ABSTRACT

The present article aims to preservation of ruined heritage site of the Odisha and highlighting the ancient culture and old civilizations in total area of Sitabinji. I argue that the significance of the site have decreased apart in the recent decades with the advancement of modern knowledge and thinking. Now Sitabinji is the inaudible voice of culture, heritage, and civilization of Keonjhar district, but it remains in spread a flamboyant voice in the history and tradition that sings the past indigenous knowledge in the form of anthropological site. Though there have been few attempts to document the rich cultural tradition by some individuals—Chotaray Laxminarayana Bhanja Deo, Pandit Banambar Acharya, Dr. Krushnachandra Panigrahi, Kedarnath Mohapatra, Paramananda Acharya, Rakhalad Banarjee, T N Ramachandran, Dr. B B Lal, B C Chhabra, Dr. Rameshprasad Mohapatra can be cited as an example—the need to document the site remains ever meandering. In short, the article is attempt to remind the strong life hood of this site Sitabinji and argues for a need to document and popularization for tourist attraction of its rich cultural tradition and It also shows a comparative development of both the local people which shows their cultural identity and a diversification of nature and how this site is associated with nature and the cycle of it.

Keywords: Sitabinji, Odisha, Heritage.

INTRODUCTION

Odisha, in ancient times known as Kalinga, was a far-flung cultural unity, spread over the vast regions encompassing territories from the Ganges to the Godavari and sometimes up to the Krishna River. The
ancient texts such as Bhagavati Sutra, a Jaina text mentions the name of Kalinga Janapada in the 6th century B.C. Of course, in the Anguttara Nikaya, a Buddhist text, Kalinga Janapada doesn't find a place. Odisha, one of the provinces in the eastern coast, situated between 190 281 and 200 41 N and between 820 321 and 870 311 E, respectively.

Keonjhar in Odisha in India is an exciting option for Eco tourism in Odisha. It is a land locked district with an area of 8240 km². It is situated in the northern part of Odisha. It is surrounded by Singhbhum district of Jharkhand in the North, Jajpur in the South, Dhenkanal and Sundargarh in the West and Mayurbhanj and Bhadrak in the East. It lies at an altitude of 480 meters. With a total area of 8203 sq km, Keonjhar district is on the northern corner of Odisha. The total population of this place, as per 2001 census, is 15, 61, and 990 out of which the urban population has a share of 2, 13, 023 and rural population has 13, 48, and 967.[2] The whole district of Keonjhar was a princely state before its merger with Odisha. The early history of the State is not adequately known. It was most probably a part of the old Khijinga territory with headquarters at Khijinga Kota, identified with modern Khiching. It became a separate state with Jyoti Bhanja as its ruling chief sometime during the first half of the 12th century A.D. The then State of Keonjhar comprised only the northern half of the modern district for a long time prior to the installation of Jyoti Bhanja. During the latter part of the 15th century the southern half was occupied by King Govinda Bhanja, under whose rule Keonjhar extended from Singhbhum in the north to Sukinda (a Zamindari in Cuttack district) in the South and from Mayurbhanj in the East to the borders of the States of Bonai, Pallahara and Anugul in the West. During the rule of Pratap Balabhadra Bhanja (1764-1792 A.D.) two small areas of Tillo and Jujhpada were purchased from the Zamindar of Kantajhari and were added to the State. These were recognised
as parts of Keonjhar in the Sanad granted by the East India Company to raja Janardan Bhanj in 1804. Since then there had been no territorial changes of the State till its merger with the Province of Odisha.

**Sitabinji (historical significance)**

It is situated a few kilometers south of Keonjhar -Anandpur road, about 32 km from Keonjhar and 22.5 km from Dhenkikote. Located in the Ghatagan Police station the twin villages Sitabhinji and Dengaposi stand on the river Sita which contain ancient fresco paintings on a number of natural rock shelters in the hills. There are some interesting tourist places in Keonjhar which includes the Jagannath Temple, the Vishnu Temple and the Ghaghra Falls. Keonjhar has the distinction of containing one of the oldest rocks of the world, approximately 38,000 million years old covering an area of 100 km at Asanapat. The district bears the oldest stone inscription found in Odisha, pale geologically belonging to the Gupta period. [3]

**Architecture**

Near river Sita there many ruined backed bricks scattered and round wall bricks stupa type architecture also found here. The bricks are just like similar to the bricks of Sisupalgarh. This place was named as Puspagiri in Buddhist period, according to Banambar Acharya research, Xuanzang was described his biography. [4] The bigger boulder is inclined towards smaller boulder, making a triangular gap in between which are 6.7 m in height and 4.7 m in depth which is called as Ravana Chhaya. [5] The antiquity of the area is established by a large number of micro liths and some neoliths. In a subsequent period the place was undoubtedly a flourishing Saiva centre. Fragments of old pottery and large-sized bricks are found scattered all over the place. Near these records are a number of ruined brick structures, the historicity of which is yet to be established by excavation.

**Coins and ornaments**

A few Kushan coins are also said to have been recovered here. The local people collected many ancient coins and old ornaments in rainy season. T N R Amachandran has written about the coins in MARG journal. This coins recorded as 3th and 4th century AD and on the coin human, sun, moon, king with elephant engraved. [6]

**Fresco mural painting**

In Sitabinji, one finds the fresco paintings in the cave shelter of Ravana Chhaya dating back to 5th Century A.D. The chief antiquities of these places are a tempera painting on the ceiling of two huge boulders famous as "Ravanchhaya",(which takes after a half open umbrella providing sun shade) a Mukhalingam and a number of short rock inscriptions. The tempera painting stands for a Royal Procession which depicts a royal figure seated on an elephant with a sword in his hand. A band of footmen lead the procession followed by a horseman and a dancing woman. The royal figure is depicted as being followed by an attendant woman too. A line of painted writing is inscribed below the scene which reads the name of the king as Maharaja Sri Disabhanja. The next available mural is on the ceiling of Ravanchhaya projecting rock-boulder at Sitabinji in the district of Keonjhar belonging to later Gupta period. [7] This painting, the lone survival of its kind in the whole of eastern India, is attuned to the Ajanta style. Though there are certain basic differences which can be attributed to the local variations like the laying of the ground for painting, provision of a painted inscription, the colour scheme and composition, the painting depict the vigor which was the essence of the Ajanta style of paintings of the period. The lack of evidence fail to build up a connected history of paintings which otherwise would have started with the Jain school of painting at Khandagiri and Udayagiri passing on to the Buddhist style and terminating in Saiva-Sakta and Vaishnava painting as is the case with the evolution of Odishan sculptural art. These rock shelters of Sitabhinji date back to the 4th and 5th century AD. Several rock inscriptions testify that they once attracted the Shiva ascetics. Historical records evidence is that Maharaja Sri Disabhanja of Sitabinji may be the earliest Bhanja King who flourished in the 4th and 5th century AD. It may well be believed that the Bhanjas were ruling in
Odisha almost continuously since the fourth or fifth century AD. The territory called Bhanjabhumi or Bhanjabhum, which includes the present Mayurbhanj was evidently named after the Bhanjas.

**Figure-4.** Fresco paintings in the cave shelter of RavanaChhaya (UmeshNayak)

**Figure-5, 6.** Fresco paintings in the cave shelter of Ravana Chhaya (Umesh Nayak)

**Sculptural significance**

Near Ravanachhaya are a number of half buried boulders with short inscriptions on them. The inscriptions are characters, a few of them ornamental, which can be assigned to the 5th and the 6th centuries A.D. Five of these inscriptions refer to Saiva followers. The deity worshipped here and referred to in these inscriptions might be the character of MukhaLinga (or the linga with the four faces of Siva) now enshrined in a temple.

To the further south is a cave with a linga inside. The local people associate the cave with Sita and her sons, Lava and Kusa. The inscribed boulders are also connected with many stories and traditions. The
name Sitabinji may have originated from Sita, now worshipped in the cave, or from the name of the rivulet flowing close-by which is also called Sita.[8]

Figure-7. Stone short inscriptions(UmshNayak)

Figure-8. Stone Elephant(UmshNayak)

Figure-9. Stone short Linga(UmshNayak)
Figure-10. The four faceslinga (UmshNayak)

CONCLUSION

Sitabinji assemblage belong to a late Neolithic and early Buddhist, Sivaism phase or chisel dominated varity heraling the first time the fusion of the multicultural at its late phase with the early proto-historic phase in Odisha. Now this place Sitabinji is witness offering of artifacts and ornaments in the grave indicating ancestor-worship a prelude to the megalithic culture in Odisha. Though Sitabinji has not seen the megalithic cultural phase yet it comes culturally nearer to it with grave goods offering. The area around Sitabinji is a dominantly by local populated area but this site though exhibits belonging of the dead in the grave yet does not provide evidence as to the burning of the corpse.

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