



The Origin of Lord Narasimha

Dhruva Dasa

(I)

Pilgrimage to Ahovalam :

Ahobilam is known to be the place where Nrsimhadeva appeared. In 1980 I was born to devotee parents in the large Hare Krishna community of New Vrindavan, West Virginia. From my infancy my parents brought me to the temple each day. Gradually, as a young child I grew attached to the large, fierce-looking deity of Krishna's form as Lord Nrisimhadeva (Narasimha) and His foremost devotee, the boy-saint Prahlada. When I was six, Prahlada's age, the priest allowed me to assist him in the temple worship of Lord Nrisimhadeva. Although the Lord looked frightening, I always felt protected when I stood before Him.

When I was sixteen my family visited India. I fell in love with the spiritual atmosphere there and decided to return as soon as possible. By the time I turned eighteen I had decided to make the journey on my own. I worked hard to save for the trip and agonized over my itinerary. India is so big-where should I go?

One day I visited the Hare Krishna temple in Miami. As I glanced over a large stack of old issues of Back to Godhead, a stray breeze blew open the top one to a full- page photo of Lord Nrisimhadeva. The picture seemed to beckon me.



Reading the accompanying article, I was amazed to learn about a young sannyasi, Indradyumna Swami, who had made an incredible journey to Ahovalam, a remote South Indian holy place said to be the very spot where Lord Nrisimhadeva dispatched the evil Hiranyakashipu. His article inspired me so much that I set my mind then and there on making the difficult pilgrimage to Ahovalam.

Warnings

I began my India adventure in Vrindavana, where I visited a remarkable three-eyed deity of Nrisimhadeva. From there I proceeded south to several well-known holy places, including Srirangam and Tirupati, my last stop before Ahovalam.

The devotees at the ISKCON Tirupati temple asked me where I was going next. When I said Ahovalam, they looked at me as if I were crazy and urged me not to go. Seeing they could not dissuade me, they strongly cautioned me to



stay only for one day and get out of there. I thought they were just joking until I realized that I was the only one laughing. An experienced devotee warned me that people there try to rob and kill you and that the surrounding jungle holds ferocious, wild animals such as bears, tigers, and cobras. With these words of encouragement I felt terrified-but even more excited ! The journey would truly test my faith in Lord Nrisimhadeva. After a grueling ten-hour bus ride, I arrived at the Allagada station, where I'd catch the Ahovalam bus. As I waited, a large group of people suddenly surrounded me, the only blonde kid in the whole station. An English-speaking man asked where I was going. When I replied, "Ahovalam," he looked at me very strangely. When he told the crowd what I had said, everyone stared at me even more.

"Why do you want to go to such a place?" he asked. "It is a very dangerous place."

"I am going to see Lord Nrisimhadeva," I replied.

"May He protect you," he uttered gravely, and walked away.

Aboard the bus and getting closer to Ahovalam, I could feel my limbs start to tremble, and my heart beat fast. I didn't know what lay ahead, but I was going to see my Lord at His home.

The Lord Sends a Guide

After an hour on the bus through the middle of nowhere, I reached the tiny village of Lower Ahovalam. There I saw Lord Nrisimhadeva at the Lakshmi-Narasimha temple, the first of nine forms of the Lord to be seen in the Ahovalam area. Then I arranged for some rough accommodations-the only kind available. A shower is a bucket of water you pour over yourself.

I was in the middle of my shower when someone knocked on the door and called out, "Hello. Hare Krishna !"

Having been warned about thieves, I opened the door cautiously. There stood two Indian men. One of them, tall and saintly looking, introduced himself as Madhu, from Vijaywada. Years before, he had lived in an ISKCON ashram and was now initiated in the Ramanuja line. He said he'd heard that I wanted to see all nine forms of Lord Narasimha.

"Yes," I answered, thinking, Word sure gets around fast here.

He said, "I'm going to go tomorrow morning. Why don't we go together? I have been several times and can take you to all nine forms."

I felt convinced this must be Nrisimha's arrangement, so I readily agreed. I asked Madhu how much he would charge.

"I am glad just to serve another devotee," he humbly replied.

Madhu said that to see all nine forms in one day, we would have to spend the night in the jungle.

The Trek Begins

In the morning I rose early and met Madhu. We visited the nearby Lakshmi-Narasimha temple to pray for a safe journey. Remembering a photograph in the old Back to Godhead, I recognized the same pujari who had taken Indradyumna Swami on his tour here in 1979.

Our walk to Bhargava-Narasimha, the second of the nine local forms of Nrisimhadeva, took us through a thick jungle with paths in all directions. Madhu said that no matter how many times you go there you can never remember the way.

"You have to depend on the Lord," he said. The next thing you know, we were lost. I felt nervous. We finally found the way and arrived at the beautiful temple, where we chanted for a while.



In the past many great sages worshiped the deity here. Madhu said that the deity is named for Parashurama (also known as Bhargava), the warrior incarnation of God. Parashurama had performed penance near Ahovalam at a place now known as Ramatirtha.

Next we set off to see the third form, Catravada Narasimha. Madhu mentioned that if we were lucky we would be able to see all nine forms on this holy day. Catravada was a long walk from town, but I was extremely pleased to see Him. He was effulgent and had a big smile. We were allowed to touch our heads to His lotus feet.

Near Catravada is Yogananda Narasimha, the last of the nine forms of Lord Narasimha in Lower Ahovalam. He looked magnificent and powerful. Of the nine Narasimhas, Yogananda is said to be the most merciful.

We ran back to catch the bus to Upper Ahovalam, a trip through dangerous and treacherous terrain. After a while the bus stopped, and the driver directed us to get off. I saw nothing but jungle, but as the bus drove away, the temple of Karanja Narasimha came into view. He is named after a fruit-bearing tree growing next to the temple.

Having now visited the first five Narasimha forms, we had to walk the rest of the way to the next: Ugra Narasimha, a deity tucked in a cave between two mountains. The walk was beautiful. All around was an untouched jungle, overgrown and full of wild animals, which, fortunately, we

did not encounter. Soon we reached the temple of Ugra Narasimha, constructed inside His cave. The deity looked ferocious. We prayed for a safe trip to our next stop, the Ugra Stambha, said to be the actual pillar from which Lord Narasimha appeared.

Atop the Historic Pillar

After a side trip to the ancient Varaha Narasimha cave/temple, we followed an adjacent stream bed to the Ugra Stambha and the seventh form, Jvala Narasimha. The terrain proved most difficult. Madhu told me that not many people

make this journey because it requires crossing a huge and dangerous waterfall. On the way up I saw a couple of wooden boxes next to the path.

"Those are for the people who died making the climb," Madhu said. I didn't need to hear that.

Nestled on the side of a cliff, the Jvala Narasimha temple is said to be the exact spot where the Lord killed the demon Hiranyakashipu. Next to the temple is a large stream. At the spot where Narasimha washed his hands

after killing the demon, the water flows blood-red and even feels like blood.

After more climbing we reached the top of the large stone pillar. The view was spectacular. I couldn't believe I'd actually made it. We'd been walking all day long, with very little to eat and just water to drink, but I hadn't thought of anything except the thrill of being in this spiritual place.





My contentment was short-lived; now it was time to go to the eighth form, which meant another long walk through the mountains. At last we reached the temple of Mohaloha Narasimha, situated on the side of a mountain. According to Madhu, Lakshmi did penance to marry the Lord here.

Next we went to the Prahlada school, which has Sanskrit writing on the walls dating from the days of Prahlada's studies here. Near this high, mountainous spot was another cave, with a beautiful Yoga Narasimha deity in it. But we still had one more destination: the Bhavana Narasimha deity, four miles away.

Although Madhu had warned me not to walk ahead on the path, I did so anyway. Suddenly a huge cobra slithered in front of me. It seemed to be ten feet long. I heeded Madhu's warning and let him lead. The jungle was so dangerous, even in the daytime. Now it was close to dark, and we still had miles to go.

As we ascended the mountain trail, nearby villagers screamed angrily at us. Madhu just kept walking. When we reached a mountain-top stopping point, he told me they were saying that it is forbidden to enter the jungle at night because of the wild animals. People who go in, they said, never come out again. They also said that no one should go to the Bhavana temple at night, because at that time the demigods come to worship Lord Narasimha.

Now I was really scared. Then I saw a dead snake in the middle of the path. A bad omen, Madhu said, but we just had to depend on the Lord for protection. Suddenly it was pitch black. I pulled out my tiny flashlight. I shook with fear and prayed to Lord Narasimha for protection.

Protected by Fire

In spite of the dark we somehow made it over the big mountain. As we did, we were

amazed to see that the forest ahead was on fire, except for the small path we were following.

I thought, It must be Lord Narasimha lighting up the jungle and keeping wild animals away. The fire went on all the way to the temple.

At last we reached the ninth and last deity. Lord Narasimha and His consort looked so beautiful. We thanked Him for allowing us to attain His audience.

We were exhausted, and it was too dark to go back, so we decided to sleep in the front area of the tiny temple. I tried to go to sleep, but I felt too excited and amazed to be sleeping in the Lord's temple.

Suddenly I felt something sniffing and touching the back of my neck and ear. I jumped up and saw nothing. Madhu said he would stay up to see what it was. He turned on the flashlight and began telling me wonderful stories about the Lord. Then, with a loud pop, the brand-new flashlight went out. We tried everything to fix it, but without success.

Just at that moment the wind started to blow ferociously. I wondered if we were offending the demigods by being here. After a while I fell asleep, only to be awakened by Madhu frantically pulling me into the temple's inner sanctum. I was so groggy I didn't ask why. Madhu hastily slammed the gate shut and secured it as best he could.

Furry Guests

Looking up I was stunned to realize I was sitting right at the base of Lord Narasimhadeva's lotus feet. I lay down and felt at peace. Then a bone-chilling roar broke the stillness.

I froze and whispered to Madhu, "What was that ?" He assured me there was nothing to worry about. "Just go to sleep," he said. The next morning we set off for a long walk to two more



Narasimha temples, named Giridhari and Jyoti. Jyoti was the most amazing and ferocious deity of all I'd seen. His name indicates that the forest would always be burning because of His anger.

From Jyoti we were able to catch a bus back to Ahovalam. It took seven hours. In the evening when we arrived we went straight to Lakshmi-Narasimha temple-the first stop on our tour-and thanked the Lord for His protection. Later, while we ate, Madhu explained why he had moved me to the inner sanctum of the Bhavana temple the previous night. While I was asleep, three huge wild black bears had come up, smelled us, and circled the temple.

The next morning we returned to see Bhargava Narasimha, the second of the nine forms. I felt blessed when we were allowed to clean the whole temple. As we left, a crowd of villagers surrounded us. Madhu spoke with them, then translated for me. They were shocked to see us alive after entering the jungle at night. They also said that, although they were born there and had lived their whole lives in the area, we were the first people they'd known who had managed to see all nine forms of Lord Narasimha in a single day.

Meeting the Swami

It was time to move on. I thanked Madhu profusely, and we both said we hoped to meet again. Because of his humble and devotional attitude, Madhu had been an inspiration for me. Far from trying to take advantage of me, an inexperienced young Westerner in a foreign land, Madhu had taken care of everything, even our bus fares. As my bus lumbered away, I thanked Lord Narasimha for giving me Madhu's company.

A few days later I arrived in Jagannatha Puri. After checking in to a hotel, I was astonished to learn that Indradyumna Swami happened to

be staying at the very same place. I had never met him, except through the article in the old BTG. I went to his room and paid my respects. Tears filled his eyes as he learned of the journey I had made in his footsteps.

Simhachalam

Simhachalam which means "Lion Hill" is in Andhra Pradesh, South India. It is the second most richest temple in India after the Tirupati temple. The deity there is of Varaha lakshmi Nrsimha Swamy . A very rare form of the Lord which is only revealed for 12 hours on one day (Aksaya Tritiya, the first day of candana yatra) and the rest of the year it is covered in a hill of sandalwood paste in order to keep the Lord cool. When Prahlada was thrown of the hill by his father's army, the demons, Krishna or Vishnu stood below the hill to catch Prahlada. It is believed that the place where the Lord stood is where the temple is built. The original shape of the deity in the tribhanga posture has two hands with the head of a lion on a human torso.

(II)

Jagannath Puri and Narasimha Worship

Jagannatha Puri in Orissa is a very famous place of pilgrimage for the devotees. It is home to The Lord of The Universe, Jagannatha with His brother, Baladeva and His sister, Subhadra. It also got lots of Nrsimha Temples ! :-

Even though Puri is a famous Vaisnavite center, there is no other Vaisnavite shrine worth the name except the Temple of Jagannath and minor Vaisnava shrines of other incarnations of Visnu. The worship of Lord Visnu is very much popular among the Hindus. He is the Protector who rescues humanity at the time of distress. The time when the evil prevails upon the truth, Visnu takes different incarnations to annihilate the evil and rescue the saints and truthful. The Vaisnavas



worship the ten incarnations of Visnu. His fourth incarnation is the great god Narasimha, Who has the body of a man and the body of the lion. Similar combined forms are to be noticed in the icons of Varaha, Dakshya Prajapati, Ganesha, and Gomukhi Keshava. The image of Narasimhanath of Paikamal, in Baragarh district, is Marjara Keshari. The image of Sarabha is illustrated in the composite of a man, bird and beast. Evolved as one of the Avatars of Visnu, Lord Nrsimha grew into prominence and was worshipped independently, considered as the full incarnation of the Lord. In the Sakti Sangama tantra it is mentioned that Visnu assumed the Narasimha Avatar in the Kritayuga, Angira year, Madhav month and 14th day in the Swati Nakshatra. In the Skanda Purana it is written that Narasimha appeared on the lunar 14th day of Baishakha in Swati Nakshatra, on Saturday during dusk. We do not find the name Narasimha in the Vedic period. The Name is only found in Atharvaveda, where Narahari is worshipped by Ganadeva. Astadhyayi of Panini did not mention the name. However, the epic Mahabharata (Harivamsa), Puranas like Matsya, Padma, Kurma, Visnu, and Visnu Dharmottara, associate Narasimha with Visnu. Based on these, K.C. Das believes that all these Puranic references to Narasimha were known during the Gupta period. There are two broad types of Narasimha images, i.e., Ugra and Saumya. But T. Gopinatha Rao has divided the images of Narasimha into three groups: Sthauna, Girija and Yanak. The word "Sthauna" refers to Narasimha coming out of the pillar; "Ugra" and Girija coming out of caves (yoga). Some call it



Keshava, and Yanak is seated on Garuda or Shesha, with five hooded canopy held like an umbrella. When Laxmi is on the left lap, the image is called Laxmi-Narasimha. The deity sitting in Utkutikasana with Yogapatta and Laxmi on the left lap is very common and popular in Orissa, and Oriyas worship Him as the embodiment of valour, vitality and virtue. The popularity of the Lord is evinced from the hymns and Suktas composed for him, including Stotram, Puranas and Upanisads. Not only in literatures, but also in

epigraphic records and sculptural art are found references of Narasimha worship. There are 105 Narasimha temples with land endowments in Orissa. A list was prepared by G.C. Tripathy, out of the materials collected by H.V. Stietencorn. Besides this, there exist many more temples scattered

through out the State. In addition, a large number of detached images find a place in other temples, such as Parswadevatas. The worship of Lord Narasimha was sanctioned in western Orissa during the Gupta era. In the research article of scholar Sasanka Sekhar Panda, "Purusottama Jagannath is Purusottama Narasimha" published in Orissa Review, Ratha Yatra Special Issue, June 2006, it has been mentioned that three Narasimha images are found at Podagarh, Sarguli and Parwa in Nabarangapur district, which are believed to be images of the Vakataka period, who conquered Puskari (Podagarh) of the Nala kings in the 5th and 6th century A.D. Another image of Narasimha of Maraguda, now in Khariar Branch Museum, is believed to be of the period of the Sarabhapuriyas. In Sirpur Inscription, Queen



Vatasa, mother of King Mahasivagupta Balajurna of Pandu dynasty, had paid her homage to Lord Purusottam and sought the blessings of Narasimha. During the Somavamsi rule, Narasimha worship got a new impetus afterwards. Some of the ruling dynasties like Kadambas of Goa, the Imperial Gangas of Orissa and the Vijayanagar kings in India have Narasimha as their tutelary Deity. From the Dasagoba copper plate of Rajarajadeva, it is revealed that Sri Laxmi Narasimha was the tutelary Deity of the Ganga. In the Kaleswar Siva Temple Inscription of Anangabhimadeva III, the Ganga ruler Chodagangadeva is compared with Narasimha. Four of the Ganga kings bore the title of Narasimha, which proves the popularity of Lord Narasimha of that time. As found in the Dynasty Ganga Vamsanucharita, from among the 27 kings of Eastern Ganga, seven kings before Chodaganga had the word Narasimha added to their names. Narasimha temples and Narasimha sculptures of large varieties of this time (10th to 13th c. AD) found in every nook and corner the State, prove the patronization of the cult by the ruling dynasties. The association of Narasimha with Puri is unique. Puri is a recognized Vaisnavite centre of India, in the Province of Orissa. Puri came to prominence, not as a political centre but as a socio-religious and cultural centre. It has not been the capital of the kingdom at any point of history of Orissa. Therefore, the rise and fall of the dynasties in its long history have no role in the tale of the sanctity of the city. Puri is the site of the gods from time immemorial. Puri, the city of gods, was the land of Narasimha at one time, the land of Purusottama at other times, and finally the land of Lord Jagannath today. With scanty historical sources, it is very difficult to reach a positive conclusion. Puri was under the domain of different dynasties ruling over the kingdom in different periods of history. We don't find any

specific historical references about this place during the rule of the Chedis, Murundas, Matharas, Pitruvaktas, Vighras, Sailodvabas or the Bhaumakars. But during this period, Puri had gained a remarkable popularity as a place of religious importance and there are literary and archaeological references of Madhava worship by the tribals at this place. This led Dr. S.N. Rajaguru to justify that Madhavaraja II of Sailodvaba dynasty had established the shrine of Madhava at Puri and entrusted its management to some of his kinsmen, who were supposed to be tribals. During this period the philosophy of Vaisnavism was divided into two sections, namely (1) Vaikhanasa School and (2) Pancaratrika School. The Vaikhanasa worshipped Visnu in three phases, namely Purusa (Omnipotent), Achyuta (imperishable), and Anirudha (unconstraint), while the later Pancaratrikas followed Chaturvyuha cult and worshipped Vasudeva, Sankarsana, Pradyumna, and Anirudha. The Pancaratrika school might have gained popularity in Kalinga, Kangoda and other neighbouring tracts as long as the Sailodvabas continued their rule in that region. The Sailodvabas were the followers of Saivism. They must have constructed a large number of temples of Lord Siva in their dominion, surrounding all sides of Chilika Lake. Srikshetra (Puri) was topographically a religious centre of Kangoda, where some muni-asramas were established in the temples of Markandeya (Markandeswar Sahi near Markanda temple and Markanda Tank), Angira (Dolamandap Sahi), Pandu or Kandu, (Gaudabada Sahi near Jameswar temple) and Bragu. According to a system, introduced in Puri temples, the image of Sudarsana is carried to visit those risi-asramas on the auspicious days of Radhastami, Kumarotsava and Gamha Purnima. Sudarsana is to honour each sage at his temple or Asrama. That old system is still practised in



Puri. According to Mahabharata (Banaparva), the Pandavas were advised by Lomasha-muni to visit some sacred places after they crossed the river Vaitarani on their way to Kalinga. Again, Pandit Nilakantha Das states that the Jinasana brought back by Kharavela in the 1st century B.C. was worshipped as Purusottama Jagannath at Puri. But for want of any convincing evidence, we are not able to accept it, although Puri was an ancient Tirtha where Tapasvinis were dwelling in the hill caves. Some inscriptions of later Sailodvaba kings of Kongoda narrate the following verse, expressing that a king of that province could earn similar religious glory at his own capital as what the yogis and munis could achieve by performing hard austerity in mountain caves. Most probably, those hermits who lived in Kangodamandal were worshipping either Visnu or Siva in the coastal tracts, while in the hill areas, i.e., the western part of Kongoda, there lived Tantri yogis who were worshipping Devi (Durga) in the form of Stambheswari. In the Bhagavata Gita, Sri Krishna says, "I am Visnu among the Adityas" (Adityanam aham Visnuh)". It is therefore presumed that Puri, the seat of Madhava-Narasimha-Purusottama, might not have experienced the apathy of Bhaumakaras who were not hostile to Brahmanism, though they were Buddhists. During the Somavamsi rule, the epoch-making event was the coming of Sankaracharya to Puri. The visit of Sankaracharya inspired Narasimha worship to be popular in this locality. It is believed that Sankar had the blessings of Laxmi-Narasimha and wrote Sri Laxminarasimha Pancharatna Stotram, Sankatanasan Laxmi-Narasimha Stotram, and the Bhasyas of Narasimha Tapini Upanisad. Narasimha worship in the Govardhana Math and the figure of Sankar beneath the sculpture of Laxmi-Narasimha in the Jagamohana of Sri Laxmi temple of Shree Jagannath temple of Puri also associate Narasimha and Sankar. This fact is supplemented in the Skanda Purana (narration of

Indradyumna) and the Narasimha temple construction near Gundicha temple. A Telegu inscription of Chodagangadeva at Narasimha temple refers to Lord Narasimha worship in the pre-Ganga period. During the Ganga rule, after the coming of Sri Ramanuja of Sri Sampradaya, a devotee of Narasimha and promoter of Bhaktimarga, Narasimha Worship reached its climax. Narasimha worship reached every doorstep of Sakalautkala in general, and Puri in particular. It led Sena King Laxman to adopt the title of "Paramanarasimha." Lord Narasimha became the Khetrapala, or the guardian Deity of the kshetra. At present, we find a dozen Narasimha temples in the city, with many more in the Maths of Sankar, Ramanuja, and Madhugaudeswara order, as well as in the Jagagharas. We also find Narasimha as Parswadevata in Vaisnava, Saiva and Sakti temples.

Present day Narasimha Temples in and around Puri

Narasimha Temple (Jagannath Temple Precinct): It is a pancharatha rekha deula at a height is about 55ft. The presiding Deity is the Vidarana Narasimha in ugra pose. The image is of 1 ft. high, which is not matching size to the height of the temple (in accordance with the Silpasastras).

Yagna Narasimha Temple: It is near Gundicha temple. Its height is about 60 ft. The presiding Deity is Laxmi-Narasimha. An elevated place has been levelled for the erection of the main temple and its two front apartments. The area around the temple complex has been protected by high masonry walls with provision of a series of steps for entry into the premises on the eastern side.

The main temple built in pancharatha rekha order is fronted by a pyramidal jagamohan and a



rectangular natamandap. All the structures within the premises are thickly plastered in lime mortar, painted in matching colours. The bada of the main temple as well as the jagamohan indicate five-fold horizontal divisions and five vertical paga projections. The gandi of the main shrine is bereft of figure sculptures and decorative designs except, however, the projecting lions of the central rahapaga of all directions. The mastaka consists of the usual beki, amalakasila, khapuri, kalasa, and nilachakra.

The central niche of the outer walls contain figures of Varaha-Visnu, Trivikrama, of later workmanship, and a Visnu image of early Medieval period as parsvadevatas. The sanctum preserves a remarkable image of Laxmi-Narasimha on a high masonry pedestal. The artistic finish and iconographic peculiarity of the image take us back to the time of the Ganga period. The Deity was very likely installed at Puri by Chodagangadeva, who is said to have introduced the system of Narasimha worship in Orissa.

A similar Laxmi-Narasimha image is still noticed in the premises of Gangamandira of Cuttack town. The image in question is seated in Yogasana with both legs crossed and tied near the knee. Laxmi is found seated on His left lap. Of His four hands, the two lower ones are stretched over the knees and the two upper ones display conch and disc, the most favourite weapons of Visnu.

The jambs of the doorways leading to the sanctum are embellished with floral motifs, creepers, nagabandhas and scroll works. Figures of Jaya and Vijaya, the two legendary door-keepers of a Visnu temple are seen at the base of the jambs. The architrave over the door entrance is relieved with the figures of nine planets. A figure of Gajalaxmi is carved at the centre of the door

lintel. The outer walls of the jagamohan are set with several sculptures of much later workmanship. A large panel on the left wall of the jagamohana represents three mounted elephants on the march. The window grills of the jagamohana depict ladies playing on various musical instruments, salabhanjikas, alaskanyas, and gajasimha motifs, also of much later workmanship.

Chakra Narasimha Temple: It is at Chakratirtha road. It is a Pidha Deula, at a height of about 55 ft. In the sanctum of the temple there are three Narasimha images. Among these three Deities, the middle one is bigger than the other two and is seated inside the Chakra. It is known as the Chakra Narasimha. Of the others, the one on the left is Purusottom-Narasimha, and on the right is Ananta-Narasimha.

Pandu Narasimha Temple: It is in Pandu Asrama near Jameswar Temple, Gaudabada Sahi. The presiding Deity is the eight-armed Vidarana Narasimha, in Ugra pose.

Laxmi-Narasimha Temple: It is at Mangalaghat road near Bali school. It is a Pancharatha rekha deula. Its height is about 25 ft. It has jagamohan.

Narasimha Temples (four temples inside Jagannath temple): (A) Baisi Pahacha; (B) Suka; (C) Simachala; and (D) Uttar Dwara.

Singada Narasimha Temple (near Lokanath Temple): The presiding Deity is four-armed Laxmi-Narasimha, sitting on Utkatasan. A small image of Goddess Laxmi is sitting on the yogapata at the left thigh of the deity. She is offering betel in her right hand, looking to the Lord. She has a lotus in her left-hand. Narasimha in his uplifted back hands hold sankha and chakra, and his front two hands rest on his knee. The Deity is crowned by Kiritamukuta and he has three glittering eyes.



The Deity is adorned with different types of ornaments. He wears the Anantasarpa as sacred thread. Seven hoods of the snake cover as canopy over His head, amidst which the face of Balabhadra is seen with plough. Two female attendants like Sridevi and Bhudevi are found with folded hands on either sides of the Deity. A gajatorana supported by two pilasters is found just by the side of the Deity. At the right side base of the pillar there is a standing royal figure with folded hands. Perhaps it is the figure of legendary King Indradyumna. Just at the backside of Prahlad, Lord Siva is found in aradhana pose, and the image of Brahma with folded hands is seen at the left side. The presiding Deity is flanked by two Vidyadharas with garlands, perhaps because the image is very near to the pond full of a waterfruit named Singada.

Narasimha Temple: It is at Gadanti Chowk by the side of Meghanada Pachery of Srimandir. There is a miniature temple and the presiding Deity is four-armed Laxmi-Narasimha.

Kanchisasana Narasimha Temple: Kanchisasana is a Brahmin sasana village under Chalisbatia Gram Panchayat in the Sadar Block of Puri. This village is renowned for Narasimha worship. Most of the Brahmins are Atharvavedi and Narasimha is their tutelary Deity. The village has one Narasimha temple on the eastern side of the village temple. The presiding Deity is four-armed Laxmi-Narasimha. The temple is of rekha order and the height of the temple is 25 feet.

Jagannathpur Laxmi-Narasimha Temple: Jagannathpur is a Brahmin sasana village under Chalisbatia Gram Panchayat in the Sadar Block of Puri. It is 2 km from Kanchi sasana. The temple is of pidha order and is about 35 ft height. The presiding Deity is four-armed Laxmi Narasimha made of granite stone, exclusively carved and of fine elegance in craftsmanship, being about 6 ft. in height.

Rendha Narasimha Temple: It is on Puri-Brahmagiri Road at a distance of 10 km from Puri, at Rendha Chowk. The presiding Deity is four-armed Laxmi- Narasimha, and the Lord is highly revered.

Kusunikhuntia Jaga Narasimha: It is in the Jaga in Harachandi Sahi. It is a The Lord is highly revered. pidha deula of about 25 ft. height. The presiding Deity is four-armed Saumya Narasimha. The peculiar feature is the absence of any Laxmi figure. The Deity is crowned with seven-hooded Adishesha, which forms a canopy over His head.

Jadamath Narasimha: This temple is in a private Math in Pathuria Sahi. It is a pidha deula of about 23 ft. height. The presiding Deity is four-armed Laxmi- Narasimha.

Radhamadhav Narasimha Temple: It is located at Hatisal Chowk in Dukhishyama Chhata Math. The temple is 20 ft. height. The presiding Deity is four-armed Vidarana Laxmi-Narasimha.

Hinjalajaga Narasimha Temple: The temple is in the premises of the Jaga in Bali Sahi.

Barabatijaga Narasimha Temple: The temple is in the premises of the Jaga in Harachandi Sahi. The presiding Deity is four-armed Vidarana Laxmi-Narasimha.

Narasimha images on the temple walls, inside the temples on the premises of Jagannath Temple: Narasimha images carved into the walls are worshipped at some 50 places like Mukti Mandap, Bhogamandap, Natamandir, Narasimha and Nisa-Narasimha, Laxmi, Dadhibamana, Bhubaneswari and Madanamohan, Nandagopal temples, Ramamandira at Baisapahacha, Lion's Gate near Patitapaban.

Narasimha images in the temple as Parswadevata: These images are generally four-



armed and in vidarana posture on the back raha niche of the temple: (a) Gopinath temple at Keponjharkothi on Grand Road; (b) Radha Krishna temple at Gopinathpur near Atharnala; (c) Jagannath temple, Manikarnika Sahi; (d) Radha Krishna temple, Manikarnika Sahi; and (e) Patitapaban temple at Patitapaban Lane, Markandeswar Sahi.

Narasimha images in the temple as Parswadevata in Sakti temples: (a) a four-armed 1ft. image with back hands uplifted with sankha and chakra and front hands in dhyana and abhaya mudra in Dakshinakali temple, Kalikadevi Sahi; and (b) a 4 ft. high, three-eyed, with ramanandi chita, back hands uplifted with sankha and charka and front thands on His knee, sitting on Garuda in the Ramachandi Temple, Ramachandi Sahi are the examples. These seem to be recent installations.

Narasimha images engraved in the walls of the Saiva temples: These types of images are found in the temples of Jameswar, Lokanath and Kapalamochana. (a) The image (sculpture) is known as Panchamukhi Mahavir, having five faces, with Varaha in north, Narasimha in south, Siva or Hanuman in east, Garuda in west and Hayagriva on top, near Indradyumna Tank. The Deity has ten hands, holding sankha, trident, khatwanga, pasa, ankusa, hillock, dhuma, musthi, mace and snake. He is standing over the demon. It is stated in the Kapila Samhita that one will earn more punya if he/she makes a darsana of Sri Nilakantheswar, Yajna Narasimha and Panchamukhi Mahavir after taking sacred bath in Indradyumna Tank. (It is related to Adapa Mandap Yatra of Jagannath). (b) Garuda Tosana: It is also a unique sculpture in the niche of Bhogamandap. It is a two-armed Deity standing in dwibhanga pose over the lotus pedestal. There is a Garuda image in worshipping pose on the

right side of the Deity. In His right hand, the Deity is offering a laddu to Garuda, while his left hand is in katyavalambita posture. The legend associates it with the great Sankar.

Laxmi images: In almost all Laxmi-Narasimha sculptures of Puri, the size of Laxmi is very small and two-armed. The peculiarity noticed here is that Laxmi touches the mouth of Narasimha in her right hand in the process of offering betel. Another variation is found with the image at Algum, where Laxmi is four-armed.

Lord Narasimha is worshipped in almost all the Maths of Puri. The Maths at Puri have developed over the centuries into unique institutions, which have exercised profound influence on the religious and cultural life of the locals, as well as people coming to Puri. Adisankar is credited as being the pioneer of Math building. When he established Gobardhana/Bhavavardhana Math at Puri in the early 9th century A.D., it is said that Puri had 752 Maths. But the number is far below 100 at present.

The head of the Math is the Mahanta. He lives in these maths with sadhusanyasis, sisyas of the institution and some inmate students. These Maths belong to various Sampradayas and socio-religious groups. In these Maths, various Deities are worshipped, as per the sect they represent. The main Deity or subsidiaries are worshipped in the Maths. By this process, all Maths of different monastic order have promoted Narasimha worship. Ramanuja followed Adisankar in establishing Maths in considerable number, which are situated at every strategic place by his two categories of sisya order, the Bagel and Dingal. they facilitated Narasimha worship like their guru. These sisyas are of sanyasis and grihastas (Narasimhachari and Venkatachari).

Madhavacharya, another saint of the 13th century, had established one Narasimha temple



at Soda. Some Maths of Madhavacharya order also worship Lord Narasimha. Narahari Tirtha had established one Narasimha temple at Srikakulam. Ramayati Vaisnavas at Puri are worshipping Narasimha along with Rama and Sita.

Sri Chaitanya advised his disciples to have Danda Pranama (salutation by laying on the ground) to Lord Narasimha before taking darshan of Sri Jagannath. Sri Chaitanya Himself worshipped Lord Narasimha at third step of baisapahach, before going to have the darshan of Sri Jagannath. So in some Gaudiya Maths, Narasimha is worshipped.

There is a legend that Sri Gauranga saved Thakur Haridas from the attack of an enemy, assuming the Form of Narasimha. There is a separate temple for Narasimha in the Sidhabakula Math of Thakur Haridas. Similarly, some Maths of Ramananda order also have Narasimha worship. Atibadi Jagannath Das, author of the Oriya Bhagabat, started his writing with a salutation to Narasimha, so the Math of Atibadi Jagannath Das order has Narasimha worship. The palm leaf manuscript of Oriya Bhagabat is worshipped with great reverence as the representative of Jagannath or Narasimha. Therefore with the spread of Bhagabata and Bhagabata Tungi in Orissa, Narasimha became more popular as a Deity. In all these Maths, Narasimha is worshipped either in iconic form or aniconic form. The iconic forms are normally made of metals, mostly astadhatu and sometimes stone. The aniconic form is the worship of Salagrama, on which the face of Lord Narasimha is drawn.

Lord Nrsimhadev's Associations with the Shaiva and Jagannath Cults

Traditionally, seven Sahis (avenues) of Puri were set up encircling Sri Jagannath Temple with

a view to have Sevas of the Lord and to protect the shrine during times of crises. Each Sahi has an akhada (center). Under each of the akhadas there are some jagaghars (training centers). These jagaghars are the centre of physical and cultural training like kusti (wrestling), Oddisi song, Oddisi dance, Gotipua dance, and special Jaga Sangeetas under reputed gurus.

The term "jaga" in Oriya connotes a "place" like jagar of Himachal Pradesh. These jagagharas in Puri are the genuine centres of cultural awakening at the grass root level. Considering from this angle it may not be out of place to state that the term jaga is derived from the word "jagarana", which means to keep awake. The members of these jagagharas worship Hanuman (Mahavir) and Narasimha as the sources of power and strength. Even some jagas have been named after Lord Narasimha, like Narasimha Ballav and Nrsingha Ghar.

Narasimha is also associated with Saivism, as has been analysed by Eshmann. She states that the representation of Lingodbhava, where Siva appeared from the endless flaming Lingam, is usually represented as a huge column resembling the sense of Narasimha bursting out of the pillar. To support her view, we find a description in Vishnudhramottar Purana pointing to the face of Narasimha and manes surrounded with flames.

The flaming Lingam of Saivism and the flaming manes of Narasimha cult have close affinity. Eschmann has also stated another story from Visnudhramottar Purana where a devotee worships the Lingam until he has a vision of Narasimha appearing from it. This connection is represented in one of the early Siva temples in Orissa, near Baramba called Simhanath. The figure of Simhanath is carved on the front entrance. A standing human figure with a lion head holding a trident is locally known as Simhanath.



This speaks of Siva-Narasimha or Siva incorporating Narasimha.

The panels of Bhimeswar and Madhukeswar temples at Mukhalingam contain Narasimha images. In the Lingaraj temple premises there is a Laxmi-Narasimha image. At the Manibhadreswar temple at Bhubaneswar and Nilakantheswar temple at Denua, Sri Narasimha is the Parswadevata. In Puri, the association of Narasimha with Siva is intimately noticed. Near all the Narasimha temples, there are Siva temples. Near Chakra Narasimha temple, there is Panchabati Siva temple. Similarly, near Pandu Narasimha temple, there is Jameswar temple, and inside the Jagamohan of Jameswar temple there is the image of Narasimha. In the temples of Lokanath and Kapalalochana, the images of Narasimha are there.

A Narasimha image was found in the earth while the digging of the compound at Grameswar Siva temple in Kanchi Sasana was going on. The beautiful image was made of chlorite. Another interesting feature of this Siva temple is that there is a Narayan image at the right door-jamb as Dwarapala. Another peculiarity of this temple is that animal sacrifice was given during Dasahara every year at the sanctum of this Siva temple. This shows the close association of tantricism [a degeneration of Vaishnavism].

Another resemblance between Lord Narasimha and Siva is the Ugra form. The Vidarana Narasimha is Ugra as Lokanath of Puri, on whose name the local people fear to take vow. In some Puranas, Siva is Kirtimukha. In some Narasimha images there is Kirtimukha. Ananta is sometimes described as Sankarsana or Siva, as well as Narasimha. Eschmann has rightly pointed out a Saiva element in Narasimha which probably also led to his worship as a tutelary god of the latter Gangas.

H.V. Stetencorn narrated that in western Orissa, people give more emphasis to the Narasimha aspect of Visnu and the trend was finally found in the Jagannath cult of Puri. G.C. Tripathy has stressed the Tantric element, which instigated the devolvement of the Narasimha cult from Vaisnavism. They see some affinity between Lord Jagannath's body and the Lord Narasimha's appearance from the pillar. Eschmann has postulated that the head of Lord Jagannath may be symbolic of a lion head, with the Lord's round eyes being typical features of Lord Narasimha's. According to Indradyumna legend, the satiated god assumed the form of Saumya Narasimha with chakra and bow in His uplifted hands, with His two main hands on the knees. Balabhadra covers the head of Narasimha with a thousand hoods.

Narasimha is the guardian Deity of the temple and all the performances, from cooking to puja, are preceded by offering to Lord Narasimha first. The initiation by a new servitor (sadhibandha) starts with worshipping the Khamba Narasimha (image of Laxmi-Narasimha) on the first pillar of Jagamohana. The Palia Pujapanda sits at this pillar and offers the bhoga of the public to Narasimha, then to the Lord, and at the time of pahuda (door-closed), offerings are also given here.

Lord Narasimha is described as the protector of Lord Jagannath, and the protector of Nandighosha chariot. It is customary that a wooden image of Narasimha after due ritual (rath-pratistha), completed by the deula-purohit, the only strotriya Brahmin servitor of the temple, is to be brought with proper procession with bijekahali and other vadyas to the chariots (Hanuman and Bhubaneswari for Balabhadra and Subhadra, respectively).

Lord Narasimha is also one of the nine parswadevatas of the said chariot. In the



Nabakalebara the role of Lord Narasimha is indispensable. The new images of the Lords are to be consecrated in presence of Narasimha and trees selected for image making are to be cut also in the presence of Narasimha. These rituals are called as banajaga.

In all these above rituals, Mantraraja, the Mantra of Lord Narasimha, are only to be recited by the Brahmins. Yajna- Narasimha is associated in the process of the journey of the logs of the Lord. Narasimha is one of the Vesas of the Lord on the 13th day of the month of Kartik and Lord Jagannatha is worshipped as Narasimha on the 14th day of lunar fortnight of the month of Vaishakha (Narasimha Chaturdasi).

Angyamala (garland) of the Lord is taken on this day to Chakra Narasimha for His birthday-celebration. The birthday celebration of Narasimha is celebrated at the temple of Narasimha, near Muktimandap. On the said day, Lord Narasimha's image (from Dakshinighar) visits Jagannath Ballav Math. On the 9th day of the lunar fortnight of the month of Srabana and the 14th day of lunar fortnight of the month of Margasira, Laxmi-Narasimha move around the city.

Lord Narasimha is treated as the embodiment of valour and energy. Sometimes Sudarsan is linked with Narasimha. Sudarsan is the Ugra aspect and the working force. Similarly, Narasimha is the Ugra form of Visnu. When Sudarsan is consecrated, it is recited that he belongs to Narasimha group. Representation in sculpture is made on the combined aspect of

Narasimha and Sudarsan. Sudarsan in the form of the wheel is found at the back of the image of Narasimha in the sculpture Chakra Narasimha. Sudarsan is the moveable image of Narasimha. It is claimed by scholars that Jagannath and Narasimha are inseparable, and all the four Deities of Jagannath pantheon are linked intimately with Narasimha: Balabhadra as Ananta, Subhadra as post, Sudarsan as fury and Jagannath as Narasimha, speak the story of intimacy of Narasimha in Jagannath consciousness.

The Narasimha sculptures found at Puri are two-armed to twenty-armed images. Important among them are the Garuda-tosana Narasimha, eight-armed Pandu Narasimha, Narasimha sitting on Garuda. All the parswadevatas are in vidarana posture. These images are made of different varieties of stones, but chlorite is common. Metal images of the jaggharas and maths are of astadhātu. Some of these institutions worship the salagramas with Narasimha, chakra and sankha drawn upon them, and are also called Chitra Narasimha.

It is unique in Puri that the amalgamation of several cults are found here. This includes safely the Narasimha Upasana. The most common images of Lord Narasimha found in Puri are Laxmi-Narasimha in utkurita posture. The Ugra aspect of the Deity is not there, rather it represents elements in the character of Purusottama.

ISKON Temple, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar.