

Bhubaneswar & It's Traditional Names in Legend

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Abstract—Bhubaneswar, the famous Puranic Saivite center, has gained prominence throughout the ages. This place is a famous Saivite center not only in Odisha but also all over India. Having various names, the place has become a popular location in Odisha from a very ancient period. The Brahma Purana, Linga Purana, and Shiva Purana describe this place as a famous Saivite center and also mention its religious merit. Later, some Upapuranas were compiled, like Ekamra Purana, Ekamra Chandrika, Kapila Samhita, and Swarnadri Mahodaya, etc., vividly describe the origin and history of various temples of Bhubaneswar and also the legends, mythologies, rituals, and festivals relating to the temples of the city. Throughout its long history, Bhubaneswar has been known by various names, and each of its names is unique as having a different mythological story related to the particular name. The present scholars have made an effort to emphasize the traditional names of the temple city through this article. From Ekamra to Kalinga Nagari, from Toshali to Bhubaneswar, the place has more prominence and potentiality in history. This article presents the significance of all the names.

Keywords— Bhubaneswar, Tribhubaneswar, Ekamra Kshetra, Krittivasa, Sacred, Purana

INTRODUCTION

The present city, Bhubaneswar, has a long history, from prominence as Ekamra Kshetra, temple city or Mandira Malini, to becoming the capital city of Odisha state. This is the place that keeps different historical monuments, such as temples, temple tanks, monasteries or Matha, Stupa, rock caves, Fort & Fortification, etc., within its boundary. The city got its prominence during the rule of different royal dynasties. In 261 B.C., the historic Kalinga War was fought by the Mauryan ruler Ashoka, the Great, on the bank of river Daya at Dhauli in the present town of Bhubaneswar. In 2nd B.C., during the rule of Mahameghavahan Aira Kharavela, the capital city was Kalinga Nagari. The archaeologist later identified this place with the present Sisupalgarh, located in Bhubaneswar. It is one of the famous early historic fortifications. The kings of royal dynasties like Bhaumakara, Somavamsi, Ganga, and

Gajapati built many temples and temple tanks in the city. With time, Britishers occupied Odisha in 1803 A.D and continued to rule for many years. Later, the state Odisha emerged as a separate province in 1936 A.D., with Cuttack as its capital city. However, the year after India's independence in 1948, the capital city of Cuttack was replaced by the new city of Bhubaneswar. Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru laid the foundation stone for the capital on 13th April 1948, and German architect Otto Konigsberg planned this new capital city for Odisha. Giving more importance to Odisha or Utkala, Kapila Samhita mentions- "Of all the regions on earth, Bharata Khanda is the most distinguished of all the countries of Bharata Khanda, Utkala boasts the highest renown.¹ Its whole extent is one uninterrupted tirtha. Its happy inhabitants live securely in reception into the world of spirits, and those who can even visit it and bathe in its sacred rivers obtain remission of their sins though they weigh like mountains. Who shall adequately describe its sacred streams, its temples, its Kshetra, its fragrant flowers and fruits of exquisite flavor, and all the merits and advantages of a sojourn in such a land? What necessity indeed can there be for enlarging in the praises of a region which the devatas themselves delight to inhabit". This shows the importance of Utkala as a sacred region with pilgrimage places, tirthas, temples, etc. Bhubaneswar is a holy place with more than 500 sandstone temples, temple tanks, wells, mathas or monasteries etc. The place contains different traditional or puranic names, which are as follows.

TRIBHUBHANESWAR, EKAMRA KSHETRA & EKAMRA KANANA

The temple City Bhubaneswar derives its name from Tribhubhaneswar, which means the lord of three worlds, and he is regarded as the chief deity of the same. Many ancient Sanskrit texts like Ekamra Purana, Kapila Samhita, Swarnadri Mahodaya, and some ancient copper plate inscriptions mention the name Ekamra Kshetra as well as Tribhubhaneswar. In the first chapter of Swarnadri Mahodaya mentions –

“वहनापि च समूहस्तं तं देवं वह्नरूपकं, भारते चत्कोले
देशे शीत्येकाम् के वने, लिगंम सनातनं विधिः नाम्ना
तिभूवनेश्वरं, सर्वज्योतिमयं तत्तू गूप्तं वैदिज्यसत्तं,
तत्त्वैव्यैदैश्च सहितस्तिष्ठत्यपि च सर्वदा”²

It means in Bharata, specifically in Utkala, the magnificent Ekamra forest is situated where the eternal, divine, and supreme lord, namely Tribhubaneswara, is found in the form of linga. The name Ekamra is found in the Brahmeswara temple inscription of Udyotakesari Mahabhava Gupta-IV and the Ananta Vasudeva temple inscription of Paramarddi Deva.³ The Kanas Copper plate of 600 A.D and the Angul Copper plate of Bhauma ruler Santi Karadeva-II also regard Bhubaneswar as Ekamra Kshetra. The first epigraphical record is the Kanas Copperplate, which mentions Ekambaka and can be identified with Ekamra. Various legends, folklore, and myths about the name of Bhubaneswar are prevalent. Although there is no direct evidence regarding the naming of Bhubaneswar, Various Puranas and Upapuranas describe it as Ekamra Kshetra. Leading works like Ekamra Purana, Brahma Purana, Shiva Purana, and Kapila Samhita mention this place as a holy place for pilgrimage and describe the religious merit of Ekamra Kshetra.⁴ There is a memorable chapter in the Ekamra Purana which describes that the Gaudadhip (Gauda ruler) Shasanka built a Shiva temple in Ekamra Kshetra, and he succeeded in establishing Lord Tribhubhaneswar as the chief deity of the kshetra after destroying a number of Buddhist monuments. It also mentions that Shasanka accepted lord Tribhubaneswar as the presiding deity and identified the Swayambhu linga of Tribhubaneswar. This is also described in Ekamra Chandrika, Kapila Samhita, and Swarnadri Mahodaya. K.C Panigrahi also agrees that the temple of Tribhubhaneswar has been famous since Sasanka.⁵ On the origin of the name Ekamra, Kapila Samhita mentions, “In a former age, there existed on this spot a mango tree of great merit. Because there was only one tree, the place is called the grove of one mango tree, and this lofty tree has magnificent branches decked with gem-like leaves and bearing fruits, which bestowed the fourfold blessings of virtue, wealth, desirable objects, and salvation. This place is named Ekamra Kanan or Ekamra Vana”. It means earlier, the place was adorned with a single mango tree with magnificent branches that spread from Sundareswara Shiva temple to Megheswar temple. At the root of the mango tree, Ekamresvara Lingaraj

was enshrined. In this context, Swarnadri Mahodaya mentions –

“सून्दरेश्वर मासाद्य जावन्मेश्वरो हरं, परिणाममिदं
विद्यादनिलानल कोणयोः अस्यापि मण्डले वृत्ये छायामस्य
प्रकिर्त्ता, आमस्य मूलं प्रथितमेकाम्रेखरलिङ्गकम्⁶

This above Sanskrit paragraph describes the glory and greatness of lord Shiva. Lord Sundareswara, the supreme one, resides at the root of the mango tree. With his majestic form, he controls the whole universe. The place is very auspicious, as it houses one crore of Shiva linga from ancient times, connecting us to the rich historical roots of Hindu spirituality. Swarnadri Mahodaya mentions a verse that gives more importance to the Ekamra forest and its location.

“एकाम्रक वनं नाम प्रख्यात भूवनत्यये, ब्रह्म क्षेतवरं श
श्रीमन्नदीगन्धवती तटे”⁷

KRITTIBASA OR KRUTTIBASA KATAK

Brahma Purana narrates “In Utkala (Orissa), there is a Kshetra of lord Krittibasa (Shiva).⁸ It removes all the sins and such regions are extremely rare. It has a crore of Shivlingas. Is equal in merit to Varanasi known as Ekamra has 8 principal tirthas”. This shows the place Ekamra is the abode of lord Krittivasa which contains crores of Shiva Lingas and 8 principle tirthas”. These 8 principle tirthas are- Bindusagar or Bindusagar Tirtha, Koti tirtha, Ganga Yamuna Tirtha, Brahma Kunda, Megha Tirtha, Papanasini Tirtha, Alabau Tirtha, Rama Hradha. This makes the Kshetra more and more sacred.⁹ The name Kruttibasa Kataka / Kruttibasabhidha Kshetram is mentioned as a name for the temple city Bhubaneswar in the 38 Sloka of Maheswari Khanda in Skanda Purana. The Shukla Yajur Veda also mentions the same name for Bhubaneswar. It suggests that the word Kriti Basa consists of two words - Kriti means Skin and Basa means Cloth. The deity whose Basa is Kriti is known as Kriti Basa. In other word the deity whose cloth is skin is known as Kruttibasa. A folklore relating to this name says that once Lord Shiva killed Gajasura and dressed himself with the skin of Gajasura as per his death wish. From that day he is Known as Kriti Basa and the Kshetra related to lord Shiva is also known as Kriti Basa. Another puranic story describes that there was a demon king namely Matanga and his son was Drumila. Drumila had 100 sons. Among them, Kriti and Basa were powerful. Drumila got a blessing from the Brahmins that his two sons Kriti and Basa can't be killed by any male.

So Kriti and Basa made a plan & killed their other brothers. After knowing the matter, Drumila drove away from the kingdom. Both travelled here & there and reached Ekamra. At that time goddess Parvati in the form of Gopaluni worshipped the lord. Both brothers fell in love with her and proposed to marry. Goddess Parvati told about the event to lord Shiva. After getting advice from him and for the welfare of the human society, goddess Parvati killed both the brothers by pressing down to the earth through her foot. After killing the demons in a tactful way, lord Shiva is regarded as Kriti Basa. Ekamra Purana describes that once the Sabara were very powerful & prominent in a part of Ekamraka. They worshipped a natural rock as Swayambhu Linga that was covered with Kriti meaning the bark of a special kind of tree that was grown in the Ekamra forest at that time. They named the Swayambhu Linga as Kriti vasa. Their chief worshipper Badu is also described as the Sevayata of lord Lingaraj Who is assigned with the worship duty of the same.¹⁰ From the 7th century to the first half of the 16th Century, this place was popularly known with the name of Krutivasa Kataka. Most of the inscriptions of the Ganga dynasty having this name (Krutivasa Kataka) have been found from Bhubaneswar. Kedaeswar inscription of Chodaganga Deva (1034A.D), Uttareswar inscription of Narasimha Deva (1174 A.D) and a 14th century book “Jinordharasataka” mention the name Kruttibasa of Ekamra Kanana.

SWARNACHALA

According to Ekamra Purana, the Ekamra forest (Ekamra Vana) is situated on the Swarnakutagiri near the Gandhavati river (its modern name is river Gangua and it is regarded as the Ganga of Bhubaneswar). For this the place has another puranic name Swarnachala. In 26th & 27th Stanza of chapter-1 in Swarnadri Mahodaya mentions -

“एकाम्रकसमं क्षेत्रं न नराणां च कूत्रचिदं
आत्म प्रीतिकरं नित्यं न भूतं न भविष्यपि
कोटिलिगोदभवं क्षेत्रं देवभूमी सनातनी
भूमीति नावमन्तव्यं स्वर्णकूटं हि चाशमम¹¹

There is no other kshetra in the whole Universe which is comparable to Ekamra Kshetra. The Bhisma parva of Mahabharata mentions Hemakuta as a name of Kailash Mountain. Having meritorious features, Bhubaneswar has given the equal status with Kailash and has also given the name of Swarnadri or Swarnachala.

GUPTA KASHI OR VARANASHI

Another legendary name of this place is Gupta Kashi because Lord Shiva resides here leaving all his favourite places at the request of his beloved wife goddess Parvati.¹² Because once upon a time Varanasi or Kashi, one of the favourite places of lord Shiva was overcrowded for which he left Kashi and came to reside at Ekamra Kanana which is another name of Bhubaneswar. In the Siva Purana and Brahma Purana, Ekamra Kshetra is described as the second Kashi or Varanasi. Kapila Samhita describes how Lord Shiva departs Kashi and residing at Ekamraka and this place came to known as Ekamra Gupta Kashi. Both Kapila Samhita and Swarnadri Mahodaya praises Utkala and Ekamra Kanana also.

CHAKRA KSHETRA

“खण्डाचलं समासाद्य यत्रास्ते कूणडलेश्वराः
आसाद्य वलहां देवीं बहिरागेश्वरावधि
क्षेत्रं मेतत समादिष्टं चक्राकारं शूभं मूने
सर्वपापघ्नमतूलं नानातीर्थं विभूषितं
आम्र छाया तुव्ये विप्रा क्रोशमात्रा ह्यूदाहता
परिणामं प्रवक्षामि तस्याः शूणूत भो द्विजाः¹³

This verse has been described in the first chapter of Swarnadri Mahodaya to highlight the extension of the branches of Mango tree in the Ekamra Kshetra from Khandachala to Kundaleswar and again from Balhala Devi to Bahirangeswar. It is also narrated that this extension is in the form of circular or chakra which is very auspicious and is adorned with a number of Tirthas. Another puranic and prominent name of Bhubaneswar is Chakra Kshetra. It is said that in Utkala, four prominent places are named after the four Ayudhas of Lord Vishnu-Sankha, Chakra, Gada, Padma. Puri is named as Sankha Kshetra while Bhubaneswar is named as Chakra Kshetra. The Baitarani is named as Gada Kshetra and Padma Kshetra is located in Konark. It is also mentioned that the prominent ayudha of lord Vishnu is chakra and according to which this Kshetra has been regarded as Chakra Kshetra. There is a verse described in Swarnadri Mahodaya -

“एकाम्रकं च तत क्षेत्रं संख पार्श्वे व्यवस्थितं
यत्रास्ते भगवान् साक्षात् परमात्मा सनातनः”¹⁴

This means the area of Ekamra is that sacred site where the supreme lord resides. The omnipresent eternal lord forever abides in proximity to Sankha Kshetra. It states that the importance of the place

grew with the residence of the eternal divine Tribhubaneswara.

TEMPLE CITY OR MANDIRA MALINI

As per Odia pronunciation, capital city Bhubaneswar has another popular name Mandira Malini or temple city Bhubaneswar because the place contains a number of sandstone temples related to Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Shaktism etc. The most striking feature is the presence of only one Vaishnavite temple Ananta Vasudeva amidst hundreds of Saivite temples around the city.

II. CONCLUSION

The history of Bhubaneswar is not only very vast and old but also the nomenclature of Bhubaneswar is very old. This place records the story of different cultural movements starting from Buddhism to Saivism. It also presents the prevailing rituals, traditions associated with the particular religion. The city is the witness of the rise and fall of different royal dynasties. The presence of thousands of monuments and cultural relics shows the rise and fall of royal dynasties with the prominence of capital city Bhubaneswar. Bhubaneswar is a popular name. Besides this name, it has some other ancient names like Ekamraka Kshetra, Chakra Kshetra, Krittivasa Kataka or Kruttivasa Kataka, Gupta Kashi etc. Puranas, Upapuranas are important sources in this regard.

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