image at SDO-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>compound Museum – 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Two-armed with book on utpala and varada mudra (non-textual) – both standing and seating</td>
<td>Ratnagiri monolithic stupa – 29, other images at Ratnagiri – 12, Lalitgiri – 1, Brahmvana – 1, Vajragiri (OSM) – 1, Udayagiri – as attendant deity in various mandalas as well as the central image in the rock-cut Manjuśrí mandalas – 8, Solampur – 2, Dihakula – 1, AchuTārājpur – 3 – 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total 10 88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Cult of Eight Bodhisattvas and other Bodhisattvas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Samantabhadra</td>
<td>Lalitgiri (l) 3, Udayagiri-6, Solampur(s)1, Lalitgiri(s) 3 – 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Maitreya</td>
<td>Ratnagiri(s &amp;i) 4, Udayagiri 7 (s), Lalitgiri 4 (i),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AchuTārājpur (i) 2, Solampur(s) 1 Khiching (s) 1, Baud 1 – 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lokeśvara</td>
<td>In many places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ksitigarbha</td>
<td>Lalitgiri (i&amp;ii) 2, Ratnagiri (s) 3, Udayagiri(s) 7,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AchuTārājpur (l) 1, Solampur (s) 1 Khiching (s) 1– 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Vajrapani</td>
<td>Ratnagiri (s&amp;i) 4, Vajragiri (i) 1, Lalitgiri (i) 1,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Achutarajpur (i) 1, Solampur(s) 1, Udayagiri (s) 5,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Khiching (s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Akarasagarbha</td>
<td>Lalitgiri (i) 2, and at other places under Vajrapani section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Manjuśrí</td>
<td>In many places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sarvanivaravanaviskakambhina</td>
<td>Lalitgiri (i &amp;s) 2, Ratnagiri 3 Udayagiri (s) 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Religious equations between brahmanical religions and Buddhism: some Questions
How is then religious dynamics viewed in a poly-religious context, as in early medieval Orissa? Xuanzang had this to note in Orissa about the equation between brahmanical religion and Buddhism in Orissa of 7th century:

The people are indefatigable students and many of them are Buddhists. There are 100 Buddhist monasteries and a myriad brethren are Mahayanists. Of Deva temple there were fifty, and the various sects lived pell-mell (emphasis mine) (Watters 1961: 193).

I-tsing says thus:

The two systems (Hinayana and Mahayana) are perfectly in accordance with the noble doctrine... Both equally conform to the truth and lead us to nirvana... The two systems are, in like manner, taught in India, for in essential points they differ from each other... Those who worship the Bodhisattvas and read the Mahayana sutras are called the Mahayanists, while those who do not are called the Hinayanists. (Takakusu 1966: 14-15)

Sylvain Levi, in the ancient context of Nepal, wrote:

A rigid classification, which simplistically divided divinities up under the headings, Buddhism, Saivism, and Vaisnavism, would be pure nonsense; under different names, and at different levels, the same gods are the most part common to different confessions (Levi 1905 I: 319).

On the other hand scholars point out that such similarities between Hinduism and Buddhism led to the disappearance of Buddhism India. “If Buddhism declined after Pala period... What was the real condition of Buddhism? Was it not a bundle of popular cults and superstitions, which could be called in any name? True there were few monasteries, patronised by kings and landlords and also monkish culture proclaiming the world as void entity... But the Buddhist monks were parasites living on the financial support of kings and landlords, and as soon as this financial support was withdrawn, monks of the great monasteries at once turned into beggars for whom none was to shed tears. Had Buddhism in its later forms been an organised religion with followers among the people it could not perish all of a sudden.”(Bhattacharyya, 1981:15)

Kunal Chakrabarti holds the view that the “in popular understanding Buddhist and brahmanical icons came to perform the same function. Even in the realm of underlying metaphysical premises tantricism brought the Buddhist and brahmanical ways of worship close. When both the religions began to receive royal patronage irrespective of the personal faiths of the rulers it carried the universal message that the differences between them, if any, were marginal and that both were entitled to be venerated in almost equal manner. (Chakrabarti 2001: 142).

6. Shared cultural matrix

In the cultural matrix of Orissa, different religions used certain common baseline concepts. The origin of these baselines may be brahmanical or Buddhist but they formed part of the ritualistic behaviours and belief system of followers of all religions of India. Maharaja Gopacandra' inscriptions, which is dated to 6th century AD, states that his subordinate,
Acuyata gave land grants for provisions for bali (offering to all creatures), caru (offerings to ancestors), gandha (sandal paste), puspa (flowers), and dipa (lamps), and so forth, for providing for the havis (oblations), pinda patra. Similarly, the two Talcher plate grants of Bhaumakara king, Sivakaradeva (number 13 and 14) refer to land grants for the provisions for snapana (ablutions), gandha (sandal paste), puspa (flowers), dhupa, naivedya, caru, puja for the Lord Buddha Buddha bhattaraka in the shrine (ayatana) built by Amu bhattaraka, as well as sleeping or resting snapana, vandapana, lepana of Lord. Worship of gods and goddesses, certain ritualistic practices in the worship of these deities, worship of particular gods and goddesses for fulfillment of existential goals became common to all religions of Indian in this period. Moreover in south Asian cultural context, same god and goddesses were worshipped in different religions in the same or different name. Archaeological excavations in Ratnagiri, Lalitigiri, Udayagiri have revealed images of Ganesa, Siva lingams, Mahisamardini Durga. Gajalaxmi as a decorative motif is found in brahmanical temples and Buddhist sacred complex as well. Karuna Mätsyendranatha, who is a form of Avalokitesvara, is worshipped as Visnu in Nepal (Slusser 1982).

7. Eclecticism/Syncretism/or competition

The theme of eclecticism, which has been accepted as a truism, pervades historical writings. Historians speak of harmony, eclecticism among various religions in ancient times. Sylvan Levi’s statement that the Nepal Mahatmya faithfully reflects the eclectic syncretism, which has nearly prevailed in Nepal, finds an exact echo in modern writing on the Somavamsis of Orissa. The authors state that the epigraphic records of the period refer to diverse creeds and point out clearly the catholicity of mind and tolerant policy of the Somavamsi kings ((Levi 1905: 204; Sarma 1983: 69).

What is missed out in these perspectives of polar opposites of antagonisms-syncretism is moot question of why particular features of another religion are incorporated by another? The incorporation of the Buddhist deities into the fold of brahmanical pantheon or vice versa indicates a more complex level of interaction and symbiosis between Buddhism and brahmanical religions. It reflects a degree of competition between the two religions in order to attract the parishioners of the other by incorporating certain baseline concepts and icons to attract the parishioners of another religion. These baseline concepts—irrespective of their provenance—were very popular. They include worship of gods and goddesses, several rites, Tantric traditions, incorporation of autochthonous deities, alchemy, various life cycles rites, etc. The origin of these features may be brahmanical, Buddhist or independent but were adapted and incorporated by other religions. Both religions wanted to incorporate within them by giving sectarian hues to these elements.

One instance of this incorporation is the incorporation of tribal elements. While the brahmanical religions incorporated many deities and identified them as forms of Siva or Sakti viz. Stambhesvari, Maninagesvari, Gokarnesvara, etc. the Buddhist incorporated into their fold under the name of Parnasabari who has been described in the iconographic texts Sarvasabaranam bhagavati (the goddess of all sabaras (Getty 1978:134). Other instances of mutual borrowing and adaptation from other contexts can be cited. Caste system is an area, which Buddhism borrowed. Even though the Buddhism denied it the fact that many kings who described themselves as Paramasaugata declared themselves to be believers and upholders of caste.¹ These instances of competitions through borrowing and

¹Many of the Bhaumakara rulers proclaimed that they had restored and upheld caste system. For example the Neulpur
adaptation occur in both religions. The domination and subordination each religion can only be studied in particular context. What seems to be clear in historical records of early medieval times is not of hegemonic Hinduism incorporating Buddhism, tribal elements, Tantric practices and cults through agrahara bramhanas but a more nuanced relation between two religions is a shared cultural contexts.

A frequent reference to syncretism, eclecticism is encountered while describing inter-religious equations. As noted earlier, Sylvan Levi stated that the Nepal Mahatmya represents religious syncretism. This is particularly referred to in connection with an eclectic Hinduism, which accepts diversities with an élan. The classic example is that of the incorporation of the Buddha as an avatar of Visnu. The Bhagavata Purana first refers to this. The first epigraphic and sculptural representation of the Buddha avatar is found in the Pallava and in Osian sun temple (8th-9th century) AD respectively.

A religious cult is syncretic when it combines soteriological, social and instrumental religion within a single, exclusive and monotheistic framework (Gellner 1996:100) and hence opposes the use of any other system. This definition fits hardly with brahmanical religion or with Buddhism. Brahmanical religions accept high degree of cultural relation and accept diverse paths to salvation.

Rather syncretism disguises understanding of an important process of competition existing between two religions. Criticising Levi’s comment that the Nepal Mahatmya faithfully reflects the eclectic syncretism Brinkhaus argues that the passages Levi quotes reflect rather a special form of conflict and inclusivistic attempt to resolve the conflict (Brinkhaus 1980: 279). He states that the manner of confrontation does not raise doubts about the validity of an alien religion which has an independent existence and its own set of traditions, but rather attempt to incorporate and at the same time subordinate the religion to one’s own. (ibid.). Dumont’s concept of hierarchical encompassment in the context of caste system applies equally to Hinduism-Buddhism relations. Dumont’s concept of hierarchical encompassment postulates that the superior pole of an opposition absorbs within it a higher level what is opposed to it at the lower level (Dumont 1980: 239). For instance, practices of the Theravada and the Mahayana were absorbed in the higher poles of Vajrayāna Buddhism. Allen’s remarks that Vajrayāna Buddhism is based on simple inversion of orthodox monastic Buddhism (Allen 1973: 13) is true at one level, yet at higher level Vajrayāna Buddhism integrated the Sravakayana practices, the Mahayana devotionalism and ritualism of Vajrayāna Buddhism within a single Vajrayāna Buddhism framework. The same applies to the relationship of Vaisnavism and Saivism. The sectarian exclusiveness of the Vaisnavas is evident for many Vaisnava texts. The Narada Pancaratra says that Brahma, Rudra, Surya, their saktis or their children should neither be worshipped daily nor even be resorted to for the fulfilment of any desire. But at the higher level, such exclusiveness gave way to the development of Hari-Hara cult. The process of polar opposition at the lower level and integration of opposition at the higher level marked the relationship of Hinduism and Buddhism. The orthodox Buddhism decried the worship of divinities, it opposed brahmanical religions but at the higher-level brahmanical deities are incorporated and given subordinate status. It also holds true to the attempt of

grant of Subhakara records that Paramasangata Subhakara II established the varnasrama in its golden age purity in strict accordance with the scriptures (Mishra 1934-1–7).
brahmanical religions to incorporate Buddhism within them. Buddha became an *avatar* of Visnu. Other deities like Tara, Mahakala were also incorporated within brahmanical pantheon and hierarchy.

Buddhism and Hinduism in early medieval Orissan context operated in a shared cultural environment, an environment characterised by popularity of goddesses, popularity of magic, belief in worship of instrumental deities, numerous rites, rituals, observances and cyclical and calendrical festivals. In these situations, contestation between two religions took place in a very subtle way, given the shared nature of certain base-line concepts, which are common to both religions.

8. Routinisation in Vajrayāna Buddhism

Since competition was to attract the soul and patronage of the parishioners of another religion, it is likely that such contestation found expression in idioms that were acceptable to people in general. There were certain ideologies in brahmanical religions and Buddhism, which prescribed five ‘m’ karas for salvation. There were of course some serious believers who believed in Tantric practices as a soteriological means to attain salvation (*mahasukha*). But many of these Buddhist *Siddhas* engage in these practices in order to learn magic and alchemy, which definitely had instrumental value.

The *Hevajra Tantra* (*Hevajra Tantra* 2.3.41-5) describes a *yogini* as one who is characterized by his being over all worldly distinction (of caste, purity and etc) The Lord said “food and drink must be just as it comes. One should not avoid things wondering whether they are suitable or unsuitable.” (ibid.) This is contrary to a layman’s perception of the nature of religion, which involves rituals, worship, purity etc. Even though Vajrayāna Buddhism as soteriology was esoteric, as an exoteric religion it is highly unlikely that monastic organisations of early medieval India, which had established economic interests, would have preferred the open display of such antinomian practices of esoteric Buddhism. In fact, the Buddhist *tantras* betray traces of a process of routinisation of these extreme practices. Still some members of the monastic community of the early medieval India were engaged in sexual practices as is evident from the *Kriya Samuccaya* of the 12th C (*Kriya Samuccaya* 1977 352-5).

The process of routinisation is evident from the *Hevajra Tantra* which prescribes: “First the precepts should be given, then the ten. Then he should teach *Vaibhasya*, then the *Sautantrika*. After that he should teach *Yogacara*, then the *Madhyamika*. After he knows levels of the ways of Mantras then he should begin on *Hevajra*. The pupil who lays holds with zeal will succeed. There is no doubt.” (*Hevajra Tantra II* 90) Kanhapada’s commentary on this passage prescribes a process from exotericism to esotericism rather than outright display of antinomian behaviour. The *Samvarodaya Tantra* (17.1-6) describes the characteristics of *vajra* master who should give initiation. They include tranquil appearance, who has subdued his passion, who knows the practices of mantra and *tantras*, who is compassionate and who is termed in treatise, who talks to sweetly to everybody, who treats all living beings as his own, who always takes pleasure in almsgiving and is engaged in yoga and *dhyāna*, meditation, who speaks truth, who does not injure living beings whose mind is compassionate and intent upon benefiting others.

“Sameness is the emblem (*mudrā*) of his mind. He is the protector of living beings; he
knows the various intentions of living beings and is regarded as the kinsman by those who have no protector. His body is complete as to sense organs. He is beautiful and agreeable to see. He knows the true meaning of consecration. His speech is clear, he is an ocean of merit and he always and continuously resort to pitha (power place), he is called acarya." (Tsuda, 1974: 294) These liberal prescriptions of the nature of Vajracārya contain inclusive accounts of all three yanas.

This might be an actual or ideal representation of a Tantric acarya but the fact such as interpretation is given in a core tantra (anuttarayoga tantra) like the Samvarodaya suggests that within monastic communities such as routinisation was at work. It was in response to the growth and development of Buddhism as primarily a religion of lay people. It is to be noted in this connection only very few deities in yab-yum pose are found in Indian context is general and in Orissa in particular.

One can suggest that early medieval monasticism favours such a routinisation and scaling down of extreme practices. In present Nepal the newer Buddhists maintain a distinction between inner and outer divinities. The esoteric deities with Yugānadha pose are kept in inner chamber while other deities are found in the other parts of the monastery. Only those who have been initiated to the Vajrayāna tradition are allowed to inner level. Whether this was in practice in the Orissan Buddhism is not known (this requires an analysis of the architecture of the monastic complex). But the near absence of the Yab-Yum images point out that an open display of an antinomian Vajrayāna practices were dissuaded in general.

Another evidence of such routinisation is the absence of Buddhist deities trampling on their Hindu counterparts in Orissa. As pointed out there are certain cultural idioms, which are very popular and cut across religious idioms. One is the use of Gaja-Laksmi; the other is the popularity of gods and goddesses like Ganapati, Sarasvati, Siva and Visnu. Their representation as subordinate deities to Buddhist deities as prescribed in Buddhist literature would not have acceptance from the lay people who followed and worshipped them. The fact that Buddhist sites preserve Mahisasamardini, Ganesa, Sivalinga and other images suggest their cross-religious appeal. To represent them as being trampled by Buddhist divinity would have been antagonistic to Buddhism as an adaptable religion, which borrowed and incorporated many cultural icons into their pantheon.

Therefore, contestation between the two religions found expressions in popular realms. They include the realm of divinities, rites, cyclic rituals, observances and other facets of everyday religion.

9. Religious Equation: Study of Iconography

One area of cross-religious borrowing and adaptation was in the sphere of iconography. The priestly class of each religion tried to attract the patronage and support base of wider social groups and sometimes the support of the practitioner of opposite religion. They tried to attract the contending religion’s support base by investing their divinities with forms and symbols of competing religion and adapted and integrated them in a language and in a framework of their respective religion. Iconography was a fertile field of such cross-religious experimentation.
Lienhard’s analysis of this relationship between Hinduism and Buddhism in the context of Nepal offers insight on the relationship between the two religions in our period of study. He identified three processes in his theoretical conceptualisation of inter-religious equation (Lienhard 1978: 278). These three processes are: borrowing — borrowing from one religion to one’s own; Parallelism — by which functional equivalents are developed in one religion of the cults and rites of the other; and Identification — whereby a single cult is frequented all under different names (Gellner terms this as examples of multivalency of symbols).

To this conceptualisation could be identified four other processes, namely subordination — in which divinities are directly given a subordinate position in the competing religion; conflation — in which two or more divinities or motifs of the contesting religion were conflated to invent anew deity in their respective religion; Conversion — in which the divinities of the opposite religion were converted to be part of one’s pantheon and Combination of any of the above six processes. The following pages analyse these processes.

9.1. Evidence of Borrowing: Hindu Divinities in Buddhism

a. Mahakala: Mahakala is regarded as a form and prototype of Siva. The main temple of Ratnagiri, which was built in the usual Kalinga-style of architecture, is dedicated to Vajra Mahakala, a Vajrayāna variety of Mahakala. The popularity of the deity is still evident today in Orissa where he is worshipped as a Hindu deity. Observances (Bratas) in the form of Vajra-Mahakala Brata (this brata is still observed in Orissa.) In the Sadhanamala and the Nispannayogavali he is described as having one face with two, four or six arms and eight faces with sixteen arms. He shared the following characteristics with Siva:: 1 three eyes, trisula and decked in ornaments of serpents indicating borrowing from Hinduism. However, he is adapted in Buddhism as a guardian of kitchen. I-tsing refers to Mahakala who is found in great monasteries in India “at the side of a pillar to the kitchen or before the perch. Being always wiped with oil, his countenance is blackened and the deity is called Mahakala” (Takakusu 1966: 38). The ancient tradition asserts that he belonged to the beings in the heaven of the Great God (Mahesvara). At meal times, those who serve in the kitchen offer light and incense and arrange all kinds of prepared food before the deity (ibid.).

9.2. Evidence of Parallelism

In both religions the functional or iconographic equivalents or the both are found suggesting a process of parallelism

<table>
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2 Chinnamasta’s Buddhist origin is discussed in the previous section.
Vajrayogini

2. Durga  Functional  Astamahabhaya Tara
3. Indra  Functional  Vajrapani

Kartikkeya
Iconographic

Manjusri

4. Kubera
Iconographic and functional

Jambhala  God of wealth
5. Manasa  Functional and iconographic  Janguli

6. Matsyendranatha  (Krsna inSimilar traditions  Karunamaya Avalokitesvara Nepal)

7. Narayana
Iconographic functional

Sristkartar-Lokesvara  Creator god
8. Nilakantha

Similar tradition

Nilakantha Avalokitesvara

9. Saptamatrika
Iconographic and functional

Hariti  Goddesses of fecundity
10. Sarasvati

Functional

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3 Manjusri is worshipped as Kartikkeya. This god is knowledge and learning is represented in the Guhyasamaja-tantra as Kartikkeya. In the Manjusrimudrakalpa, Manjusri is called Kartikkeya, Manjusri (dvitya-duara samjpe Kartikkeya Manjusri Mayurasana). (Guhyasamaj tantra: XXVII).

4 Kubera/Jambhala: Like pot-bellied Kubera Jambhala’s iconographic form is represented a pot-bellied man. Kubera holds a bag of treasure but Jambhala holds a mongoose which vomits jewels.

5 Narayana/ Sristkartar Lokesvara: The Buddhist god having one face and two hands is depicted with gods coming out of his body which suggest a clear copy from Sristkartar Lokesvara. An image of the deity with Hindu gods emitting from it appears on the gold window of the Lalitpur royal palace. At first glance his form is very similar to the Hindu icon of Narayana or Ardhanarisvra surrounded by ten avatars (eg parallelism, subordination)

6 Nilakantha Avalokitesvara: Like Siva whose throat has become blue after churning the poison of Vasuki. The Buddhist iconographic texts describe purely in terms of the description of Siva as wearing a tiger skin, having a blue throat by poison and flanked by cobras (borrowing, parallelism).

7 Saptamatrika/Hariti: The mother goddess who carries a body in their lap. Hariti holds a child. She is regarded as goddess of fecundity.
Manjusri/Sarasvati: Goddess of learning

11. Sitala: Functional Parnasabari

12. Sri Laksmi: Goddesses of prosperity

Iconographic and functional
Vasudhara: Goddesses of prosperity

13. Sri-laksmi: Functional Mahasri Tara

14. Surya: Marici

Iconographic
Marici: —

15. Varahi: Iconographic Varahamukhi


9.3. Multivalency of Symbols:
Many deities who are functionally equivalent and have shared iconographic forms is different names. Laksmi, the brahmanical goddess of prosperity is known in Buddhism as Vasudhara. Her popular form is Kumari. In Nepal Kumari worship is vital in any religious worship. Similarly Janguli is known is Buddhism as Manasa while the folk name is Jagulei in Orissa. Other instances of multivalency of symbols can only be ascertained by studying the folk deities and their traditional roles. Karunamaya-Matsyendranath in Nepal is known by different names. Buddhists always refer him as Karunamaya. Others call him Bugadya (the village where he spends half the year). Hindus worship as Siva while the bramhanas of Lalitpur like to relate a story, which illustrates his identify with Krsna.

8Manjusri/Sarasvati: Sri Pancami is celebrated as a festival of Manjusri and Sarasvati for skill and learning.

9Sri Laksmi/Kumari/ Vasudhara: The functional equivalent of Sri-Laksmi in Buddhism was Vasudhara. The Vashundhara-Vratopatti Aradhana a Sanskrit Buddhist text copied in NS 923 AC (1802 AD) claims that the goddess assumes three fold form of Vasudhara or the Maha-Laksmi or the great prosperity and Kumari, the Viraja. The Sadhanamala’s description of Vasudhara clearly matches with the iconographic form of Laksmi.

10 Surya- Marici. She is the goddess of dawn and is having a chariot drawn either by horses or by boars

11 Visnu Hayagriva/ Saptasatika Hayagriva: Hayagriva, according to the Puranic mythology was primarily a demon to kill whom Visnu assumed the form of a horse-headed man. The special cognisance of the Saptasatika Hayagriva is the scalp of a horse over his head. Another aspect of the same god associated with – is three faced and eight armed and the number of arms as well as the attributed placed in his hands clearly associated him with Visnu Hajo-Hayagriva temple of Assam illustrates an incorporation of this folk deity, first by the Buddhist and followed by Hindus. (Jaiswal 1985: 1-14).
9.4. Any of the combinations:
While Sristkarter-Lokesvera illustrates an example of borrowing parallelism and subordination, Mahacina Tara/Tara represents an example of borrowing and parallelism. Similarly, Nilakantha Avalokitesvara points out the process of borrowing and parallelism at work. In most cases where Buddhism had been borrower, there seems to be a combination of borrowing-parallelism or borrowing subordination at work.

9.5. Evidence of Conversion:
Fieldwork reveals many instances where Buddhist deities were converted and worshipped as Hindu divinities in temples of modern Orissa. Now that Buddhism is totally extinct in Orissa, it is not being possible to identify the exact timing of this process of conversion. More often, the Buddhist divinities are encountered lying on the roadside and are worshipped as goddesses. Mallman has encountered a Halahala Lokesvara, who is worshipped as Brahma and Sarasvati (Mallman 1961: 203-20) goddess Bhattarika and goddess Mangala, on close iconographic examination reveals to be Tara. A Siva lingam in Soro in Balasore district is inscribed with a Buddhist dharani (De 1953:271-73). Similarly the Bhaskaresvara lingam is argued to be an Asokan pillar (Panigrahi 1986: 314). Panigrahi believes that the conversion took place around 5th century AD when Bhubaneswar was emerging as Ekamresvara. The temporal dimension of the conversion is important for it reveals whether the divinities of Buddhism were converted when Buddhism was still extinct, or it started later in the aftermath of the decline. In the case of the former, which seems to be the case, as suggested by the Bhaskaresvara temple, it might have involved strong resistance from the followers of Buddhism.

9.6 Evidence of conflation:
The process involves fusion of the elements of two deities into one. One instance of conflation is the Buddhist deity Yamantaka, who a conflation of Yama and Antaka (Durga). Mahasri is the conflation of Laksmi and Sarasvati.

10. Appropriation and Accommodation of Buddhism in Brahmanical Religions
There was also an attempt to develop a composite deity combining the attributes of Siva, Buddha as in Java and Bali.12 A composite image of Hari-Hara (now in the Gupta gallery of Indian Museum, Calcutta) shows the four-armed Hari-Hara at the centre the backhands carrying a trident and a conch-shell and the front hands a skull-cup and a discuss. He bears the other usual features and there are some attendants by his side. What is unique about the image is the presence of Surya and Buddha in the left and right of the main sculpture.

The hallows around the image of Buddha and Surya and the lotus pedestal on which the former stands indicates that the Buddha was represented as an equal deity (unlike many

12The Baudha stutis of Bali have considerable Saiva admixture. Hooykas has observed that some of them make the impression of purely Saiva, while the others are shared by the Baudhas and Saivas. He further notices that dukuh priest of Bali was represented in three varieties, Saiva, Baudha and Saiva-Buddha. In important ceremonial feasts one finds four Saiva and one Buddhist priests. Similarly at the cremation of princes, the consecration of water of the two sects are mingled together. In two important Saiva rituals, particularly important to note is their role in the Ekadasa Rudra ceremony, which is celebrated once in a century (Hooykas 1973: 8, 177).
Buddhist sculptures where brahmanical gods were assigned subordinate and inferior positions (Banerjea 1985: pl. XLVIII Fig 1).

Two other sculptures, now in the Asutosh Museum, Calcutta are a carved brass figure of Siva-Lokesvara and another image of Surya-Lokesvara. The brass figure of Siva-Lokesvara shows the composite two armed ithyphallic god standing on the *Samapadasthanaka* pose on a double-petalled lotus, his right hand holds up a *kapala* and the left a *trisula*, he is very sparsely ornamented and bears on the top his *Jatamukuta* a tiny seated figure of Dhyani Buddha Amitabha to whose family Avalokitesvara belongs. (Banerjea: 1985: 547, pl. XLVI Fig 4).

A fragmentary relief from Orissa shows the representation of Surya-Lokesvara. The composite god appears to have been ten-armed. Six of whose hands are gone, of the remaining two hands the two rights hold a noose and a full-blown lotus flower by its stalk and another unidentified object. The tiny figure of Dhyani Buddha Amitabha seated on the top of the raised coils of the *Jatamukuta* indicates Lokesvara character of the god while the full blown lotus held by his parallel hands on either side is a manner in which they are shown in the hands of a north Indian Sun icon emphasises his solar nature. The figure is dated to 11th century. (Banerjea 1985: 548).

This process was also reflected in the literary texts as well. Bodh Gaya— the most sacred pilgrim centre for the Buddhist as well as centre for Hindus provides interesting vignettes about inter-religious relationship, particularly between Vaisnavism and Buddhism. Xuanzang records that a brahmana who had built the Buddhist *vihara* at Bodh Gaya. “On the site of the present *vihara* Asokaraja first built a small *vihara*. Afterwards there was a brahmana who constructed it on a large scale.” (Beal 1958: 119). The brahmana at first was not a believer of Buddha but on Lord Siva’s advice he returned and built the *vihara* and his younger brother excavated the tank (*ibid*.). An important containing an inscription reveals attempt to articulate the inter-religious relationship in a manner so as to contain sectarian conflict but simultaneously offers insights into attempts to superimpose a religion (in this case Saivism) in a Buddhist complex. The sculpture represents Visnu, Siva and Surya, all in very crude fabric (Cunningham 1892: pl. XXVIII 3).

The inscription on it refers to the dedication of a figure of *Caturmukhi Mahadeva* who was installed in the “pleasant abode, the temple of the Buddha, the lord of righteousness” by Kesava, son of Ujjavala, the stone cutter “for the benefits of the descendants of the *snatakas*” (the erudite Saivite Brahmin scholar) residing at Mahabodhi. A tank of exceeding depth and holy river Ganges has been excavated for this good people at the cost of thousand drachmas” (*ASIAR* vii 1908-09:139-58). The inscription belongs to the reign of Dharmapala’s reign (8th century). It reveals the subtle way in which brahmanical religions were imported to the most sacred Buddhist monument. It at once acknowledges the importance of Buddha but simultaneously it attempted superimposition and take over by the Saivite.

Similarly the Vaisnavas acknowledged Buddhist presence in Gaya. The tradition here is that Visnu here was born as Lord Buddha. The Vaisnava at first did not identify Visnu with Buddha but with the sacred Bodhi tree, which to the pious Buddhist still forms the centre of the universe. The *Prayogas* or books of ritual prescribed for Vaisnava pilgrims at Gaya and the sacred *tirthas* in its neighbourhood offers evidence of Buddhist supremacy in the
region. In Manirama’s *Gaya yatra* (MS III ASB Sanskrit Manuscript D, 27 fol. 17 A). The pilgrim’s visit to Bodh Gaya on the fourth day of his pilgrimage to holy centre is described in the following manner. “…Thereafter he should bow down before the Dharma, Dharmesvara and the Mahabodhi tree in the due order. On this occasion the following verses should be recited.” “Adoration to the noble asvastha, the Bodhi tree whose soul is Brahma, Visnu and Siva (as means) of saving our dead ancestors and makers. The relations in my own and in my mother’s family who have gone to hell, may they all come to heaven forever through seeing and touching tree. Oh noble tree, I have paid off a three-fold debt by coming to Gaya. May I be saved from the ocean of rebirth through the favours.” Verses like these are found in other manuscripts like *Gayanu-Sthana-Paddhati* (ASB Sanskrit Manuscript MS D 26).

These evidence point out the subtle manner in which Bodh Gaya was appropriated by the Vaisnavas through the *Pipalla* (Bodhi tree), which is sacred to the Vaisnava as well. The epigraphic, textual and sculptural evidence quoted above reveal two trends simultaneously at work. On one hand there is a ready acknowledgement of dominance of a particular cult in a particular space, on the other there are attempts to elbow out, push back the dominant sect/religion from the place and replace it by a rival sect or religion.

The degree of superimposition and appropriation varied in different contexts depending on the popularity of the existing cults, its embeddedness in the cultural milieu, its support system and degree of patronage by the ruling elite. The *Gayamahatmya*’s acknowledgement of the Buddhist presence in Gaya speaks of the former trend (i.e. acknowledgement of the supremacy) while the inscription, which describes installation of a Caturmukhi Siva, reveals a superimposition on the Buddhist Bodh Gaya, which later on was complete with the taking over by the Mahabodhi temple by the Saiva mahantas. Similarly, the *Ekamraksetra*, which was a Saiva centre, came under attempted Vaisnava domination. The *Ekamra Purana*—a text of 12-13th century, prescribes that the pilgrim should visit the Vaisnava temple of Ananta-Vasudeva (built by the Gangas) before paying homage to Lingaraja (18th and 25th chapters, *Ekamra Purana* 1933).

The *Ekamra Purana* narrates a story of the accommodation of Vaisnava deity at *Ekamraksetra* (Panighram 1986: 345) but the *Kapilasamhita*, written during the reign of Prataparudradeva (16th century), gives a contrasting view narrating that Vasudeva fixed the abode of Siva at *Ekamra* (Bhubaneswar). Thus the former, which is a Saiva text, makes concessions to a Vaisnava deity in a predominantly Saiva culture, where as the latter provides evidence of attempts at giving a superior position to Vaisnavas vis-à-vis Saivites at a Saiva centre. As noted earlier, the presence of *Guruda* with bull in front of the *bhogamandapa* of the Lingaraja temple, change over of the *ayudha* at the top of the Lingaraja, the tradition association with the change as well as the *Kapilasamhita*’s narration of the story of the origin of the *Ekamraksetra* clearly suggest an endeavour at Vaisnava superimposition.

There is another evidence of such an appropriation by a rival cult. Tara is spoken in the *Haravijaya* of Ratnakara of (9th century) as a form of Candi who originated in the origin of the Arya-Avalokitesvara, and who is said to have been amidst lotus bosom (Handique 1965: 548). Sarala Das’s *Candi Purana* (the author of the Oriya *Mahabharata*) speaks of Ugra Tara as a Yogini emanating from the Devi-the great goddess of Hinduism (Sarala Das...
Another example of deliberate syncretism is the *Twenty one Praises of Tara*, which had liberally borrowed from Saivism and give an appearance of a hymn of Saivite nature (Wayman 1959: 36-43). Nagaraju also refers to similar attempt to incorporate Buddhism within Vaisnavism in Karnataka (Nagaraju 1969: 67-75).

These processes of appropriation of Buddhism had begun long ago as Xuanzang observes that he saw hundred monasteries in Kashmir but the religion followed in them was mixed hinting thereby that the people worshipped both Siva and Buddha (Dutta 1939 I: 36-37). Xuanzang also observed a similar process in Orissa, when he referred: there are above hundred monasteries and myriad brethren all Mahayanist, of Deva temples, there were fifty and the various sects lived pell-mell (Watters 1905 II: 193).

These evidence which show attempted appropriation and dominance of rival religious centres and deities of rival sects/religions operated within the boundary of shared cultural space. These competing religions and sects shared certain baseline concepts, used similar idioms, and engaged in common cultural practices. Simultaneously, they engaged in contestations to broaden their support base and religious territory by borrowing the locomotifs of their rival religions and presenting it in a manner to give an appearance of their distinct religious hues as well. Present their religions in a superior way vis-à-vis their rival religions.

The Vaisnavas liberally borrowed the Buddhist ideas of *Sunya*. The Vaisnava poets of Orissa in the 16th century employed numerous Buddhist terminologies in their poetic expressions (Balarama Das’s *Virata Gita*, Acyutananda in *Sunya Samhita*). Despite these healthy competitions in a shared cultural and geographical space, there were occasional flare-ups in sectarian bellicosity. The *Dharmapuja-vidhana* refers to the sadharmis and the Buddhists of the Jajpur region of Orissa who are said to have been persecuted by the bramhanas (Bhattacharyya 1994: 334). The *Caitanya Bhagabata* composed by Iswar Dash towards the end of the 16th century records a tradition as how Anangabhimadeva sided with Brahmins and clubbed thirty-two Buddhists when they failed to satisfy him in answering a test. (Panigrahi 1986: 312). The *Madalapanji* (the Jagannatha temple chronicle) records a similar story of the persecution of the Buddhists by Madana Mahadeva, who is represented in the text as a brother of Anangabhimadeva (*ibid*).

11. Decline –Possible causes

How and why did these monasteries of Orissa disappear in subsequent times? Even if one accepts that the Vaisnava saints, while popularising the Jagannatha cult, appropriated Buddhist idioms or a state-sponsored inclusivistic Jagannatha cult led to the decline of Buddhism, they do not explain the decline in its entirety. If they were the decisive factors, how did other cults, particularly Saivism, retain its popularity in Orissa? Despite the Lingaraja temple being subject to Vaisnava invasion it continues to remain an important Saiva centre and in some measure contests the imperial Jagannatha cult.

Hence the reasons for the decline of Buddhism are to be located within its structure. One reason could be the monastic nature of Buddhism. Buddhist religious structures were primarily not independent structures (the Kalasan inscription in Java, the Dambal inscription of Karnataka however, refer to temples of Tara.) but parts of monastic
complexes, which were subject to Muslim invasion. The destruction of Nalanda and Vikramasila led to the fleeing of Buddhist monks to Tibet (Shastri). Taranath also referred to Turuska invasion implying Muslim invasion of the Buddhist monasteries of Bihar and Bengal (Taranatha: 137-38). It is to be noted that the decline of Buddhism in Orissa coincided with a phase of development and flourishing of Buddhism in Tibet and Nepal.

The monastic-centric nature of Buddhist religious structure was a handicap vis-à-vis brahmanical temple. Unlike the brahmanical temples, which were embedded within socio-economic niches of micro and sub regions, the Buddhist viharas were elaborate structures, which required vast amount of resources to sustain them. Moreover, the monastic nature also meant that they were less embedded with various micro and meso regions.

Another significant factor for the decline of Buddhism in general is its inability to come to terms with folk practices. Eschmann has conceptualised the steps in which tribal-folk deities have been transformed into a Hindu deity (Eschmann 1978:79-99). A visit along the road reveals the process of transformation at work in Orissa. Numerous village goddesses are now integrated to brahmanical religions, the most recent being Tarini. The most significant one from our point is Stambhesvari, who as a wooden goddess is now the presiding deity of a temple in Ganjam (ibid.). Hinduism easily accepts these folk practices as low form of Hinduism. Buddhism also tried to appropriate and accept them as part of Buddhist pantheon. The fierce goddesses, such as Parnasabari are instances of such incorporation and acceptance. But the incorporation and the corresponding position allotted to them in the Buddhist scheme were somewhat frozen after 7-8th century AD. The schematic arrangements of Buddhist pantheon prevent quick and easy incorporation of autochthonous elements.

Rather the integration came from the above, which neatly developed the Buddhist pantheon keeping their eyes on the support base of their religion. In contrast, the assimilation of folk deities into Hinduism always started from below. It is later in the evolution of the deity that the brahmanical Hinduism integrates it into its fold, introduced rituals and bija mantra for regular worship, invented myth and tradition to integrate it with high tradition Hinduism. The process seems to be the bottom to top rather than the top to bottom, as in case of Buddhism. This provided Hinduism a decisive leverage in capturing people at the lower level who always constitute an important segment in the sustenance and longevity of a mass religion. The monastic-centric Buddhism was a big handicap in this regard.

12. References


3. Anguttara Nikaya (1917) *The Books of Kindered Sayings* tr. By C A F Rhys Davids,

13 Eschmann has conceptualised the transformation of symbol to image – from Aniconism to iconic and integration into Hinduism as involving five stages aniconic symbol invested with vermilion, irregular worship, ritual specialist in the form of dehuri, followed by temples, regular worship and daily rituals consisting of gandha, puspa, dhipa, dipa naivedya, snana (Eschmann 1978: 79-88).


49. Saddharmapundarika (1933-35) Ed by U. Wogihara and C. Tsuchida, Tokyo