MATHAS IN ODISHA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO GANJAM DISTRICT: A STUDY

Simanchal Behera*

Abstract

This study has been to determine that Mathas culture between medieval period as well as modern period. Matha is a Sanskrit word meaning a "cloister, institute or college." It also refers to a monastery in Hinduism. The Matha tradition in Hinduism was likely well established in the second half of 1st millennium CE, as is evidenced by archaeological and epigraphic evidence. Mathas are affiliated to their respective sects and espouse the teachings of their gurus (spiritual heads). The Mathas in the Hindu tradition have not been limited to religious studies. In the ninth century A.D. during the reign of Kesari dynasty, the visit of Adi Sankaracharya to Srikhetra led to the resurrection of Brahmanism in Odisha. After the Kesaris, came the Gangas and the founder this dynasty Chodaganga Deva though a Saivite after the conquest of Utkala became a Vaishnava follower. During his reign his contemporary the famous religious preacher Ramanujacharya (1056-1137 A.D.) visited Srikhetra and beatified and initiated him into Vaishnavism. Along with this process, Brahmanism and Vaishnavism started in Odisha. Ganjam District has a number of famous Mathas built during the medieval and modern periods. Each Matha is adorned by a presiding deity. All these Mathas perform the designated duties apart from worshipping the presiding deities.

Key Word: Medieval, Hinduism, Religious studies, presiding deities.

INTRODUCTION

Matha is a Sanskrit word meaning a "cloister, institute or college". 1 It also refers to a monastery in Hinduism.² Monastic life, for spiritual studies or the pursuit of spiritual liberation, traces its roots to the 1st millennium BCE. The Matha tradition in Hinduism was likely well established in the second half of 1st millennium CE, as is evidenced by archaeological and epigraphic evidence.³

Mathas are affiliated to their respective sects and espouse the teachings of their gurus (spiritual heads). Some of the sects represented in the Mathas are Ramanuja,

Research Scholar, P.G. Department of History, Berhampur University, Berhampur (Odisha)

Nimbarka, Gaudiya, Angira, Adwaita, Ramanandi, Atibadi, Pancha ramanandi, Gauda sect, Ananta sect, Utkal Vaishnava, Madhavacharya Dashanami, Pushtimarga, Gurunanak and Kabir. There are however few *Matha*s like abadhuta, Jogada, Satyaprakash and Giridhari which do not belong to any sect. Though called *Matha* they are basically lodging houses providing shelter to pilgrims.⁴

Mathas grew over time, with the most famous and still surviving centres of Vedanta studies being those started by Adi Shankara. Other major and influential *Mathas* belong to various schools of Hindu philosophy, such as those of Vaishnavism and Shaivism. ⁵ The Matha host and feed students, sannyasis (monks, renouncers, ascetics), gurus and are led by Acharyas. These monasteries are often attached to Hindu temples and have their codes of conduct, initiation and election ceremonies.⁶

The Mathas in the Hindu tradition have not been limited to religious studies, and historical evidence suggests that they were centres for diverse studies such as medieval medicine, grammar and music. The following is a brief discussion of the many sided duties of the Matha.

Dharmic Monastry: A *Matha* is usually attached to a temple. The *Matha* is thus a Dharmic Monastry and in Hinduism it specialises in Hindu Dharma Shastras.

Centre of Learning: The *Matha* acts as a centre of learning. It is also a home for many saints and spiritual seekers who learn to practice meditation and study Shahstras such as Vedas, Upanishads, Agamas, Nigamas etc.

Socio-economic entity: A *Matha* encourages cottage industries which are housed in the *Matha*. These industries use the produce of its farmlands. The local people are engaged in running these cottage industries. The land is used for the production for the people engaged in the *Matha* work and the surplus is sold in the markets. Thus the *Matha* combines agriculture, industry and trade, based on indigenous methods.

Centre of Arts and Crafts: The *Matha* is also a centre for learning and according to R. Champakalakshimi renowned temple architecture expert, "in the pre-modern periods of Indian history, the rule of the temple as the institutional focus of development is underscored by the temple's social and economic outreach as a landowner, organizer of rural and urban activities, provider of educational and other facilities such as medical help and hospital, and above all, as the centre of cultural activities, such as the arts; painting and sculpture, apart from architecture; music and dance and more significantly as a symbol of political power"⁷. Here she intends about the *Matha*s attached to the temples as most of the above said duties are performed not by temples directly but by the *Matha*s attached to them.

Social Welfare Institution: Mathas run social welfare institutions like schools for poor children, for differently-abled and other marginalized section of society. Hostels are run for those who cannot afford a boarding outside. Old age homes and homes for widows and orphans are also run by the *Mathas*. Hospitals for the benefit of the poor and Goshalas for the preservation of indigenous breeds of cattle and for propagation of healthy food habits are also run by the Mathas.

Centre for preservation of cultural heritage: Temple is the central part of every Matha. Hence Hindu temple architecture sculpture and painting are preserved in these Mathas. Most temples and *Matha*s have been centres of cultural activity for ages harbouring great artists and giving them a livelihood and a platform to perform.

Centre for great literature: Saints and scholars study and meditate in these *Matha*s and create great literature for the benefit of the posterity.

Centre of charity: People give charity to these *Matha*s which is in the form of money and other articles. The rich as well as poor contribute to this charity. In the past kings and other administrative authorities gave grants to the temples and the Mathas. In turn, the Mathas help the poor of the society with this charity. Most of the beneficiaries of this are

the poorest section of the society. This system is preserved even in the present day Mathas.

Legal units of the society: Just over a hundred years ago people in the rural areas looked towards a Matha for solving their disputes based on ethical and moral standards as laid down in the shastras and interpreted according to the needs of the time.

Social security units: Mathas help in times of emergencies like floods, famines, epidemics and other such emergencies by providing relief work. They help the poor, the marginalized and the downtrodden.

Till recently, the Matha was one of the most important institutions of India. Since independence its authority has decreased a little but it is still enjoying importance. The most important thing is that it never acted as a political unit.8

Early History of *Mathas*:

Asta Mathas of Udipi and other Mutts: Towards the close of his life Madhava, the saint of Dwaita had ordained eight monks for the conduct of worship of Krishna, at his Matha in Udipi. These established lines of their own by ordination and these lines of ascetics became the precursors of the Asta Mathas of later times. The swamis of the eight Mutts (Mathas) hold office as High Priests of the Krishna Matha, by turns for two years each. The system is generally believed to have been introduced in the present form by Vadiraja Swami, one of the celebrated Pontiffs of Udipi, in the 16th century.

The centres of religious propaganda started by these disciples in various parts of the country, and these can historically be said to have descended by Madhava. The historical association of the eight Mathas of Udipi with the care and worship of the image of Krishna, installed by Madhva¹⁰ at his mutt there has given them the historical and spiritual capital of the Madhava community as a whole, its place of pilgrimage and periodical congregation as well as its perennial source of spiritual inspiration for centuries. Later Uttaradi and Ragavendra Swami Mutts rose to fame under the leadership of Pontiffs like Raghutama and Vijayindra. These three *Matha*s now enjoy the status of "*Matha*-traya" or the three premier Madava Mathas descended from Jayatirtha.

The Udipi and other Mathas are named after their (village)- headquarters. The Uttaradi Matha has a territorial designation as its pontificate has been occupied by Utara-Karnataka or Uttaradi Karnatakas. The only other important person among the early Pontiffs of the Udipi *Matha* is Vishnu Tirtha, the younger brother of Madhava. He founded a Matha of his own at Subrahmanya, which exists to this day.

The period of Madhava and his immediate disciples therefore is described as the seed-time of Dwaita thought. The new phase of intellectual development in the history of Dwaita school began and finally two schools of thought emerged with the inclusion of Ramanuja school. Instead of going deep into this school of thought it should be mentioned here that the *Matha*s have played an important role in the religious discussions in evolution of the Dwaita siddhanta.

Dasanami Samnyasis: Sankara who consolidated the Adwaita siddhanta founded the order of the Dasa Nami samnyasis, who are divided into ten groups, each of which attaches one of the following names of its accepted religious name; Aranya, Ashrama, Bharati, Giri, Parvata, Puri, Sarasvati, Sagara, Tritha and Vana. Sankara wanted his order to become the vanguard of orthodoxy. He founded the bulwarks of Advaita in the four corners of India. Vimala Pitha at Jagannatha/Puri on the East Coast, with which the Aranyas and vanas are associated, Jyoti Matha near Badrinath in the Himalayas the centre of the Giri, Parvata and Sagara, Kalika Pitha in Dwaraka on the West Coast with the Tirthas and Ashramas, and Sarada Pitha in Sringeri in Karnataka, the home base of the Bharatis, Puris, and sarasvatis.

The living Sankaracharyas represent an institution and are themselves an institution in India's religious life. Each of the Sankara Mathas has a number of schools attached to it in which Sanskrit and the traditional subjects of Hindu learning are cultivated. 11

The Four *Matha*s of India:

Govardhana Matha, Odisha - Rig Veda

Govardhana Matha is located in the coastal city of Puri in Odisha and associated with the Lord Jagannath temple. The Eastern part of the Indian subcontinent from Bihar to till Rajamundry and Orissa to Arunachal Pradesh, comes under this Math.

Sharada Peetham, Karnataka – Yajur Veda

Sringeri Sharada Peetha was established by Adi Shankara on the banks of the Tunga River in Chikkamagalur district in Karnataka. Town of Sringeri is the site of the first Matha in India and one of the famous Matha in Karnataka state along with Ramachandrapura Math.

Dwaraka Pitha, Gujarat – Sama Veda

Dwaraka Matha is also called as Saradha Matha is situated in the ancient coastal city of Dwaraka in Gujarat. It is one of the four cardinal Mathas established by Adi Shankara and associated with Dwarakadheesh Temple.

Jyotir Math, Uttarakhand – Atharva Veda

Jyotir Math or Jyotir Pitha is located in a city with same name Jyotirmath in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand. Jyotirmath is gateway to Himalayan Mountains.

1889

Other Famous Mathas in India include:

- Gaudapadacharya Matha, Goa
- Kanchi Matha, Tamil Nadu
- Belur *Matha*, West Bengal
- Kashi Math, Uttar Pradesh
- Ramachandrapura Math, Karnataka

Mathas in Odisha:

In the ninth century A.D. during the reign of Kesari dynasty, the visit of Adi Sankaracharya to Srikhetra led to the resurrection of Brahmanism in Odisha. After the

Kesaris, came the Gangas and the founder this dynasty Chodaganga Deva though a Saivite after the conquest of Utkala became a Vaishnava follower. During his reign his contemporary the famous religious preacher Ramanujacharya (1056-1137 A.D.) visited Srikhetra and beatified and initiated him into Vaishnavism. Along with this process, Brahmanism and Vaishnavism started in Odisha. Ramanujacharya's disciple Govinda established the Emar Math in Srikhetra. After that the followers of Madhavacharya, Ramanda visited Srikhetra and established their respective Mathas there. In the reign of the greatest rulers of the Ganga and Surya dynasty, Brahmanism and Vaishnavism had assumed the status of a royal religion and as such in the religious consciousness of Odisha, Vaishnavism and Vashnava thoughts and sentiment had acquired a niche for itself.

Amongst the early duties of *Matha*s was growing food grains on endowed lands knows as "amruta Manohi" for bhoga of Jgannatha. Some of the Mathas had the privilege of cooking and offering Khatani Bhoga (cooked food offerings). Gajapati kings had allotted store rooms, chullas (hearths) and other facilities in Badadeula to such Mathas for this purpose. The rights still continue.

Certain Mathas were established by Gajapati kings to perform specific services during daily ritual and on festive occasion like Snana yatra, Ratha yatra, and Nabakalebara. Since such Mathas were established by the Gajapati kings, they are called Rajangila Mathas. The following is a list of some of the Mathas in Odisha.

Agikhia *Matha* at **Sohagpur:** The Agikhia *Matha* is located in the village Sohagpur of Puri district. Inside the *Matha* a modern eastern facing *pidha* temple is built. The presiding deity in the sanctum is Lord Jagannatha made of neem wood and the brass images of Lord Krishna with Radha.

Amuniakana *Matha* (Ahnuria *Matha*) at Niali: The *Matha* is located about one km. from Niali. According to local traditions, it was the Ashrama of various Rishis who were practicing penance.¹⁸

Ananta Abadhuta Matha at Konark: Ananta Abadhuta Matha is located on the right side of the grand Sun temple of Konarka in Puri district. Traditions relate that the Matha was established by the time of Kasypa Rishi. However, the *Matha* has been dated to the 18th century AD.¹² The presiding deity inside the *Matha* is two-armed standing Surva image holding lotus in his both hands along with two *Chalanti Pratima*.

Ananta Bata at Bhainchigoradi: Ananta Bata Matha is situated in the village Bhainchigoradi near Amaresvara is in Puri district.

Antarvedi Matha at Trivenigh at in Kantapada Sasana: The Antarvedi Matha is situated in Niali *Tehsil* of Cuttack district. 13 Legends associated with the *Matha* regarding its establishment to the time of the end of *Dvapara* and beginning of the *Kali* era. Inside the Matha, a modern saptaratha pidha shrine faces to east. A black chlorite image of Lord Krishna along with the three triads-Jagannatha (Patitapavana), Balabhadra and Subhadra made of Neem wood; and brass idols of Radha and Krishna are worshipped in this Matha.

Arkatirtha Matha at Bangali Sahi, Niali: The Arkatirtha Matha is situated in Bangali Sahi of Nuagaon and about one and half kilometre from Niali. In this *Matha* an image of Vansidhari Krisna is being worshipped.

Athagada Matha: This Matha is situated in Cuttack district has a different type of architectural planning. The Matha complex accommodated a shrine that may be or may not be of the shape of rekha or pidha temple, residential apartment for the Mahanta, devotees, temple sevants and the menials. Provision was also made for houses to store grains. A palm-leaf manuscript library was also a part of the complex. At times, the Mathas were confused for temples.

Balitubi Matha at Nachhigaon: Balitubi Matha is in the village Nachhigaon of Cuttack district.

Belavana Gadi Matha at Kesaraipur: Belavana Gadi Matha in the village Kesaraipur near Vandesvara is located in Tulasipur Panchayat of Nimapada *Tehsil* of Puri district.

Chakia Matha at Kundhei near Kakatapur: The Chakia Matha is located in the village Kundhei under Kakatpur Tehsil of Puri district. An image of Lord Jagannatha is worshipped as Patitapavana.

Chandrasekhara Matha at Madhava: Chandrasekhara Matha is located in the village Madhava of Niali *Tehsil* of Cuttack district.

Dadhichi Ashrama at Mudugala: Dadhichi Ashrama in the village Mudugala is under Kakatapur *Tehsil* of Puri district. It is at a distance of 7 km from Astaranga.

Dash Matha at Tolagopinathapur: The Dash Matha is in the village Tolagopinathapur of Cuttack district.

Deuli Matha, Tirumali Matha & Sidhavata- Jayadeva Sadhanapitha at Kendu Vilva: All these are situated in the village Kendu Vilva or Kenduli in the Balipatana block of Bhubaneswar Tehsil in Khurda district.

Draupadi Matha at Kantikula: The Draupadi Matha, very close to the Kutamchandi shrine in the village Kantikula is situated under the Binishpur Panchayat of Niali *Tehsil* of Cuttack district. The images of Lord Krishna as Vanshidhari with Radha and Raghunath Jew, made of brass are being worshipped.

Ekanta Ashrama at Charichhaka: Ekanta Ashrama in Charichhaka is located in the Nimapada Tehsil of Puri district.

Fategarh Matha at Fategarh Bazarsahi: Fategarh Matha in the village Fategarh Bazarsahi is located in the Cuttack district.

Gopala Matha at Kudapatana near Binishpur: The Gopala Matha is situated in the village Kudapatna near Binishpur on the left side of the Charichhaka-Kakatapur road. Inside a renovated *pidha* shrine an image of Vishnu is worshipped as Gopala.

Gotirtha Matanga Muni Ashrama at Kantikula: Gotirtha Matanga Muni Ashrama in the village Kantikula is situated in the Binishpur Panchayat of Niali *Tehsil* of Cuttack district. Inside the shrine the image of Rishi Matanga is being worshipped.

Guptamanika Matha- Varahapur: Guptamanika Matha in the village Varahapur under Kantapara block of Cuttack district. Inside the Matha a medieval pidha temple houses an image of Lord Krishna made of chlorite stone along with Ananta-Gopala, Gajalaxmi and the wooden image of Jagannatha.

Gurudeva Matha at Vandesvara: The Gurudeva Matha is situated in the village of Vandesvara under Tulasipur Panchayat of Nimapada *Tehsil* of Puri district. Inside a modern mandapa the image of Jagannatha kept over a pedestal is being worshipped as Gurudeva.

Hadiakanda Matha at Masuridiha of Nuapitapada: The Hadiakanda Matha in the hamlet Masuridiha of Nuapitapada village is situated under Krushnaprasad Panchayat of Niali block in Cuttack district. The Matha belongs to Gaudiya sect. The presiding deity Vanshidhari Krishna with Radha and Gopalji, all made in brass are kept over a pedestal under the east facing tile roof shrine amidst the fruit and flower bearing garden.

Kalaboda Gadi at Otanga: Kalabo<mark>da G</mark>adi is situated in the village Otanga near Palichhak in Puri district.

Kapila Muni Ashrama in the village Kapila Ashrama at Kapilesvarapur: Kapilesvarapur under Niali block of Cuttack district. Inside the Ashram a pidha temple made of sandstone faces to east houses a Patalaphuta Shivalinga within a circular Yonipitha made of black chlorite stone.

Khiragachha Matha at Amaraprasadagada:Khiragachha Matha is situated in the village Amaraprasadagada under Tulasipur panchayat of Nimapada *Tehsil* in Puri district.

Kusababa Matha at Bagalogarh: The Matha is located in the village Bagolagarh under Niali *Tehsil* of Cuttack district.

Madana Mohana Matha at Nuapatana: Madana Mohana Matha is located in the village Nuapatana under Kakatpur police station of Puri district.

Madhavananda Jew Matha at Adaspur: Madhavananda Jew Matha is situated in the village Adaspur of Cuttack district. It is at a distance of 38 km. from the capital city Bhubaneswar. Inside the Matha a pidha temple contains an image of Vishnu, being worshipped as Madhava.

Madhubana Gadi Matha at Madhuban: Madhubana Gadi Matha in Madhubana village is under Kakatapur *Tehsil* of Puri district.

Musibaba Matha at Sahanajpur: Musibaba Matha in the village Sahanajpur near Jallarpur is located in Niali *Tehsil* of Cuttack district.

Nagarusi Matha at Nagesvara: The Nagarusi Matha is situated under Madhava Panchayat of Niali Tehsil in Cuttack district Inside the Matha complex a garden, an ancient brick well, two-room residential house of tile roof, a yajnavedi and the open-air Nagarusigadi where a pair of wooden footwear (Kathau) is being worshipped.

Odia Matha at Puri: The Matha has close association with Jagannatha. It has the speicial privilege to supply the dress materials (khandua and sari etc) at the time of coronation (avisekha) of Gajapati Maharaja. Until mid 20th century, Odiya Matha was a shining star in the religious sky of Puri. But in the present times, its income has reduced considerably and as a result the seba and puja and its educational and cultural activities have taken a downward trend.

Pandavakuda Matha at Pandavakuda near Amnakuda: The Pandavakuda is situated over a sand-dune in the village Pandavakuda under Amnakuda Panchayat of Balipatna block of Khurda district. The presiding deities housed in the sanctum over a moulded pedestal are the images of Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra and the brass idols of Radha and Damodara.

Prachiguru Dharmakshetra Matha at Narasinghpur: Prachiguru Dharmakshetra Matha in the village Narasinghpur under Dhumala Panchayat of Kakatpur Tehsil of Puri district.

Radhakanta Matha at Nuagaon: Radhakanta Matha is situated in the centre of the village of Nuagaon under the same Panchayat in Niali *Tehsil* of Cuttack district. It is one of the greatest *Mathas* which has survived up till now. The presiding deity of this *Matha* is the image of Lord Krishna as Vanshidhari along with the bronze image of Radha and accordingly the Matha is known as Radhakanta Matha. Besides, the main deity an image of Lord Jagannatha made of neem wood; Salagrama; bronze idols of Gopala, Radha-Govinda, Banka-Bihari, Madana-Mohana, Radhakanta; a sandstone image of Ganesha and Hanuman; and a black chlorite stone image of Laxmi-Nrisimha is being worshipped.

Ratnavata at Sanhuli: Ratnavata in the village Sanhuli is situated in the Tulasipur Panchayat of Nimapada Tehsil of Puri district. It houses the images of four-armed Trivikrama; a Shivalinga within a yonipitha; an image of Avalokitesvara Padmapani treated as goddess Laxmi, deulacharini treated as Gramadevati, all are made of sandstone is being worshipped. Besides, detached loose sculptures of four-armed Chamunda, Hanumana, Ganesha, Garuda, Nandi and an architectural fragment in which a *pidhamundi* flanked by nayika figures are kept in the premises.

Rohana Matha at Bolara: The Rohana Matha is situated in the village Bolara under Kakatpur *Tehsil* of Puri district.

Sadababaji Matha at Sialikanta: The Matha is situated in the village Sialikanta of Madhava Panchayat of Niali Tehsil in Cuttack district. The Matha is made of thatched house and the Apujachakra made of wood, facing to west under a thatched house is worshipped. The *Matha* belongs to Mahima cult and believed in the sun worship and the *sunya* (void).

Sadhugumpha Matha at Olatapur: Sadhugumpha Matha in the village Olatapur of Cuttack district.

Sahadakunja *Matha* at Amanakudagarh: Sahadakunja *Matha* in the village Amanakudagarh of Khurda district.

Siddha Matha: The Siddha Matha is situated in the Pradhan Sahi village of Madhava Panchayat of Niali block of Cuttack district The Matha amidst a fruit bearing garden, facing to east is made of R.C.C. building with a pidha shrine in the western end and fronted by a detached yajnasala mandapa. Inside the sanctum Lord Jagannath, brass idols of Lord Krishna as Vanshidhari along with Radha and an image of the Mahanta Baba Siddheswar Das are worshipped.

Sidhagumpha Matha at Jagamohanakuda: Sidhagumpha Matha in the village Jagamohanakuda near Sundargram is in Cuttack district.

Taila Matha at Taila: The Taila Matha is situated in the village Taila of Niali Tehsil of Cuttack district. The Matha made of tile house within a garden, facing to east is in a dilapidated condition that houses an image of Gopala over a small wooden pedestal locally known as khatuli.

Uttarayani Matha at Pitapada:The Uttarayani Matha in the village Pitapada under Krushnaprasad Panchayat of Niali block in Cuttack district. The Matha is built over an earlier ruin as evident from the scattered brick fragments. The Matha derived its name according to the deity Uttarayani thakurani who faces to the north. Besides, a modern east facing, pancharatha pidha shrine with panchangabada and five-tier pidha roof houses the images of Lord Jagannatha, Balabha<mark>dra and</mark> Subhadra; Vanshidhari Krishna; Krishna and Radha in the sanctum.

Vanta Matha at Vantu near Kakatpur: The Vanta Matha is located in the village Vantu under Kakatapur Tehsil of Puri district. Inside the Matha is a pidha temple which is devoid of any decoration except the dopichhasimhas and deulacharinis over the beki of the vimana. The image of Garuda is in anjalimudra facing to the sanctum. Inside the sanctum the presiding deities are the images of Lord Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra made of neem wood with a *pravabali* of black chlorite stone of 75 cm. in height in the back. The other deities are Sudarsana, Narasimha, Madana Mohana, Dolagovinda, Laxmi and Sarasvati made of brass which is placed over a moulded stone pedestal.

Viswamitra Matha at Kakatpur: The Viswamitra Matha is situated in Kakatpur of Puri district. In a recently built modern temple the images of Varaha Vishnu, Trivikrama Vishnu along with Lord Jagannatha are collectively worshipped as Patitapavana.

Mathas in Ganjam District:

Located on the boarder of Andhra Pradesh, Ganjam District came into existence on 1st April 1936. The district is named after the old township and European fort of Ganjam situated on the northern bank of river Rushikulya which was the head quarter of the District. In the year 1992, after reorganization of districts by Government of Odisha, the 7 blocks of Parlakhemundi subdivision were separated and the new district of Gajapati formed and 3 subdivisions, 22 blocks, and 18 urban areas remain in Ganjam district.

Ganjam District has a number of famous Mathas built during the medieval and modern periods. Each *Matha* is adorned by a presiding deity. All these *Matha*s perform the designated duties apart from worshipping the presiding deities. The following is a brief description of the *Matha*s of Ganjam District.

Ramaji Matha: Ramaji Matha is situated in Bhismagir of Ganjam District. It is at a distance of 46 km. from Berhampur and 15 km. from Digapahandi. This Matha was constructed by the Maharaja of Khemundi. The Presiding deity of this *Matha* is Rama along with Laxman and Sita. These deities are of made of an alloy of eight metals. The architectural details of this *Matha* include the Rekha, Pidha, Bhatra, Mandapa style. This Matha is presently managed by Sri Kesaba Ramanuj Das.

Laxman Balaji Swami Matha: This Matha is constructed in the year 1700 A.D. It is situated at Ganhangu, near Balipadar in the Bududa Tahsil. The distance of this Matha from Berhampur is 70 km. and from Bhanjanagar, it is 28 km. away. The Presiding deity of this *Matha* is Laxman Balaji Swami. The idol is in the standing position.

Radha Madana Mohan Swami *Matha*: This *Matha* is in a village named Gangadahani in the Purushottampur Tahsil of Ganjam District. It is 30 km. away from Berhampur and at 10 km. distance from Purushottampur. This *Matha* was established in the year 1905. The Presiding Deities of this Matha are Lalita, Radha Krishna, Gopala. The idols are made of Brass. Presently this *Matha* is managed by Sri Rama Krishna Dash Maharaj Ji.

Jagannath Matha: Jagannath Matha of Kanchuri belongs to the Hinjili Tahsil of the sub-division Chatrapur of Ganjam District. Its distance from Berhampur is 35 km. It is 7 km. away from Hinjili. This is an old Matha constructed over 400 hundred year ago. Presiding deities of this Matha as the name of the Matha suggests Jagannth, Balabhadra and The temple architecture of the *Matha* is in the Rekha, Bhadra, Mohana, Subadhra. Mandapa style.

Sri Jagannath Swami, Gopinath Matha: This Matha is in the Mathura village of the Polasara Block of Chatrapur sub-division. It is 50 km. away from Berhampur and 5 km. away from Polasara. This Matha is also constructed almost 300 years ago in the year 1733 A.D. Presiding deity of this *Matha* is Sri Jagannath along with Balarama and Subhadra. The temple architecture of this Matha is in the Rekha, Bhadra of the South Indian style.

Raghunath Swami Dadni Bamana Matha: This Matha is in the Gaghunathpur Kakarapani area at Bhuta Sarasinigi in the Purusottampur Block. It is 40 km. away from Berhampur and 10 km. from Purusottampur. The Presiding deities of this Matha are Raghunath Swami and Dadni Bamana who are in the standing style. This Matha was constructed with the grant of the Raja of Athagada.

Gopaji Matha at Ganjam: This Matha had more irrigated and fertile lands. The Rusihkulya river was running close and it was possible to get good income from the lands. There was also most 800 acres of land under this Matha. 14

Chaitanya Matha: The Matha is located in Chikiti Gada 25 kms from Behrampur in Ganjam district. This *Matha* is adorned by the 19th century classical paintings.

Amba Matha: It is a Matha located in the village Alladigaon in Ganjam Sri Amba Devi Temple is the main temple of this *Matha*.

Sundarama Matha: This Matha is located in Berhampur an important city of the Ganjam district. It is in the Triveni Nagar. This *Matha* as a function Hall(Mandap) which is used for different religious ceremonies.

Lakshmi Narasimha Matha: This is another Matha situated in Berhampur, the silk city. It is situated in an area called Hridakhandi.

Radha Krishna Matha (Bada Matha): This is an important Matha of Berhampur city. It is situated in the Ankuli area of Berhampur.

Apart from the above, there are other *Matha*s situated in this area. Sri Chaitanya Matha of Podamari in Digapahandi, Kasturi Dash Matha at Hanuman Bazar in Brahmapur, Raghunath Matha at Dengapadara in Balipada, Bada Matha of Seragada, Balaji Swami Matha of Patrapur, Bada Matha of Athagada, Bhagabat Matha of Kabisuriya Nagara, Byagrambar *Matha* at Kalachuri are to name a few.

Duties of Mahanta and the Manager of the Mathas:

A Mahanta usually remains in charge of the management of the Matha. The Mahantas comes from villages around, and succession is by nomination of the existing Mahanta. If disputed, two pieces of paper containing the names of the two claimants are kept on the head of the Deity and whichever drops first is selected. The *Mahanta* never leaves the Matha, but his assistants go round the neighbouring areas spreading their religious cult. The symbols of Artatran Gadi are badi (stick), topi (cap), and kanthi (necklace). The Mahantas adorn these.15

All the Hindu Mathas whether they are situated in Puri or elsewhere provide the food service as an ancillary service to the temple. They arrange free food distribution to the poor by the name of "Daridra Narayan Seva" through its own efforts. Matha service providers also receive the free food. 16

Summing-up

To conclude, the Mathas are serving the Hindu society in the spread of knowledge, religion, along with its social service activities. A Matha is usually attached to a temple. They act as a centre of learning, a socio-economic entity, a centre of Arts and Crafts, a social welfare institution, a centre for preservation of cultural heritage, a centre for great literature, and a centre of charity. The Mathas of Ganjam District are no exception and play a prominent role for the socio-religious development of the locality.

References

¹ Monier Monier-Williams (1923), A Sanskrit-English Dictionary, Oxford University Press, p. 730.

² Amara I. Sears (2014), Worldly Gurus and Spiritual Kings: architecture and asceticism in *Medieval India*, Yale University Press. pp. 4–9.

³ Hartmut Scharfe (2002), "From Temple schools to Universities", in Education in Ancient India: Handbook of Oriental Studies, Brill Academic, pp 172-173.

⁴ Mahanti J.C. (2014), The Saga of Jagannatha and Badadeula at Puri, Vij Books India, New Delhi, p. 208.

⁵ Rao V. (2002), Living Traditions in Contemporary Contexts: The Madhva *Matha* of Udupi, Orient Blackswan, pp. 27-32.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Champakalakshmi, R. (2007), *The Hindu Temple*, Roli and Janssen, New Delhi, p. 13

⁸ Saxena Pankaj, (2015), *The Hindu Matha: A Introduction*, www. indiafacts.

⁹ Hrsikesara Tirtha, Narasimha, Janardana, Upendra Vamana, Visnu, Rama, and Adhoksaja Tirthas (M. Vij. xv) pp., 128-9.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. ix, 43.

¹¹ Klaus K. Klostermaier, (1994), A Survey of Hinduism: Second Edition, State University of New York Press, New York, pp. 351-52.

¹² Ratha, B.K. (ed.), (1996), The Forgotten Monuments of Orissa, Vol. 3, New Delhi, p. 162.

¹³ Ray, P.K. (ed.), (1975), Archaeological Survey Report 1974-75, Prachi Valley, Odisha State Archaeology, Bhubaneswar, p. 4.

¹⁴ Das Bichitrananda, (2007), Resistance to the British role of Mohuri Zamindary in South Orissa, 1767-1850, Punthi Pustak, Cuttack, pp. 84 -88.

¹⁵ Jagannath Pattanaik, *Itihasa Prusthare Pipili* (Oriya), Bhubaneswar, 1993, p. 155

¹⁶ Mishra R.K. Jayashree Ravindran (ed.) (2011), Millennium Development Goals and India: Cases Assessing Performance, Allied Publishers, Hyderabad, p. 250

