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CULTURAL HERITAGES AT KUPARI, DISTRICT: BALASORE

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The place Kupari is located about 67 Km to the South west of district headquarters of Balasore and 30 Km to the North-west from the district headquarters of Bhadrak. It is well connected to Bhadrak, Balasore, Keonjhar, and Mayurbhanj by all-weather concrete roads. The place is very unique for its geographical characteristics. It stands on the foot of the Sarisua hill of the Simulipal hill ranges. The western side the soil is formed by large slabs of laterite rocks while the eastern part is plain of alluvial spread of paddy fields. The place is not only interesting its physical features but also it is a unique meeting place where the people of the districts of Balasore, Bhadrak, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj meet¹. The place is very unique of the availability of forest goods like *jhuna*, *mahu*, *lakha*, *kendu leaf* and deferent type of forest fruits like mango, jackfruit, *kendu*, *harida*, *bahada*, *amla* and many others. The place is not only unique for its geographical location, but it is a flourishing center of different religious culture. The place has many ancient culture, festivals and religious art and architectures that glorify this place.

Kupari is also very important from historical point of view. The historical importance of Kupari goes back to Vedic period as it is evident from the local traditions that, the sage Kapilamuni took meditation in this place and preached his philosophy of *Sankhy Yoga*. There is also a shrine of Kapilamuni Ashram in the centre of Kupari market.

Further, a Jaina Jataka story narrates that, the 23rd Tirthankar Parsvanatha visited to Kopakataka, where he brook his fast in the house of Dhanya and preached his sermon. This Kopakatak is presently identified with Kupari. The Jaina Karakandu story also mentions about Kopa Kapuri as a sacred place of Mahavira, that is also identified with Kupari in the district of Balasore. Again the Neulpur Copperplate of Bhaumakara king Subhakardev-I mentions that, he donated a Buddhist village Komparaka to a group of Bramhins². That village Komparaka identified with Kupari located in Balasore district yields with Buddhist heritages. In this present paper attempt has been made to high light the cultural heritages of Kupari.