iJRASET
International Journal For Research in Applied Science and Engineering Technology



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH

IN APPLIED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

Volume: 12 **Issue:** XI **Month of publication:** November 2024

DOI: https://doi.org/10.22214/ijraset.2024.65341

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International Journal for Research in Applied Science & Engineering Technology (IJRASET)
ISSN: 2321-9653; IC Value: 45.98; SJ Impact Factor: 7.538
Volume 12 Issue XI Nov 2024- Available at www.ijraset.com

Odishan Art and Artists in Ancient to Modern Era

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(Sparkling to the Odishan Slipping Artist and Revival of the Ancient Art in Contemporary Phase of Odisha)

Abstract: ***Odisha has a rich cultural heritage, celebrated with great enthusiasm and joy, with art playing a central role. Our state observes 13 festivals across 12 months, where every mother becomes an artist in her own right, passing down this creative spirit to her children. This nurturing of artistic talent gives rise to a new generation of artists who continue to bring pride to Odisha's art academy. However, despite the abundance of talent, there is a noticeable lack of documentation on the history of Odishan artists and their work. This oversight largely stems from the fact that past art historians did not undertake the challenging task of chronologically documenting the artists and their contributions. Consequently, today's historians struggle to gather information about artists who have passed away. When questioned, some deny knowledge, while others, who may know, remain reluctant to share. Determined to shed light on Odisha's art and artists from a broader perspective, I sought to learn more by reaching out to close friends of deceased artists. However, their recollections were often colored by emotion, making it difficult to separate truth from embellishment. I then turned to the Academy of Fine Arts, hoping to find substantial information, but I uncovered only fragments, like shells scattered in the sea. Through this paper, the author aims to document various aspects of art and the lives of artists, spanning from ancient rock art to contemporary periods. However, capturing the entire narrative in a single paper poses challenges. Therefore, further discussions will continue in a separate series on the art and artists of Odisha. This paper serves as an introduction to the rich heritage of Odishan art and its creators.***

I. INTRODUCTION

"Art is a mirror of society," reflecting its real problems and values with great significance. As Ben Elton once said, "Artists don't create society, they reflect it." Art can indeed serve as a reflection of society, history, and culture. In particular, Odia art and artists have always aimed to create history with a unique and mysterious ideology. Not only do artists bear the responsibility of conveying social messages, but artisans also play a vital role in caring for society. Unfortunately, in a patriarchal society, the development of ancient folk art with a contemporary touch is often stifled. Like a wild jasmine flower that blooms in the jungle and falls before anyone notices, the contributions of Odia artists and artisans often go unrecognized. They continuously struggle for economic stability and social recognition. Most people only appreciate commercial art and fail to understand the deeper essence of its creation, which is rooted in real-life struggles and the artist's spiritual connection with their work. From prehistory to the present day, humans have always sought entertainment, using different methods and mediums to live a joyful life. Art and artists are respected by a few patrons who understand the importance of art, but the general public tends to worship the creations of artists—such as idols of various gods and goddesses—rather than respecting the artists themselves. People tend to focus on religion and religious practices, which is something artists appreciate. Artists use their skills and experience to create religious places such as temples, mosques, and churches. These artistic creations serve as important historical sources, providing valuable insights into our ancestors, religious history, and the narratives of knowledge.

II. TODAY'S LIFE OF ART STUDENT IN ODISHA

Art not only expresses the feelings of artists but also expresses the whole social situation. Art of Odisha have rich culture and tradition, reflecting the every possibility of happiness and courage. Odisha has different temples and different religious practice place where different types of rituals were practiced. All the people of Odisha feel that the lord Jagannath is our great patron and we are just a expression media. Life of an art students is very much difficult to live in a urban place. They seem a mesmerizing dream to live like a celebrity but their economy crisis is not allow to live a wonderful life. They struggle as farmer, Just as the farmer struggles to grow crops, so the art students strive to achieve their goal. There are two different types of students come every year to do art graduation in different places of Odisha.

Those two different types are:-

1) Those have intuitive characters which are God gifted. This types of students want only appreciation from society.
2) Second types like they are not interested to study in any general line. They are always Obsessed with their career. They want a shortcut path to catch a royal life.

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When an art student comes to study Bachelor in visual art, he tries to fulfill so many dreams which he actually seems before he comes to art field but in reality he can't afford to set his life as he wanted to live. Most of the time he practiced art as a commercial artist. He dreamed to live life as a great artists but he sucked to seeing in front of a worst reality of art career. First, an art student takes admission in a government or private art college, then he build his art career very well, but under the influence of the nepotism of the art administration, he changes into a commercial artist. Many big artists of Odisha shake hands with them and gain their interest and they take all the credit and call themselves art promoters. That new born artist thinks these great artists help them to enhance his art and skills but they prove as wrong because these so called great artists are parasitic in nature, they absorb gist and urge of that new born baby who really want to be a great artistic person. Let it be go all this reality being a critic I always criticize this administration of so called great artists but my intention is improving the mentality of the new comer artists and help them to introduce the reality of this aristocrat sustainable art academy and galleries. Yes now as an art historian I want to discuss some history and historical Epic of Odishan art and artists (real great artists). There is no one who can arrange systematic chronological abbreviation or narration about Odisha art and artists , hence the author in this research article makes an attempt to discuss about Odishan art and artists.

III. HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF ODISHA

When we are going to study any civilization and culture of any caste or society before it, we need to read all the stuff of geographical location of that place. Geographical location and contemporary environment helps to write history about that place . If you don't understand the commercial, geographical, economical and religious development, we can't able to serve any type of justification and judgment. For scientific study of the history of any land, a large and meticulous knowledge of its geography is indispensable. Geography is the main reason which deals with the socio-economic and political destiny. Keeping all these things in front of eyes ,Richard Hakluyt said "Geography and chronology are the sun and the moon the right eye and left eye of history - one's familiarity and acquaintance with the surrounding, terrain, rivers, mountains, lakes, forests, climate, neighborhood are the rudimentary beginnings of historical study. Before knowing the history of Odisha art and artists, we need to know about its ancient historical geography. About it's geography, there is many epics and stories in purana and other evidence we found from the historical remains, monument, inscription and copper plates. Oldest evidence about India written in the greatest knowledge text Rig Veda. After later Vedic period purana expresses different geographical directions about India and Odisha. In Vishnu Purana ,Bhagabata purana,markandeya purana and other texts mentioned about the seven Islands in the whole world. Those islands are:-*Jambu dwipa,Plakhya dwipa,Salmali Dwipa,Kusha Dwipa,Krouncha Dwipa, Saaka Dwipa and Pushkara Dwipa. Jambhu Dwipa* also known as the 'Bharat Barsha '. One part of the eastern side of Bharat Barsha known as Odisha which is covered with Dark forests , high mountains, rivers, sea, ocean and other natural environmental wealth. From the 3rd century BC about Odisha and its history chronologically mentioned in many religious texts and oldest inscriptions. From this it is indicated that in different stages of civilization and culture, regions like Utkala,Kalinga,Udra,Trikalinga,Tosala,Kosala were politically Odisha

A. Utkal

The territory of Utkal mentioned in various text and puranic account.The description shows the idea that name was older than Udra,Kalinga . In the oldest narration about *Baibaswata manu* mentioned in text like Vishnu Purana, Bhagabata purana ,Bramha purana. IIla- Sudyumna was one of the son of ten sons of manu. Who became male and female alternatively. Illa(female)gives birth a child named Pururba from the Budha (son of Chandra). Other side Sudyumna (male king) has three sons names are – Gaya,Utkala and Binitaswa. After some time Illa- Sudyumna distributed kingdoms in between the four sons, which land was rolled by Utkal as King that place known as Utkal from that day. Also in Buddhist texts describe about two utkaliya merchant Tapassu and valika , who had started his journey from Utkal to Madhya Desa(Madhya Pradesh).

After Lookingt all the descriptions about Utkal ,F.E.Pargiter said in his account the southern portion of Chhotnagpur and Northern part of Morden Odisha is known Utkal.However, it is generally believed that the area of Medinipur, Ranchi, Singhabhum included the ancient Utkal. In the time of ruling Goudya King Samanta Somadatta inscribed about Utkal during the 7th century. Towards the final quarter of the seven century A.D.,The Name Utkal appears in Adhabhara plates of Mahanannaraja of Sasivamsa which includes Utkala in the early Somavamsi Kingdom of Kosala. Now historians have identified it with Viraja, on the river bank of river Vaitarani in the present modern Jajpur district. With the division of the large Somavamsi Kingdom into Kosala and Utkal,suvarnapura became the main headquarters of the former and Yajati nagara continued to be the capital of the latter. After a gradual march of time, Yajatinagara was conquered by Chodagangadeva during 1110 A.D. and it continued to be the capital of Utkala in 1212 A.D(Eastern Ganga Dynasty). With the decline of Ganga ruling in 1435 A.D., the name Utkala lost his political specialty and vast Kingdom of the Suryavanshi Gajapati was known as Orissa Rajya. For the large rulling area The Mahamana , seventh generation of Purrurba had divided north- west section and East section in between the two sons like Usinara and Titikhyu.

B. Kalinga

About historical geography of ancient odisha was firstly introduced in Aitreya Bramhan of veda.In Pre described illa – Sudyumna Epic ,Purrurba is the son of illa. Allahabad and Pratisthan was the ruling area of Purrurba. The time of Annu ,fourth generation of Purrurba the political geography was increased and named Anaba Rajya as his name. For the large rulling area The Mahamana , seventh generation of Purrurba ,had divided north- west section and East section in between the two sons like Usinara and Titikhyu. The king Bali was descendant of the purruba and he was childless. Other side Dirghatama was the son of Uthyat , descendant of Maharishi Angira. Dirghatama was birth control blind because malediction of Deva Guru Brihaspati but he is very intelligent and educated in Veda and Satra. In his old age he became a sex addict and was forcibly put in a box and floated down a river. When the king Bali is bathing in the river, he rescues Dirghatama from box. The king finds dirghattamaa and request him to give a child to queen sudesnna. After that queen Sudeshna gave birth six sons names are :- Anga,Banga,Kalinga,Pundra,Sunmha,Andhra. In earlier times, if the son became the king of any region, that region was named after him. In this policy, the region ruled by the Kalinga king was called the Kalinga Kingdom. According to purana Pargiter said founder of Anga,Banga,Kalinga ,Pundra and Sunmha Kingdoms are established by the marine caste people who are comes from South -East of Asia. In ancient Pali literature , Kautilya's arthashatra and Panini's Astaadhyai have mentioned the Kalinga Kingdom. Greek philosopher Pliny the elder mentioned in his documents Kalinga was divided in to three distinctive land like- Gangaridae Calinge,Macco Calingae and Calingae.Meghaastin's account suggests that the gangaridum Calingarum Regia flowed along the eastern border of the Ganges, which was actually the northeastern border of Calinga. As per the puranic tradition, Kalinga is said to have extended upto the Gangetic valley in the north,the Godavari in the southern,sea in the eastern side and the Amarakantaka hills in the west. In the fourth century B.C., Kalinga was under the authority of Nandas. During the intermission between the Nanda and Mauryas,it glides away from the fold of Magadhan imperial power. In the 261 B.C., during Ashok 's Kalinga war it comes again under the suzerainty of Magadha. Towards the middle of the 1st century B.C. Mahameghabahan Ayira Kharabelas, the powerful king of Kalinga region, is said to have extended his vouge from Mathura,in the north including Magadha to Pandya rulling area,in the south and the territory of Rathikas and Bhojakas,in the west. During the 5th century Kalinga was ruled by Eastern Ganga Dynasty. His extension is rulling area was modern Odisha's Ganjam , Gajapati, Srikakulam of Andhra Pradesh and south section of Vaster in Chhattisgarh. During that time Kalinga Nagari was the capital of Ganga ruling Kingdom which is actually in modern Mukhalingam of Andhra Pradesh. According to Huang – San Kalinga was established in South- West of Kangoda during 7th century. In 12th century Kalinga was under ruled by Ananta Verman Chodagangadeva of Ganga Dynasty. During this time Kingdom was extended from Ganga to Godavari and capital was shifted to kataka(modern Cuttack). After that they pronounced them self 'Sakalotkaldhipati'. Now time Kalinga is a word of Odishan Geophysical History.

C. Trikalinga

Trikalinga is also one expression of ancient odisha which means composition of three Kalinga. For this cause most of people believe Trikalinga is the three types of Kalinga which is mentioned in Pliny account, other people guess that Utkal,Kangoda, Kalinga is known as Trikalinga but this thing is not adopted by historians. In archeological remains ,the first mentioned about Trikalinga was found in eastern Gangas King Indravarman's copper plate. During 39 years ruling period, he declared as himself 'Trikalingadhipati'. According to evidences after Indraverman ,Samantaverman and third Vajrahasta Deva was contained as Trikalingadhipati. In edict of Eastern Chalukya Dynasty mentioned about Kalinga and Trikalinga.

Trikalinga was established near the Bengimandalam which is inscribed on donation letter of Muslipattam by first King Aamma and also mentioned in copper plates of Srirangam by Mumudi Nayak but this geographical enhancement is very complicated. J.F.Fleet calls the region from the Ganges to the Krishna river trikalinga, while Kilharn equates it with the old Telangana province.Denesh Chandra sarakar's view that the position of Trikalinga . within the kalinga and kosala states.Ramesh Chandra Mazumdar says that the mountain to the west of Kalinga is Trikalinga.

According to the Bramhanda purana preserved by Odisha State Museum explain about Trikalinga. Kalinga was Middle area of Rusikulya to Janjabati river and Trikalinga was established in between area of Janjabati to Devibati(Indravati) river. This geographical location is in very complex and conflict condition.

D. Odra

Odra also ancient name of Odisha Like Kalinga, Utkal, Trikalinga which is mentioned in ancient literature , inscriptions of different ruler and patrons. Most of historians gives many arguments Modern odisha word evaluated from the word Odra.According to Bhagavat purana Udra was the son of Queen Sudeshna.

Udra was the king of Aanba Rajya which sixth portion of Bali kingdom. In 2nd century B.C, there was a description in manu samhita ,the king of Odra known as Chandravanshi. In Mahabharata mentioned Odra people with Mekhala,Utkal,Kalinga,Pundra,Andra people. Bharat's Natya Satra and Varahamihira,s Bruhat Samhita indicates the Odra people are special. Oretus people are lived in Melus mountain Which is depicted in Natural History of Pliny and also explained here about Mendes and Sharias or saurias. Specification of narratives Oretus people are Odra, Melus is Modern Maliya Giri of Angul district, Mondes Sharias are known as the tribal people ,Munda and Sabara who are lived in this area. In Hiuen Tsang's Wu – Cha account mentioned Odra was extended from Medinipur to costal side of Mahanadi areas. He explained that Odra contain Pu- Si-Po-Ki-li(Puspagiri Bihar),Che-li-Ta-Lo port (Charitra or Srikhetra). Starting of 7th century , a large area of North Odisha known as Odra which was mentioned in Sora copper plate inscription of Somadatta. Firstly Odra was ruled by Sasanka and after him Odra was ruled by Harshavardhana. It is very complex to decided proper place of Odra by Historians. R.D. Banerjee calls the Odras as the people of Northern Orissa. Other Historian Opine that Odra be made up of undivided Midnapur, Balasore, Cuttack, Ganjam and Puri district. Udyatakesari's Narasinghapur inscription, Janmajaya-I Bramheswara temple edict, copper plates of Ramadeva and Rana and other literary element source gives evidence Odra was extended from north section to south of Parlakhmundi and South Kosala of West,Tosali in East during 9th century.The tibbatian historian Taralamanath , Arabian Geologist Iban-Khdradavi and other great people also gives his opinion about Odra.

E. Kongoda and Mandala Rajya

Conclusion With discussion of ancient odisha historical geography, there is no specific area of Utkal,Odra,Tosali or Kosala. These area always change by powerful kings according to time.Kongoda come in to well-known during Sailodbhava period. Kongoda may be expressed as' The land of Honey ' as Kongu in Tamil means honey. Some historians gives his opinion that small Samanta state called as Mandala state which flourished in the sixth-seventh century A.D.it continue as part of Kalinga and Odra. It is true shape that Sailodbhavas gave this Kongoda Mandala(undivided Ganjam district). The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen – Tsang who visited Kongoda about 638 A.D. Prabodha Kumar Mishra similar- explanation about all Mandal State. From north to west and in South area contain those Mandala state that is:-

- Dandavuki Mandala,River valley of Subarnrekha.
- Khijing Mandala, upper section of river Vaitarani.
- Banai Mandala, upper section of Bramhani river.
- Central part of river Mahanadi 's Khinjali Mandala, Ayiravata Mandal,Jamagarta Mandal and Kodalaka Mandal
- Kongoda Manda, river bank of Salima

Fertilized river valley helped to economic development through cultivation and gave path to development of Mandala Rajya. Making tribal people Politically unified and culturally strong them, these things helped them to introduce as chief. Again These Mandala kings are important for spreading the Aryan culture and utilities. Also we found small segmental territorial vassal, these are:- Swetaka Mandala(Chikiti of Ganjam), Khandirasrunga Mandala(Dharakot,Sorada and area of Barghar), Chitrakoot Mandala(Baster of Chhattisgarh and koraput of Odisha),Kamala Mandal(Kalahandi),Kaleda Mandala(range of Sambalpur and Balangir),Ambabada Mandala(Ambadula of Kalahandi) etc. if we discuss about Odishan historical geography of past,we can find that the ancient odisha geography is largely emphasize than current geographical situation.

After passing of Harshavardhan in 647A.D.Mahadhavaraja-II, the sailodbhava King of kongoda maintained his power and pelf for a long time which is revealed by his Cuttack charter. Kongoda got back his independence shortly after death of Harshavardhan, King of Pusyabhuti Dynasty during 647A.D. with the fall of Sailodbhava Dynasty, Kongoda Mandala lost his glory during the first half of the eight Century A.D.

F. Tosala/Tosali

Tosala or Tosali was the historical name of ancient Odisha based on geography. The description of Tosali is found in Parisistha of Atharvaveda, realated to some geographical part of Odisha . Other evidence sources are Vayu Purana,Mastya Purana, Markandeya Purana, these texts are expressed by its sloka and hymns. Through the hymns purana explained proper geographical location of Tosali or Tosala like Odra,Utkala,Kalinga and Other ancient name of Odisha. The purana equated the territory with Kotalas,Nisadas,Traipuras,Tumuras,Valdisas etc.

Mālabascha kurubāsch mekhalāschotkalehei saha.

Uttamarna daeshayascha vojāscha kiskindakaeihi saha.
Tosalā kosalāschaiba tripurā baidikastathah.
Tumurāsthumumbaraschaiba sathasura nishadheih saha..

(Vayu Purana XLL,132-33)

According to Avasyaka Niryukta, Abasyaka Sutra,Byabahara Vhasya the jaina text, there is description about Mahavira jaina, came Tosala because that time people followed and stopped the Jainism. The Jaina text Avasyaka Niryukta States about this land:

" Lord Mahavira,in the eleventh year of his monkship,come to Tosali where he was taken to Robber and hit hard. From here, the venerable teacher went to masoli,where too he was taken to be a robber, was arrested and brought to the king's court, but was released as the king was a friend of Mahavir 's father. On his return journey from Masoli Mahavira again come to Tosali. Here, again, he was caused great troubles and was on the point of being hanged when he was rescued through the timely interference of the Tosali- Kshatriyas".

The text identify that Tosali was a center of Jainism followers and monks (like -Digambar,Swetambara). It had a magnificent image of jaina which was guarded by King Tosalika.During the first century Tosali was under ruled by Chedi Dynasty, King Mahameghabahan Yaira Kharabela was the ruler of that time which perspective was patronage the Jainism monks and merchant. Willford identifies tosalā – Kosalaka of the Hindu text Bramahanda Purana and Kosalaka or Kosala of the Bruhat Samhita on the basis of the existence of a tank named Kosala Ganga, now known as Kausalya Ganga near Dhauli in Bhubaneswar which was known as Tosali in ancient times. The excavation of Sisupaladaga in 1948, there is some archaeological remains linked with Jainism which depicted that place was center of jainism practices before 3rd century B.C. the Buddhists text Ganndabiuha lights on the changes of Sisupalagada into Mahayana Buddhism religion after Asoka's Kalinga war(261B.C.). The Bharata Muni also mentioned in his text Natyasasta, Tosala has a distinct territory but it had its link with Kosalaband Kalinga.The Gandavyuha ,a sanskrit Buddhist text of third century A.D. Depicts that a country named Amita Tosala, with its capital city Tosala,is situated in Dakshina Patha. In this text mentioned that Upasika Achalsthira instructs Sudhanakumara,an aspirant about Tosala. Also described that Amita Tosala and it's capital Tosala was situated at South section of Surabhagiri, which is now days our Dhauli hill near Sisupaladaga. The Amitatosala was divided into two different parts viz. Uttara Tosala (North Tosali) and Dakshina Tosala'(South Tosala). The Uttara Tosala rose into glory under the king Sambhuyasa of the Maudgalyakula' whose feudatory Somadatta ruled in 580 A.D. during 3rd century the Eikyaku Dynasty King named Birapurisadatta's Nagarjunakonda inscription depicts, Tosala was the residency for theravada monks. Writings of Ptolemy,there is identified Tosali or Tosala also in writing of Pliny mentioned Tosali Pathalis. According to Dinesh Chandra Sarakar, undivided Puri-cuttack-Ganjam was known as ancient Tosali during the Vigraharaja time which had two distinct part like:- Uttara Tosali and Dakhina Tosali. In the Mudgala King Sambhuyasa of Sora inscription, King of Bhumankara Dynasty Subhakara Deva-I inscription of Neulapura, Hindola copper plate inscription of Subhakaradeba-III, Boudha copper plate inscription mentioned about narration of Uttara Tosali through this evidences Navin Kumar Sahoo determine, Medinipur, Mayurbhanj, Undivided Baleshwar district and Northern section of undivided Cuttack district was known as Uttar Tosali. The Kasana Copper plate inscription of Vigraharaja Lokabigrha , mentioned about South Tosali for First time.Tosali King Sambhuyasa was conquered South Tosali and mixed with North Tosali which mentioned in Patiakela copper plate inscription also it's continued during Bhumankara ruling period. Prediction says may be Mahanadi was division line between two areas of Tosali , South Tosali was built to take place undivided Puri, South section of Cuttack and North section of Ganjam.The capital of tow section of Tosali was Guheswarapataka or Guhadevapataka during Bhumankara. The name of Tosali was disappeared after the somabamsi king's possession of Tosali. They changed the New name from uttar Tosali to Utkala and Dakhyina Tosali to Kangoda.

G. Kosala

To study about historical geography of Odisha, there is also Kosala always create a special and unique historical geography location in Odisha during different Dynastical period and ruler. Which is mentioned in Parisistha of Atharva veda. The Buddhist texts Anguttara Nikaya indicates about situation of Kosala during 6th century B.C. Kosala people were known as Kosalā mentioned in Hindu sacred texts Mahabharat and Ramayan. In Vayu Purana mentioned the narration of Panchakosala which was part of Mekhala Rajya.The real thing is the territory of Kosala is attributed to a mythical origin. The real Kosala was one of the janapada in India which was identified in the north – East section of India (uttar pradesh).there is some story about Kosala.The Rama was the prince of Kosala. According to Ramayan to obey the Father truth,he went to the jungle with his wife Sita and young brother Laxman. They travelled South from Ayodhya to Prayaga. Travelling South -west up to Narmada valley,he came up to a place identified with the modern Chattisgarh area. They stayed for long time in this area so that people gave the name Dakhyisna Kosala(South Kosala), after his original homeland Kosala.

In Ramayan, there is also another fact that King Rama had two sons Lava and Kusha . after Sri Rama they divided the Kingdom in between them, like Uttara Kosala and Dakhyina Kosala. In Mahabharat mentioned that people of Kosala was migrated to chattisgarh because terror of Jarasandha, who was the very powerful and oppressor,that place is called Dakhyina Kosala.H.C.Raychaudhuri locates Dakshina Kosala in the territory comprising the modern district of Bilaspur, Raipur and undivided Sambalpur.The Allahabad pillar inscription of Harisena includes Kosala among the territories of Dakshinapatha which were subjugated by Samudragupat.Hiuen Tsang who visited Kosala in 639 B.C. described the Kingdom 6000 Li in circuit. As per their description,it may be presumed that Kosala comprised the district of Bilaspur and Raipur in Madhya Pradesh along with the undivided district of sundargarh,Sambalpur and Bolangir in Odisha. Kosala was ruled by different Dynasty and kings, timely it was changed as rulers and kings. This time it is in complicated situation to decide the real location, West Odisha people always creating the complications for Odisha Government and they want a different state with own identification.

IV. PRE HISTORIC ART IN ODISHA

A long time ago, humans evolved from anthropoid ancestors, undergoing numerous transformative processes that gradually shaped them into modern humans. Humans have always possessed an inventive mind, driven by a curiosity that compels them to explore mysteries and uncover new facts; this inquisitive nature has played a significant role in human development. According to anthropologists and geologists, human evolution began approximately two million years ago. Before that, Earth was dominated by an icy period known as the Ice Age or Pleistocene Epoch, a term derived from the Greek for “most recent.” This period, spanning roughly from 2 million to 10,000 years ago, was marked by extensive glaciation, with an intensely cold and arid climate.Due to these harsh conditions, the Earth supported only a limited range of flora and fauna, with the land sparsely covered by bushes and hedges, while massive animals evolved thick, long fur to withstand the extreme cold. Early humans lived a life as hunter-gatherers and scavengers, surviving on a limited supply of food. As the ice began to melt, Earth’s climate shifted to a warmer, wetter one, closely resembling present-day conditions. This new climate gave rise to rivers, lakes, and oceans and stimulated the planet’s natural productivity, leading to a proliferation of greenery such as forests, grasslands, and crops. In response to these environmental changes, early humans evolved not just physically but also socially, becoming more organized as a community.As humans began forming societies, they sought ways to entertain themselves and transmit knowledge across generations. They chose painting as a medium to share their experiences and wisdom with future generations, using cave walls as their canvas. This choice reflected both intellectual depth and curiosity. Through these paintings, they expressed their daily lives in various colors. Worldwide, famous examples include the Altamira and Lascaux caves, whose paintings provide insight into the lives of our ancestors. In many parts of the world, we find similar lithic (stone-age) caves where early humans expressed their creativity and imagination.In India, prehistoric art has been discovered in numerous locations, such as Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and others. When discussing Indian prehistoric documentation, we must highlight the contributions of Robert Bruce Foote, known as the "Father of Indian Prehistory," who discovered the first hand axe at Pallavaram. Another notable figure is V.S. Wakankar, who discovered the prehistoric sites at Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh. The first example of rock engravings in India was found in Odisha by Kashi Prasad Jayaswal in 1933, in a rock shelter at Vikramkhol in Sambalpur district. Here, cave walls were painted with red ochre and yellow ochre. Odisha is rich in prehistoric sites, where many rock shelters have been discovered. Subsequent researchers have uncovered additional prehistoric sites in Odisha, including Gudahandi in Kalahandi District; Jogimatha in Nuapada district; Choramada, Eimilimoda, Lekhamoda, Manikamoda, and Ushakothi in Sundargarh district; Ullapgada and Vikramkhol in Jharsuguda; Pakhanapathara in Mayurbhanj district; Mendra in Nabarangpur district, among others.Rock art is classified into two main categories: pictographs and petroglyphs. Pictographs are rock paintings made from natural pigments derived from minerals and other sources.

For instance, hematite provided brown, an iron-based hue; copper-bearing pyrites produced green, and carbon was used for black. These pigments were often mixed with animal fats, blood, and natural glues before being applied to rock surfaces. In contrast, petroglyphs were created through engraving, scooping, and other methods of carving on rock surfaces. The subject matter of these artworks often centered on hunting scenes, reflecting the hunter-gatherer lifestyle. These paintings encapsulate the abstract thought and creativity of early humans.In Odisha, Sadashiv Pradhan has made substantial contributions to the study of rock art and culture. He meticulously documented Odisha's prehistoric rock art, recording 40 new sites and re-recording 15 previously known sites, greatly advancing rock art research in Odisha. According to Pradhan, there are 2,241 illustrations of paintings and 3,534 engravings recorded from 55 rock shelters. Of these, 31 rock shelters contain only engravings, 9 contain both engravings and paintings, and 15 contain only paintings. Most ancient rock shelters in Odisha are formed of sedimentary rock, including subtypes like sandstone, siltstone, shale, and gritstone.Let us now delve deeper into analyzing this rock art with a detailed and comprehensive understanding.

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ISSN: 2321-9653; IC Value: 45.98; SJ Impact Factor: 7.538
Volume 12 Issue XI Nov 2024- Available at www.ijraset.com

A. Vikramkhol

Vikramkhol, an ancient rock art cave, is located in the undivided Sambalpur district, now part of Jharsuguda district, near the village of Banjari. It lies 25 kilometers along the Jharsuguda–Lakhanpur road from Jharsuguda. This shelter is made of sandstone, appearing yellow ochre and brown in color. The cave walls feature engravings and paintings in deep red ochre, though some of these artworks are no longer visible due to rain erosion, climate effects, and fungal growth on the rock surface. Heavy rainfall over the years has blurred many of the paintings and engravings, making them almost unrecognizable.A stream flows nearby, which is actually a tributary of the Ghoghor River, and the cave faces east—perhaps due to the ancient inhabitants' knowledge of the benefits of morning sunlight. According to Sadashiv Pradhan and Umesh Chandra Nayak, this rock shelter measures 37 meters in length, 8 meters in height, and provides a space of 5.65 meters. The engravings extend over a 10-meter area on the back wall of the cave, arranged in two rows and covering approximately 1.25 meters from top to bottom.As recorded by K.P. Jayswal, the cave walls were once covered in paintings, though some may have been left incomplete. The area with inscriptions measures 11 meters in length and 2.1 meters in width and preserves a pictographic inscription, partially incised and partially painted. Some of these engravings have been lost over the past 55 years, indicating the rapid deterioration of the rock shelter. Each row of engravings measures approximately 0.4 meters, with the depth ranging from 2 to 3 centimeters and the width from 3 to 4 centimeters. Due to the rough and uneven surface of the rock, the lines are neither linear nor straight.K.P. Jayswal observed that the inscribed script reads from right to left and suggested it may predate the Brahmi script. He theorized that the script of Vikramkhol combines elements of Brahmi with features of the Harappan script. He further noted that the characters in the Vikramkhol inscription belong to a transitional period between the Harappan and Brahmi scripts. Some letters are presented in their original or proto-Brahmi forms, hinting that the early inhabitants were beginning to document practices through writing. These inscriptions suggest that the Brahmi script was among the early Indian scripts from which European and Phoenician scripts may have evolved.The engravings are filled with a thick layer of ochre, suggesting the possibility that the characters were first painted and then engraved. However, the exact interpretation of the script remains uncertain. Apart from the inscriptions, other intriguing features of the cave include paintings of various figures, patterns, and designs on the wall. Some surviving floral and geometric motifs are visible, with a notable design on the right side of the engravings measuring 9 cm by 8 cm. The Vikramkhol inscriptions are dated to the beginning of the 1st millennium BCE.

B. Ulapgarh-Ushakothi

Ulapgarh is located 7 km northwest of Belphad and 2 km east of the ancient Ulap villages in Jharsuguda district. Nearby is the Ulapgarh-Ushakothi rock shelter, which contains ancient paintings and engravings. The name "Ulapgarh" is derived from two words: "Ulap" and "garh." The word "Ulap" comes from the local term "Ullap," meaning "wetland" or "moist soil," while "garh" means "fort."

There are local myths claiming that this fort dates back to the Mahabharata era. According to legend and local belief, the Pandavas spent a year here during their Agyantabasa (exile). It is said that Arjuna married a Nagakanya named Ulupi, who was skilled in tantra practices, during his stay. This story is also mentioned in the Odia Mahabharata, written by Adikabi Sarala Das in the 15th century. Ulapgarh also has historical significance as a place where Veer Surendra Sai lived during his resistance against British colonial rule. Locals believe that Ulapgarh has a history spanning over 4,000 years.

Jharsuguda district is home to many historical sites, including the Sri Ramachandi caves from the Ramayana era, the Ulapgarh paintings and engravings from the Mahabharata period, the 7th-century Guja Pahar Buddhist cave, and the 8th-century Goddess Padmasini Temple.

The Ulapgarh-Ushakothi rock shelter is made of sandstone, a type of sedimentary rock. It is located on the southern side of Ulapgarh Hill and is known as Ushakothi. The cave measures 51 meters in length, 4.25 meters in depth, and 8 meters in height, and it faces south. The paintings span 45 meters in length and 4.85 meters in width, with 407 examples of rock paintings present. The paintings vary in style, with monochromatic images in red, bi-chrome images in red and white, and polychrome images in red, white, and yellow.

The main subjects of the paintings include numerous geometric and abstract forms inspired by natural elements. Engravings made with digger and scraper marks provide insight into the working techniques of early inhabitants. Key shapes in the artwork include various geometric and non-geometric designs, such as rhomboids (8), zigzags (3), triangles (5), honeycomb patterns (8), broom or brush strokes (97), ladders (2), wheels with spokes (2), footprints (4), and an array of complex patterns and designs (15).

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The paintings in Ulapgarh-Ushakothi are classified into three distinctive types: (1) color paintings with impressions, (2) color paintings with engravings, and (3) purely asymmetric and symmetric engravings. These three styles offer glimpses into the lifestyle and spiritual practices of ancient societies in the region.

C. Yjogimatha

Yogimatha is located approximately 9 km from Khariar near the western border of Odisha's Nuapada district and about 67 km from Bhawanipatna in Kalahandi district. This cave is named after the ***rishis*** (sages) who once inhabited it, and accordingly, a nearby village is also known as Risigaon. In Sanskrit, ***rishi*** is synonymous with "yogi" (known as ***jogi*** in Odia), and ***matha*** means a residence for sacred monks. Some paintings have been discovered in two of the shelters, and these caves are formed from a coarse variety of sandstone. The rock shelter and paintings have not been fully recognized due to vandalism, which has disfigured many of the artworks. The original figures and patterns were drawn in dark red ochre (hematite) and are only visible upon close observation. The rock shelter contains paintings on both the ceiling and the back wall, depicting practices of our ancestors. The themes include stick-like human figures, humped bulls both with and without horns, concentric circles, and floral designs. Other paintings presumably depict musical instruments or symbolic astronomical patterns, such as the damaru, tilak, bowl-like shapes stacked upon one another, and the trishula. All the paintings are oriented with movement toward the left, and no hunting scenes are depicted. According to Singh Deo, these paintings belong to the later part of the Neolithic age, as “the paintings,” he says, “depict the primary occupation of the people as agriculture, and they are rendered in the red-tinted hues typical of that time.” However, it is challenging at this stage to accept Singh Deo’s view, as the scene of a calf following a cow, which is being led by a man, may not be considered an authentic representation. Additionally, the depiction of a bull cannot necessarily be interpreted as representing agriculture or domestication, reflecting the lifestyle of that period, as the bull appears alongside bison, elephants, and deer in a very clear rendering. Further exploration of the site and surrounding areas, along with a comparative study of other painted sites, may help establish a more accurate date for these paintings.Notably, the presence of items like the dambaru, tilaka, and metallic objects resembling the trisula should also be considered when dating the paintings. Based on the style of art, color combinations of the motifs, and composition, these paintings can be dated to the Mesolithic-Chalcolithic period. The Gudahandi caves are estimated to date back to the 15th millennium B.C., while the Yogimatha paintings are from a slightly later period, likely around the 10th millennium B.C. The shelter wall exhibit both monochromatic and bi-chrome paintings of early historical period. According to some research, the shelter was first documented by J.P. Singh Deo in 1976. However, it was Dr. Subrat Kumar Prusty who studied the rock paintings of Yogimatha, which are among the oldest scripts in India. The script 'Ga' and 'O' (tha) was discovered in the Yjogimatha rock painting. This painting depicts a person alongside four animals, along with some written characters. According to Dr. Prusty's report, paintings have been found in a rock shelter that appears to be connected to the term "Gaitha," which means "Gotha" in Odia or "Group" in English. These inscriptions resemble the script found in the Vikramkhol inscription, as well as the Dhauli and Jaugada inscriptions of Emperor Ashoka. Maybe these scripts are related to Brahmi script or Pre – Brahmi script.

D. Lekhamoda

Lekhamoda is the name of a site featuring a group of twelve-pointed rock shelters and engravings located in the Kanika region. These shelters, adorned with ancient paintings and engravings, are situated within the reserve forests of Chhengapahar and Garjanpahar, approximately 6 kilometers from Kanika in Hemgiri Tehsil of Sundargarh district, Odisha. The remarkable twelve rock shelters showcase approximately five hundred paintings and more than one hundred engraved specimens across sites like Kendukhol, Gangakhol, Sukhamankar, Sargikhol, and Girigumpha in Chhengapahar, as well as Phuldunguri in Garjanpahar. The paintings are crafted with mineral and natural colors, including ochre, red, white, and yellow, presented in both monochrome and polychrome styles.

These artworks depict a range of decorative and geometric motifs, complex patterns, along with representations of human and animal figures. These paintings reflect a style similar to Ushakothi, with yellow as the master color, giving a warm, unifying tone to the polychrome composition. The interwoven dual-saw pattern in white, superimposed on red, stands as a hallmark of the artistry from a bygone era. Red and yellow blend harmoniously, creating a vibrant polychrome with vivid accents of purple-red outlined by white borders. Recurring motifs in these rock paintings include deer, pangolins, humans, and cosmic patterns, illustrating connections between people, animals, and their environment. Each symbol, open to diverse interpretations, remains mysterious, defying a single meaning as it echoes from a distant past. The human figures, painted in white and adorned with masks or headgear, are shown with upraised hands. The addition of dark washes over the white suggests a later period. These figures are depicted holding various tools and instruments, including swords, sticks, and double drums. The figures are also portrayed in a sequence,

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holding hands and symbolizing a communal celebration. The carvings predominantly depict female genitalia in various sizes and shapes, featuring both natural and carved holes, each placed at specific sites.

E. Rajbahal -Ushakothi

Ushakothi, situated near at the Rajbahal area on a hill range within the Lefripara Tahasil of Sundargarh district, is named after an episode from the Ramayana. Local tradition holds that this site is where Lord Rama worshipped Lord Shiva. The three shelters adorned on the rugged sandstone are Rishi Kund, Sita Kund, and Sarpa Gumpha. Both Rishi Kund and Sita Kund display paintings as well as engravings. The engravings in their style of execution can be closely compared to those at Vikramkhol. At Rishi Kund, the engraving, though subtle, is carved on a smooth, leveled rock surface measuring 5.5 meters by 0.75 meters. The writing is arranged in a single row, unlike the two-row arrangement at Vikramkhol. The entire engraved surface is coated with a layer of ochre (tan) color. To the right of the engraving, a space measuring 60 cm by 1 meter showcases a remarkable example of decorative painting. The paleolithic people used yellow and red ochre, creating patterns that resemble textile embroidery, with intersecting lines, dots, squares, triangles, and other shapes. The only other pattern found in all three rock shelters features numerous figures resembling either a broom or brush, with 3 to 5 lines branching out from the base, each averaging 20 cm in length. The figures are irregularly painted across the rock surface. In Sita Kund, impressions of red ochre are also visible, averaging 17 cm by 9 cm. A notable carving in Sita Kund depicts an inverted triangle with a vertical line intersecting the base at the top. Moreover, two grinding holes are present in front of Rishi Kund, which closely resemble those at Manikamoda in both size and features.

F. Manikamoda

The painted rock shelter of Manikamoda is situated within a reserve forest, around 8 km from Hemgiri in Sundargarh district. The site can be reached from Hemgiri by taking the Hemgiri-Kanika road. After covering approximately 2 km, a right turn leads to the village of Sukhabandha, passing the Microwave Station of the South Eastern Railway, which is perched on top of a hillock. Upon reaching the Shiva temple, situated about 1 km from Sukhabandha village, take the road that branches to the left and follow it for about 5 km to arrive at the extensive rock shelter of significant antiquarian interest.The rock shelter stretches 98.5 meters in length and stands 7.32 meters high from ground level, with a usable space reaching 11.5 meters from the back wall. It is currently the largest painted rock shelter found in Odisha. Positioned along an east-west axis and facing south, the shelter is located above a seasonal stream that flows below and connects to the Nall Keunti about half a kilometer away. The Keunti, in turn, is a tributary of the Ghoghor River. The shelter also benefits from a year-round water source emerging from a crevice at its eastern end. It's fascinating to see that water availability increases during the summer. Throughout the year, water collects in deep, naturally formed cavities within the bedrock. The rough sandstone rock shelter holds remnants of ancient paintings on its back wall at seven spots, along with an engraving near the water source. The paintings use pigments in dark red, light red, white, and yellow. The dark red paintings are likely the oldest, as they are overlain in certain areas by both yellow and white pigments. In contrast, the light red painting appears more recent, given its vividness. Additional evidence for this relative dating is the repeated depiction of a scene showing a man dragging a humped bull. The original artwork is painted in dark red, with copies found in white and light red. These later versions often lack the expressive quality and artistry of the original dark red images. Sadly, both the older and newer paintings have been largely obscured by vandals, who in some cases replicated the original images in light geru (brick color) and even inscribed their names and dates on them, causing substantial confusion for researchers examining these works. According to Professor Sadashiv Pradhan, the paintings have been documented and classified into seven zones based on their artistic characteristics. In Zone I, the paintings—belonging to a later period—are rendered in light red. They depict human figures dressed in draperies, holding swords, shields, stick-like objects, musical instruments, and various unidentifiable items. Close to these figures are depictions of two humped bulls painted in white.

In Zone II, the entire area appears covered in a reddish hue due to repeated overlapping markings and human vandalism. However, closer examination reveals a naturalistic and stylized depiction of a humped bull in dark red pigment, being led by a man standing near what seems to be a tree. In the same dark red shade, a pair of legs is visible at the bottom, though the upper portion has been rendered unrecognizable due to repeated superimpositions. Other superimposed paintings identified in this zone include a white bull being led by a man, seemingly with the help of a rope. Zone III displays a bull and an intricate decorative pattern in dark red, likely dating back to an earlier period. In Zone IV, three figures in dark red are depicted, though only the one at the bottom is recognizable. This figure resembles a masked human with goat-like features, wearing tall headgear and holding a fish-like object in the right hand. A short distance to the right, a smaller, solitary figure appears, carrying a bow with an arrow. The paintings in Zone V are entirely in white and mainly portray human figures standing with raised arms, wielding a sword in the right hand, a shield in

the left, and pulling a bull along with a rope. In Zone VI, extensive flaking of the rock surface has significantly damaged the paintings from Zone V. However, remnants of earlier paintings in dark red are still visible in certain areas. These include intricate decorative patterns, floral motifs, and a distinctive anthropomorphic figure that locals identify as the deity Manikamoda. At a notable height to the left of this figure, one can observe a yellow line superimposed over a small patch of dark red. At the western end of this zone, near the bottom, there are two naturalistic depictions of humped bulls, similar in style to those in Zone II. All of these paintings are from an earlier period. The paintings in Zone VII depict scenes from the epic ***Ramayana***. Among them is a figure of Hanuman in flight, holding a hillock in his right hand and a tree in his left. Above Hanuman, two human figures appear, each wielding a sword in the right hand and a shield in the left. The style and vibrancy of the light red ochre used indicate that these paintings likely date from a later period. The only evidence of engraving is noticed near the water source of the rock shelter. It is a snake like heavy line measuring 2.52 meters in length. However,on the both the ends additional engravings are quite visible on closer scrutiny.

G. Mendra – Sarguli dongri

Sarguli Dongri is approximately 22 km from Dabugam in the Nabarangpur district. After crossing Borigon Chowk, turn right and continue for 5 km to the Khutuguda-Mendra road. From there, proceed to Mendra village, which is near Sarguli Dongri. This hill is called Sarguli, named after the one of local deity Sargulia Bhima from 12 other deities, according to local legend. The word "Dongri" means hill in the local language. Educators might wonder why I'm discussing this hill area—oops! I forgot to introduce myself. I am Digambar Behera, currently working as an art teacher at Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya Dongriguda, Dabugam. I am also an art critic and art historian, with a passion for exploring new knowledge about history and epics. As you can tell, I consider myself both a historian and a storyteller. One day, while I was teaching my 10th-grade students, I continued my lesson and then asked them about the nearest cultural and historical places. They shared information about many locations, but I was surprised to hear about Mendra Hill. I then requested, "Could you please help me reach there? After a few days, we made plans to visit the site. My colleague, Pragyandipta Patra, along with some of my students—Rajani, Abhaya, and Jyotirmaya—helped me with the documentation and research on Sarguli Dongri. The Archaeology and Tourism departments may not have any information about that place, which is why I chose it for research, hoping to uncover new aspects. I completed the documentation and began writing from the foothills of the area. I discovered some pits there, which appear to be natural formations. According to local people, two of these pits are referred to as the "eyes of the hill" or as eyes to a deity. There are seven natural caves located in the area, which are used by the local people for their festivals. That caves made up of in crystalline sand stone, not only that caves but also all the hill is completely covered with crystalline sand stone and laterite stone. The Jhulanadei Cave is an intriguing natural formation made of three stones. Legend has it that a small stone within the cave represents "Jhulanadei," a figure from local folklore, whom people believe was transformed into stone by a deity's curse. This ancient site holds special significance in the community, where it's said the stone has remained undisturbed by time, embodying the tale of divine retribution. After a brief walk, we encountered another cave known as Sargulia Bhima Cave, also called Bramharakhyasa Cave. This remarkable cave stretches like an elongated tunnel that extends far into the hillside. Mysterious markings can be found within, though they are weathered and difficult to interpret, leaving their origin and meaning shrouded in mystery. The third cave, located on the far side of the hill, holds an eerie and enigmatic atmosphere. Known as the Ganesh Cave, a name given by local residents, it serves as a sacred site where they worship an image resembling the head of an elephant, symbolizing Lord Ganesha from Hindu iconography. Interestingly, the stone formation bears only the appearance of an elephant’s head, suggesting it may have been fashioned or modified at a later time, adding to the mystery of its origins. The fourth cave, known as Parbati Cave, is believed to represent an abstract form of Shakti, the divine feminine power.

This cave holds spiritual significance for the local people, who continue to offer worship here. The cave walls display faint traces of pigments, with layers of fungi and weathering suggesting that colors once adorned the rock surface. However, due to the effects of rain and human activity, these ancient colors have largely faded, leaving only subtle hints of the cave’s former vibrancy. The fifth cave, known as Banakumara Cave, is named after a deity associated with the forest, akin to the revered figure Budha Raja. The term "Banakumara" translates to "handsome youth of the forest" and symbolizes a young, strong guardian of the wilderness. This figure is believed to protect the forest from those who might bring harm, embodying a vigilant spirit who safeguards the natural world from outside threats. The sixth and seventh caves, known as Badudi Cave and Bagha Cave, contain various unidentified markings, including lines and hatch-like patterns. The purpose and origin of these enigmatic structures remain unknown, sparking curiosity and ongoing speculation among historians and researchers. Due to time constraints, I was unable to uncover additional specimens. However, these rock shelters extend an open invitation to historians, encouraging deeper exploration and research. Nabarangpur

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district is home to numerous other historical sites, yet they remain largely unnoticed by historians, researchers, and educators, waiting for their significance to be fully realized and appreciated.

Across Odisha, numerous prehistoric sites have been discovered, each offering a glimpse into the distant past. While some have been documented and brought to public attention by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the tourism department, many others remain hidden, yet they bear silent witness to the region's ancient history. Sites such as Lekhamoda in Sundargarh, Rabanchaya and Sita Binji in Keonjhar, Gudahandi in Kalahandi, Chandili Ushakothi-I in Suvarnapur, Pakhanapathara-I in Mayurbhanj, and Debrigarh Ushakothi-I in Bargarh reveal intriguing mysteries and valuable insights into the lives of our ancestors. These sites, with their rock shelters, carvings, and remnants of early human habitation, speak volumes about the cultural practices, survival strategies, and artistic expressions of prehistoric communities in Odisha.

V. EVOLUTION OF ODISHAN ART STYLE AND ARTISTS LIFE; INTO A SMALL INTRODUCTION.

Odisha's art and culture vividly reflect a legacy of vibrant grace and royal dignity, masterfully expressed through the colors and skills of its artists. Odisha has long held the role of a nurturing mother, offering a landscape imbued with love and natural beauty. The roots of Odishan art trace back to the profound traditions of Lord Jagannath, whose cultural presence has shaped the region's creative spirit. Celebrations like Manabasa Gurubar, Kumar Purnima, and Akshaya Tritiya bring immense joy, each adding depth to the Odia cultural tapestry.

While much is known about Odisha's ancient art and cultural legacy, less is understood about the institutional development of art education in the region. Particularly, the post-1940 period witnessed the emergence of art academies and institutions that cultivated a new generation of Odia artists. As art institutions across India contributed to the fight for independence through creativity and cultural expression, Odisha's art academies also began to take shape, providing space for artists to engage, evolve, and contribute to the national cultural dialogue. This era marked a turning point in Odisha's art history, where academic art training began to flourish, paving the way for emerging talents to carry forward the region's aesthetic heritage while participating in India's broader struggle against colonial. Certainly! Here's a refined version that reads like an art historian's narrative: Before delving into the established academic practices, it is essential to acknowledge the extraordinary contributions of **Anand Mishra**, a distinguished 19th century artist from Odisha. Anand Mishra stands as a pivotal figure in Odishan art history, needing no formal introduction due to his profound impact on the field. Born in 1877 in the village of Virapratappur in Puri district, Mishra was the first artist from the region to formally study art and academic practice. With the support of the esteemed Abanindranath Tagore, Anand Mishra pursued his artistic education at the Government School of Art and Craft (now the Government College of Art and Craft, Kolkata). This institution, renowned for nurturing talent, provided him with a foundation that would influence his later works deeply. His father, Jayakrishna Mishra, and mother, Phakiri Devi, were integral to his journey. Anand Mishra's life and works serve as a bridge between traditional Odia artistry and the formalized academic approaches of British India, establishing him as a transformative figure in the Indian art landscape. Before his admission to the Government School of Art and Craft, he lived at the home of the renowned spiritual leader Yogi Devendranath Tagore. During this period, he met the eminent artist Abanindranath Tagore, who became his mentor. In college, his work received notable praise from Percy Brown, who recognized the young artist's talent and appreciated his work, particularly the remarkable painting Gaja Udharan Vesa. Percy Brown generously waived the fees for his education. In 1912, when King George V and Queen Mary visited Kolkata,in that time Mishra was a student of art college . During this historic event, he sculpted a portrait of the royal couple, which so impressed them that they honored him. A master of multiple disciplines, Mishra was equally skilled as a printmaker, painter, and sculptor. After mastering these diverse techniques, he returned to Odisha, where he tried to establish himself as an accomplished artist. After returning to Odisha, he joined a district school in Baleshwar as an art teacher, he was taking monthly salary of 25 rupees.

There, he met the renowned writer Phakirmohan Senapati, an encounter he would later remember as one of the most meaningful moments of his life. Both these two legendary people made a history in the field of painting and writing respectively.

Mishra made many sculptures, with the Phakirmohan Senapati sculpture being one of them, and his contribution to the field of art is unforgettable for future artists and art students. After Anand Mishra, those who went to Kolkata for art education include Basant Panda, Upendra Maharathi, Purnachandra Singh, Gopal Kanungo, Muralidhar Tali, Sachidanand Rout, Asith Mukherjee, Bipra charan Mahanty, Ravi Narayan Nayak, etc. If someone is trying to discuss the entire history of the development of Odishan artists, they should never forget about Silpi Guru Bimbadhar Verma. Ok let's put some lights on the life and art style of B.Verma. he was a self taught artist and Started his career in designing the book cover and made illustrations for the book. He was born at Kusupur,a village in the district of Cuttack in the year 1901. Verma showed a new direction to the Odisha art world. Which is an example later. His title Verma was not actual title of him, his actual title was Jena. Later he changed his title by himself.His

father,Lakshmidhar Jena was in service in Dhenkanal,a feudatory State of Odisha. B.Verma Had his early education in Dhenkanal.From his childhood Bembadhar hated school books; but took delight in doing figures in clay and interest in drawing. After his father death,his mother, Sharada Devi came back to the Village, Kusupur, with her children,Lambodar and Binmbadhar. Verma continued his education in his village for four years. However, his studies were disrupted, and his interest in art began to flourish. He was inspired by Rakhel Babu, a domiciled Bengali gentleman from the village of Chaianpal, who was an idol maker. Rakhel Babu crafted images of Durga and Saraswati for worship during Dussehra and Magha Panchami, using straw and clay. This form of image worship was uncommon in Odisha but gradually spread from Bengal, particularly into Bengal-dominated areas of the coastal districts like Balasore, Cuttack, and Puri. Although Burma's mother scolded him, he was interested in sculpting, pottery and stone carving. All these practices determined his destiny as an artist. He was always engaged in various arts related programs in the village. He used to paint the background for the village plays and he used to make up and dress the characters in the plays. The pressure of these children being associated with the rural life of the day can be seen in his later paintings in the unique form of the "Palli Badhu"(village dwarf). There is another artist who contributed a lot to art education in odisha. The Sarat chandra Deo who is known as one of the enlightened cosmic person in the art field and who upheld the ' mythical body '. He was born in the royal family of Chikiti , Ganjam district, Odisha in 1911. He is inspired from his father Radhamohan Rajendra who was also a painter of the theatre background. Sarat Chandra's family members used to participate in plays that were performed in the royal court. All the curtain painting in this drama was done by Sharat Chandra and his father. All these methods of his work made him a great artist in the future. Despite belonging to a royal family, he loved nature and many scenes of rural life. He was a Frist artist who completed law education in abroad. That study never affected his heart to from a hardness but in his inner most heart was an artist who was most aesthetic and soft to understand the nature. He admitted at Hidril school of art as a learner, which helped him to visit different countries and it helped to know about every European Isms style of art era. For Indian independence, freedom fighters were created many revolutionary steps to words earning freedom. At that time the Odisha kings were also associated with the freedom fight. they were helping them with patronage ,different types of freedom fighting work, not only the patriot but also artists; who was fight throughout paintings and art work. At that time at Cuttack the 'Utkal art association ' was established for patronage to artists and artisans in 1945. Also in that year at Chandraprabhasram, "Utkal school of art" was built by Sarat Chandra Deo for art education, it was the first starting step for art education in Odisha in 40s. For art education in odisha not only the Sarat Chandra given his contribution but also Gopal Charan Karungo ,Ajit kesari Ray,Bibhuti kanungo, Muralidhar Tali was associated with that revolutionized evolution. After India's independence, efforts were made to foster art education in Odisha, marking a transformative phase in the region's cultural development. In 1949, the visionary artist Bibhuti Kanungo laid the foundation of an art school in Cuttack, supported by the dedicated contributions of Dr. Muralidhar Tali and Basant Panda. Together, they ignited a revolutionary movement in art education, which could be regarded as a milestone in the history of Odisha's artistic legacy.

The school initially admitted 12 students, symbolizing a humble yet significant beginning. Unfortunately, due to a lack of government recognition, the institution had to cease operations. However, the vision did not fade. The school was re-established at Muhammad Bajare's residence in Cuttack, where it was renamed the Cuttack College of Art and Craft. This revival marked a new chapter in Odisha's art education.

Dr. Muralidhar Tali was appointed as the principal, while Asit Mukherjee took on the role of vice principal. During this period, several aspiring artists, including Siba Panigrahi, Mahendra Mahapatra, Phakiri Malik, and Sunil Kumar Kara, honed their skills at this institution. Their dedication and talent reflected the spirit of the college and its commitment to nurturing a new generation of artists, despite the challenges it faced in its early years.After passing some years, in 1956 the Government school of art and crafts was established at khallikote, in Ganjam district. The historic infrastructure of King Ramachandra Mardaraj's palace was repurposed and inaugurated as an art school in Ganjam district.

This significant event was graced by Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the then Vice President of India, who presided over the ceremony. The inauguration also witnessed the presence of an esteemed group of dignitaries, including Dr. Harekrushna Mahatab, Chief Minister of Odisha; S.J. Lingaraj Panigrahi, Minister; Radhanath Rath; Ramachandra Mardaraj Deo himself; Pandit Baikoli Jyotish Visarada; and Sarat Chandra Deo, who served as the institution's first principal.

In the following years, luminaries such as Bipin Charan Mahanty, Ajit Kesari Ray, Rabinarayan Nayak, Gopal Kanungo, and Bipin Bihari Choudhury continued to advance the institution's vision, propelling it toward greater heights.

During this period, two distinct art styles were cultivated under the guidance of Odisha's renowned artists. The first was a Western-style of painting characterized by realism and naturalism, with a strong emphasis on anatomical precision and physiological composition. The second was inspired by the Bengal Renaissance, drawing heavily from the artistic traditions of Ajanta, Ellora, and Mughal painting. This style reflected an orientalist aesthetic, celebrating India's cultural heritage while intertwining it with modern

sensibilities. These artistic traditions not only defined the identity of the school but also played a pivotal role in shaping the broader narrative of art education in Odisha. The artists of this period were deeply connected to oriental art practices and heavily influenced by the Bengal Renaissance. They adhered to traditional aesthetics and techniques while embracing individual creativity. Gopal Kanungo, for instance, excelled as a printmaker and painter, employing traditional methods he had mastered under the guidance of luminaries like Nandalal Bose and other distinguished artists from Kalabhavan. Sarat Chandra Deo, on the other hand, introduced a new artistic language in Odisha, influenced by his exposure to international art movements. His work reflected elements of Cubism, though it would be inaccurate to claim that he entirely abandoned traditional forms. His paintings retained quintessential Indian oriental motifs, such as the tribhanga (the three-bend posture), elongated eyes, and fluid, dynamic body compositions. Following Deo, artists like Muralidhar Tali, Ajit Kesari, and Ananta Panda championed a naturalistic movement in Odisha, drawing inspiration from the art styles of Bombay, Madras, and Chennai, which themselves bore the imprint of colonial influences. They adopted Western techniques, particularly the use of oil paints, and focused on creating anatomically precise compositions and lifelike portraits.In the realm of sculpture, Bipracharan Mohanty gained renown for his realistic works that prioritized naturalism and anatomical accuracy. Meanwhile, artists such as Binod Bihari Verma, Upendra Maharathi, and Gopal Kanungo upheld the traditional ethos of the Bengal Renaissance, employing gestural postures imbued with the spiritual and poetic essence of classical Indian texts like the Gita Govinda and Kumarasambhavam. The contributions of artists such as Sarat Chandra Deo, Ajit Kesari, and Ananta Panda were far from marginalized; their work stood as a testament to their unique artistic identities. While modernism in art had already matured globally by this time, in the context of Odisha, it emerged as a nostalgic yet enigmatic force. Odisha's artistic landscape resisted being entirely swept up in the fervor of modernism, fostering a generation of young artists who navigated a delicate balance between reverence for tradition and the desire to innovate beyond the so-called old masters. The generation gap grew increasingly pronounced. The works of several avant-garde artists, particularly Dinanath Pathy, Siba Panigrahi, Brajabandhu Misra,Chandra Sekhar Rao and Ramakant Rout, during the late 1960s, emerged as a form of deconstruction—an art of effacement and erasure. These creations embodied a discourse that, in its very articulation, sought to negate itself, dissolving into a state of self-reabsorption. They consciously abandoned traditional non-Western techniques, such as wash, tempera, nature studies, still life, and figure studies—methods emblematic of the older generation. This departure marked not merely a rejection of established practices but also a deliberate embrace of conceptual and experimental paradigms that redefined the boundaries of artistic expression.

The emergence of a pan-Indian discourse in art became evident through traveling exhibitions from Delhi, which began making their presence felt in Bhubaneswar. Artists in Odisha often looked to Delhi for inspiration, drawn by its reputation as a melting pot of contradictions, where diverse regional artist groups and styles converged in their quest for recognition and support. However, Odisha's representation in Delhi was markedly weak. Non-artists, often unable to comprehend the complexities of modernism and the nuanced politics of art, represented the region poorly. These dynamics were vividly evident at venues like the Bahawalpur House, where discussions on art and modernity unfolded against the backdrop of clinking glasses and convivial gatherings. Meanwhile, Delhi, with its vibrant mass media, spurred a robust national debate on art, backed by a superior economic ecosystem that Odisha could not match. In stark contrast, Odisha lacked the cultural infrastructure and agenda necessary for the growth and flourishing of contemporary art. The art market was almost non-existent—networks rarely sold, and there were neither public nor private galleries to provide the much-needed support for artists. While the Lalit Kala Akademi served as a lifeline for artists in the state, its efforts were insufficient to address the needs of the countless practitioners striving for recognition and sustenance. Odisha's environment, both cultural and economic, was far from conducive to fostering a thriving art scene. In the face of a deeply challenging and disheartening environment, artists striving to remain relevant and contemporary required extraordinary navigational acumen to forge ahead. During the 1960s, a small nucleus of artists gravitated toward Bhubaneswar, gradually expanding with the inclusion of like-minded avant-garde contemporaries.

Visionaries such as Kashinath Jena, Chandra Sekhar Rao, D.N. Rao, and Ramahari Jena endeavored to establish a vibrant artistic tradition. They committed themselves to creating and consistently exhibiting their works beyond Odisha, fostering a dialogue with prominent artists from across the nation who had already captured the cultural spotlight. The origins of graphic art in Odisha can be traced back to the use of woodcuts and linocuts. The primary focus was on achieving a harmonious balance between black and white areas, often explored through figural, vegetal, or architectural compositions. Interestingly, at Khallikote, anything rendered on graph paper was rather naively labeled as graphic art. With a few notable exceptions, such as Ajit Kesari, many of his contemporaries—Binode Routray, Ban Behari Parida, Bansidhar Pratihari, and Rabinarayan Nayak—seemed to fall into the trap of repetitiveness, offering little innovation. This creative stagnation was eventually disrupted by artists like Ramahari Jena, D.N. Rao, Prabodh Sahu, Dipti Prakash Mohanty, and Babla Senapati, who began experimenting with advanced techniques such as lithography, etching, and silkscreen printing. Babla Senapati's serigraphs stand out as technical masterpieces, characterized by

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remarkable tonal refinement and precision in the registration of multiple prints. Similarly, D.N. Rao's Saura pictographs, interpreted as serigraph prints, are equally exceptional, offering a compelling blend of traditional motifs and contemporary graphic art techniques. In sculpture background Bipracharan Mahanty, Fakir Mohan, Malik,Pruna Chandra Pradhan,Prasanta Das and Jayant Das are famous in contemporary phase. The rich artistic heritage of Odisha has been shaped and showcased by numerous legendary artists who have earned global acclaim, bringing pride to the state. Among them, celebrated figures such as Baladev Maharatha, Gajendra Prasad Sahoo, Chandramani Biswal, Manas Jena, Jayant Das, Minaketan Pattnayak, and Chandra Sekhar Sethi have contributed significantly to Odisha's artistic identity through their remarkable works. Notably, the Government College of Art and Crafts has nurtured many luminaries, but the B.K. College of Art and Crafts has also played a pivotal role in shaping Odisha's art landscape. Established in 1984 during the tenure of the visionary leader Biju Patnaik, then Chief Minister of Odisha, this esteemed institution was founded near Khandagiri, close to Tapoban in Bhubaneswar. The illustrious artist and scholar Dinanath Pathy served as its first principal, setting the tone for excellence in art education. Over the years, past and present lecturers have instilled unparalleled dedication and creative vigor in their students. The contributions of the college's alumni span diverse artistic disciplines. In sculpture, luminaries such as Jagannath Panda, Sitikanta Patnaik, Aditya Prasad Gadnayak, Sovan Kumar, Pratap Chandra Jena, Chuguli Kumar Sahoo, Artabandhu Rout, Kalikinkar Dey, Anjan Kumar Sahu, Prithviraj Singh Deo, and Nivedita Mishra have left an indelible mark. In painting, masters such as Sudhansu Bhusan Sutar, Jyoti Ranjan Panigrahi, Subrat Malik, Gajendra Prasad Sahoo, Gajendra Kumar Padhi, Chakradhar Behera, Pradosh Mishra, Bibhu Prasad Patnaik, Manoj Sahu, Anup Chand, Jayadev Biswal, Jayanta Panda, Birkishore Patra, Asit Patnaik, Atasi Basu, Pratul Kumar Dash, Panchanan Samal, and Sabita Panda have enriched the artistic tradition with their evocative works.

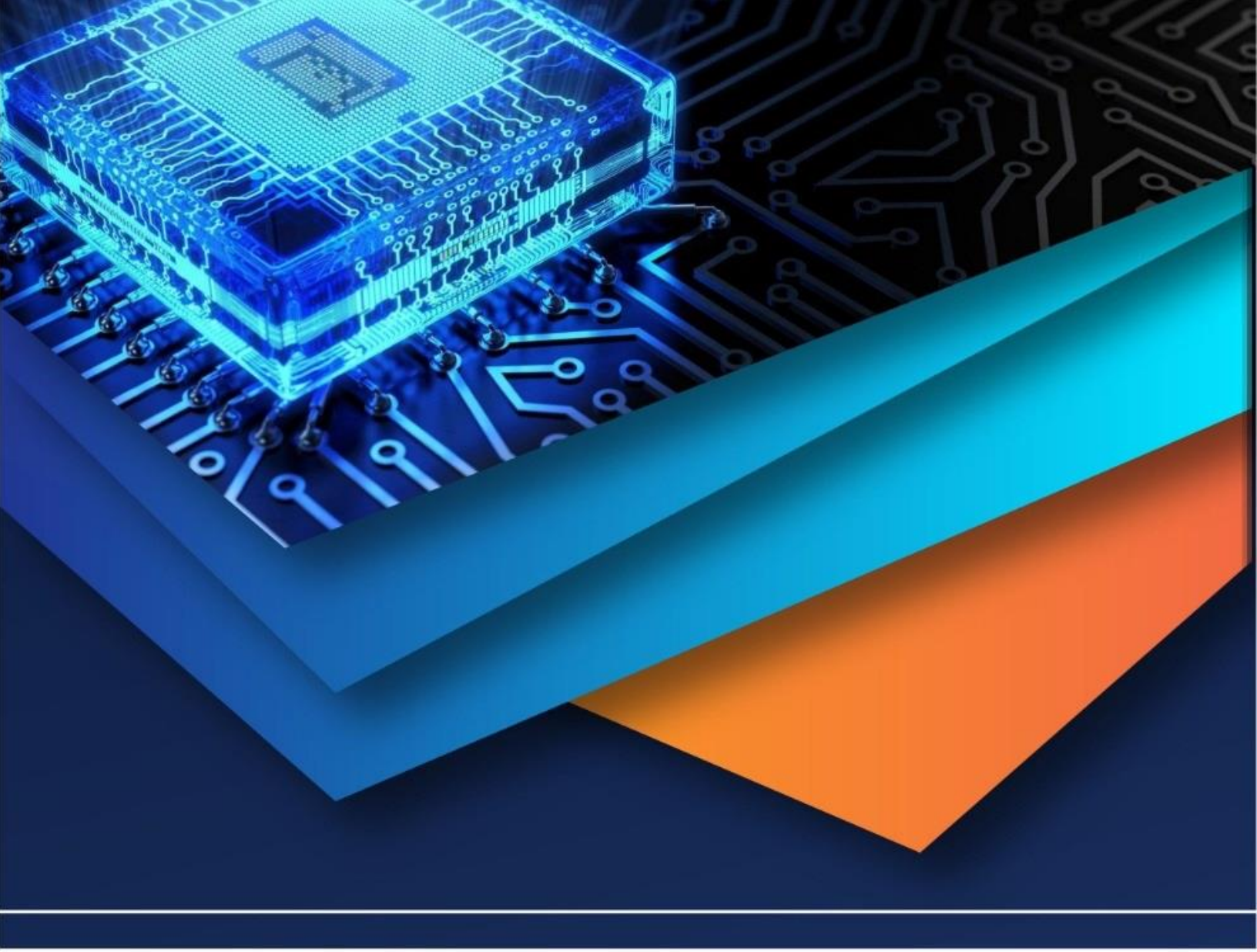
The field of graphic art has been graced by exceptional talents, including Chaita Basu, Arun Kumar Jena, Amar Kumar Jena, Prasanta Kumar Das, Bidyut Lata Patsani, Adwita Prasad Behera, Prasanta Kumar Sahu, Rajeev Nayak, and Dilip Kumar Tripathi.

In the realm of design and illustration, visionaries like Balakrishna Nanda, Sangram Maharana, Manas Jena, Ranjit Parija, Deepak Harichandan, Paresh Choudhary, Rajesh Nayak, Satya Padhi, and Kishore Ratha have pioneered innovative approaches.

These luminaries, representing a vibrant new generation, have expanded the horizons of Odisha's art, ensuring that its rich cultural legacy continues to inspire and resonate across the globe.

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