



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Arts

THE CULTURAL PINNACLE POINT IN THE HERITAGE OF ODISHA AND THE ODIA ETHNICITY

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ABSTRACT

It is imperative that right from the start it be stated explicitly that the following is only an inadequate endeavour to describe the legacy of Odisha in a chronological sequence that extends before 1947 and down to the start of the twentieth century. It is a departure from the conventional approach to history. An attempt is made to help expose the sequence of cultural revitalization that has taken place in Odisha since the state's attainment of its sovereignty. Although there is an abundance of relevant material accessible, the overall structure of such an essay is not large enough to include a discourse on cultural elements. This is because culture is a big issue in and of itself. To cover such a broad subject in such a short piece amounts to a refusal to do a detailed investigation into the problems that are being raised. This article's goal is to encourage modern historians to do more study on a variety of topics related to the cultural evolution of this time period and era specifically.

An important moment in the development of the Odia people's self-identity occurred when the Kalingans (Odias) met the Magadhan conqueror Asoka and transformed him into Dharmasoka via their bravery, fortitude, devotion, and spirit of martyrdom in battle. Ultimately, the Kalingan dream of imperial rule was realised by the glorious ruler and great patriot Mahameghavahana Aira Kharavela of the Chedi kingdom. He was a pioneer in the Kalingan style of architecture, which he established by cutting caverns and etching epigraphs. The development of most of the Lingaraj temple in Bhubaneswar, which is considered to be the crowning achievement of the Odishan form of architectural styles, took place under the Somavanshi dynasty, who followed the Bhaumakaras. In reality of course, the Mukteswar, Rajarani, as well as Lingaraj temples in Bhubaneswar are indeed the best instances wherein the aesthetic genius of the Odia architecture has been brilliantly portrayed. With the creation of enormous architectural and sculptural wonders such as the Sun Temple of Konark as well as Sri Jagannath Temple of Puri, the Gangas expanded the boundaries of the Somavanshis' influence beyond Bhubaneswar and provided the authenticity of the Odia people a new facet. The Ganga was the time period in which the Odia culture and arts first began to develop its more significant expressions. During the time of the Gangas and the Gajapatis, the Odia alphabet also developed and became more refined. The Jagannath Culture, which now has remained to be the most significant gift that the Odia people have made to the culture of the globe, obtained its own character during the Gangas.

The Suryavamshis were instead renowned for their immense imperialist fervour and, in their glory years, were capable of governing the whole Coromandal peninsula. During their reign, the Odia culture and art not only evolved, but they also attained its apex. This occurred during the Suryavamshi dynasty. The Mahabharat by Sarala Das, considered to be Odia's greatest work, was written during such a time period. During this time period, the religious poetry of Panchasakha were written and composed. The Gajapati dynasty is credited as being the period during which Odia culture and identity had their highest expression. The reign of the Gajapati dynasty in Odisha was an illustrious period in the annals of the Odia people's history. Well after Gajapatis, the Odia cultural factor began their genuine collapse, and over the next four centuries, the Odias fought in their own preservation and for the continuation of their very own cultural traditions.

Historians do not understand why the huge Sun-temple of Konark placed such a large complete stop in the progression of the Odias' ability to create structural and sculptural masterpieces. The tremendous flux of Odia literary works, which had its beginnings during the time of the great and powerful Gangas that had its climactic expressions during the time of the Suryavamshis, continued unabated even after the

end of Hindu regime in Odisha and under the threatening predicament of Afghan as well as Mughal regime in the territory. This was the case despite the fact that Afghanistan and the Mughal empire ruled the region at the time. In spite of the sociopolitical decline of the Odia people during this time period, the Riti age contributed to the enrichment of Odia literature by producing notable poets such as the Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja as well as Kabisurya Baladev Rath.

During the time when the British were in control of India, a plan was hatched to rip the Odia identity away from its origins and even to remove the Odia dialect from the position that was rightfully its. In those days marked by negative attitudes and dissatisfaction, the Odia people were forced to battle once more for the justification of their very own existence and to save the Odia dialect against the possibility of becoming obsolete. At a time when India had been going through a period of revival and when there was an activity of transformation of Indian society and standardisation of Indian religion, the Odia people were engaged in a battle that was literally a matter of life and death in order to establish the value of their dialect and a distinctive ethnic identity for themselves.

At this point in time, during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and particularly after the devastating Naanka Mass Starvation (1866), the Odias remained engaged in a conflict that was primarily two-dimensional. On the one side, they were organising efforts to preserve the Odia culture, while on the other extreme, they were getting ready for a major conflict in which they would demand that Odisha be granted the status of a distinct regional entity. Madhusudan Das was focused on the Odia people's political unity at the time while Vyasakabi Fakir Mohan Senapati had been spearheading the Odias in terms of the native tongue. Additionally, Mr. Das was battling for the Swaviman (also referred to as self-esteem) of the Odia people. Language and culture of the Odia people were the most important driving force behind this effort. The spirit and integrity of the Odia people were severely damaged as a result of the conflict at Gohiritikira, the subsequent loss of Mukunda Deb, and the installation of Afghan control in Odisha (1568). This was the most tragic loss. An experience of sorts was in store for the Odia people over the following 375 years, but in the end, the Odia race emerged victorious from the struggle when, in 1936, the Odia identity was recognised and Odisha became a distinct province with its inauguration taking place on April 1st, 1936. As a result of their new position as an independent community, the Odia people were re-energized to initiate a wide variety of programmes aimed at enhancing Odia culture.

The independence of India in 1947 provided an additional impetus for the Odia people, and by January 1949, Odisha had expanded significantly as a result of the incorporation of

Odia-speaking feudal kingdoms into its territory. The Chief Minister of Odisha used the phrase "Now the nation belongs to the people" in his inaugural statement on the state's independence day to proclaim the future tasks and responsibilities that would fall on the people of Odisha. We have an obligation to watch it progress to the point where it can compete honourably with other countries in the fraternity of nations. We are the ones who are tasked with the responsibility of reclaiming Odisha's former glory. Therefore, the immense job of resurrecting Odia cultural identity was placed squarely upon the shoulders of the Odia people, and it remained to be seen to what extent they were capable of successfully carrying out this obligation.

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