In the absence of authentic historical records, it is difficult to trace out the exact period of origin of Visnu worship and the spread of Vaisnavism in Orissa. Some archaeological evidence in support of worship of Visnu during the rule of the Mathar dynasty in Kalinga has come to light. The image of Visnu used to be worshipped as a two or four-armed deity. From a copper plate found in the village Sarsandha in the Parlakhemundi subdivision, it is learnt that Maharaja Visakha Verma (314-330 A.D.) of the Mathar dynasty declared himself as Parama Daivata and Parama Bhattaraka Padabhakta (Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XXI pp. 23-25).

It has been mentioned in the copper plate of Ananta Sakti Verman (392-426 A.D.) of this dynasty that he was Kamala nilayakranta Baksosa Narayana Svaminah Padabhakta (Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XXVIII pp. 175 ff). The plate reveals that he was a devotee of Laksmi Narayana.

In the second copper plate of Maharaja Chanda Verman (426-441 A.D.) a mention has been made of the gift of the village Kohatra to the Brahman Brahmachari Devasarma on the 5th day of the lunar fortnight of the month of Chaitra (March-April) during the 6th year of his reign. He calls himself Parama Bhagavata in this copper inscription.

Maharaja Prabhanjan Verman II (521-536 A.D.) has in his Nigondi copper inscription, termed himself as Bhagavata Swami Narayana Padabhakta (Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XXVIII pp. 175 ff). From an inscription of 3rd century A.D. found in Nagarjun Konda, it is learnt that Narayana was regarded as Parama Daivata. The term Daivata is applicable to the sun. In the 1st and the 155-6th sloka of the Rig Veda, Narayana and Savita (Sun) are taken to be identical.

In the kingdom ruled by the kings of Mathar dynasty there was the Mahendrachala (Mahendra hills). A district Mahendra Bhoga was created in the kingdom named after it. The wooden image worshipped by the Savaras on the Mahendra hills was worshipped by the kings of Mathar dynasty as the State deity. In course of time, this image of the tribal people was worshipped as Narayana or Purusottama. (The Cult of Jaganath, pp. 4-5 ff)

The territory lying between Kalinga and Tosali was known as Kangoda and it constituted one independent kingdom. The major portion of Khallikote in the district of Ganjam and a considerable portion of the present Khurda subdivision of undivided Puri district were included in this kingdom known as Kangoda. According to the Kanas copper plate of king Sri Loka
Vigraha of Vigraha dynasty of Kangod, he had issued royal orders from Tatichha Pattanam, a village in the district of Satid in Tosali to be Visayapati (Collector) and other officers of the State to the effect that the village Urdhvasrnga located in the same district was for the worship of Jaya Varaha gifted at the feet of Parama Daivatadhi Daivata Parama Bhattaraka (OHRJ Vol. IV p.6, p.233). There are two sambats mentioned in this copper inscription. The first one, if calculated according to Gupta era 200 may date back to 520 A.D. and the second calculated according to Mana to 240 A.D. But this has to be confirmed by further scientific research. Jaya Varaha mentioned in the copper inscription must certainly have been the Varaha Avatar of the ten incarnations of Sriksna or Visnu.

After the defeat of Sasanka by Harsavardhan, Maharaja Madhav Roy (590-604 A.D.) conquered the kingdom of Loka Vigraha of Kangod and established himself as an independent king assuming the title Sakala Kalingadhipati. According to a copper inscription found in the Khurda region he introduced himself as Sailodbhavanavavaya ....... nata sakala Kalingadhipatyah sakala kalavapta kaumudeva jagata pramadah pravrta chakra chakradharahaiva Bhagavan Madhavah Sri Madhavarajah. From another inscription, it is seen that Madhavaraja bore another name Sri Sainyabhita(O.H.R.J. Vol II Nos. 3 & 4, pp-20-24 ff).

During the reign of Madhavaraja the image of Visnu was worshipped in Kalinga under the name Madhava. In the densely populated region of the kingdom of Kangod and the adjacent old valley of the river Prachi, shrines of worship of Madhava Visnu were established. By the by it may be mentioned that the present Prachi valley comprising some parts of Sadar sub-division and Bhubaneswar of undivided Puri district, Sadar and Jagatsinghpur Sub-divisions of the district of Cuttack must have belonged to the kingdom of the then Nala dynasty named after Nalaraja ruled from a place Puskari near Nowrangpur of Orissa. Their predecessors had been ruling over Vidarbha territory. A rock inscription of 13 lines of Skandha Verman, son of Bhabadutta Verman of this dynasty is found at a little distance of the dilapidated Siva temple in the village Potagarh in the Umarkote taluk of the district of Koraput. In this inscription salutations have been offered to Hari at the outset.

“Harinajitam jayati Jesyatyesa gunastutirnahnima, Nanu bhagavaneva jayatetvaya chadhijeta cha”.

(Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XXI pp. 135 f).

Scholars are of opinion that this rock inscription belongs to the 5th century A.D. Skandha Verman had installed a stone slab with the foot prints of Lord Visnu engraved on it in a temple and worshipped it.

The Saravapuriya royal dynasty ruled over south Kosala. Mahasudeva Raj (6th century A.D.) bore the title of Parama Bhagavata as recorded in his Koutavalla copper plate. In his copper plate the image of Gajalaksmi (Goddess Laksmi with elephants) was engraved. The figure of Gajalaksmi was set on a full-blown lotus with two elephants on both sides sprinkling water.

After the reign of Saravapur royal dynasty, Mahasiva Tibira Deva became the king of the whole of Kosala. In his copper plate he declared himself as Parama Vaisnava (Odisara Itihas, p. 484). In the coins of the State the figure of Garuda, the conveyor of Visnu was engraved.

Tibira Deva ruled in the latter part of the 7th century A.D. His son Mahananna Raj was a devotee of Visnu and had conquered the kingdom of Utkal in the 9th year of his reign. In the copper
plates he has described the Brahmins as Bhagavata.

After Mahananna Raj Mahasiva Gupta Balarjuna became the king of Sakala Kosala. There are 42 verses of Mahasiva Gupta engraved in a long rock inscription of Siripur (EP Ind. Vol. XI pp. 184-202 ff). As it contains at the outset the expressions “Om Namah Purusottamayah”, it may be considered the first inscription of its kind in 8th century A.D. The name of Jagannath as Sri Purusottama has been recorded for the first time. After this there are salutations to the Nrsingh incarnation, to Lord Krsna the destroyer of Kamsa and to Lord Balarama. It is clear from this that Mahasiva Tibira Deva and his fore-fathers of Pandu dynasty worshipped Sri Jagannatha, Laksmi, Nrsingha, Krsna, Balarama as their ancestral Gods. So the figure of Laksmi was engraved as the royal emblem.

As king of Sarava dynasty who ruled before the Pandu dynasty termed themselves as Parama Bhagavata, it is clear that Visnu worship was widely in vogue in south Kosala before 7th century A.D. It is learnt from another rock inscription at Siripur that Mahasiva Gupta Balarjuna, son of Sri Harsa Gupta (Swabhaha Tunga) and queen Vasata (daughter of Surya Verma) had engaged the florists of Nabahatta at Sripura to make beautiful garlands every day to be offered to Lord Visnu. In the Sambal region of Kosala, Indrabhuti (714 A.D.) in his work Jnansiddhi has offered his salutations to Lord Jagannatha. In the lyrics or religious scriptures this mention of Lord Jagannatha is the first of its kind. The name of Lord Jagannatha did not find place in any scripture before this.

“Pramipatya Jagannatham sarvajina vararchitam, Sarva Buddhhamayam siddi vyapinam gaganopamam”

(Jnansiddhi, 1/1)

Indrabhuti is also known as the expounder of Vajrayana, a school of Tantrayana Buddhism. His sister Laksmikara and his adopted son Padma Sambhava went as far as Tibet on their assignment to preach this religion. Padma Sambhava is even now regarded as the founder of Tibetan Lamahood. The Sahajayana cult of Buddhism developed from the Mahayana cult. The bliss of inter-communion with God is transformed to Maharasa. In this Maharasa the soul merges in Brahma. Indrabhuti has offered his oblations to Lord Jagannatha as the deity worshipped by the Mahajinas. Among the ten incarnations, the incarnation of Buddha is taken to be Lord Jagannatha Himself. On the left walls of the Bhogamandapa behind the Garuda pillar inside the temple and upon the upper part of the Lion’s gate (Singhadvara) in the engravings of the ten incarnations the image of Lord Jagannatha is substituted later in place of Buddha which is highly meaningful though objectionable. The Oriya literature also sings of the glory of Buddha, as an incarnation of Lord Jagannatha. Instances of this can be found in the figures pictured on the old palm-leaf scriptures of Orissa. It is believed that the stuff placed in the navel part of Lord Jagannatha which is regarded as Brahma, is the tooth of Buddha. But some others believe it to be the unburnt navel portion of Srikrsna.

Huen Tsang has in his account described the Buddhist Burma region as Sriksetra. Puri, the abode of Lord Jagannatha, is also termed as Sriksetra. Consequent upon the spread of Sahajiya Buddhism, people of the lower castes of the society were attracted to it. This led to a mixture of Brahmanism and Buddhism. Almost at every home Buddhist pillars set up earlier got converted to bases of Tulsi plants and worshipped daily. These were converted to tulasi chaura and they were widely spread to all parts of India. In this way Buddhist consciousness
merged into the vast arena of Hinduism and gave rise to the development of a new religious order.

It is ascertained from Daspalla copper plate that Sri Satrubhanja Deva Tribhuban Vilas, the king of Visnubalka was a great devotee of Vaisnavism. In the copper plate there is mention of the name of a village Santosa Madhava. This copper plate belonged to Bhauma era 198 or 812 A.D.

During the reign of Bhaumakara dynasty, Tribhubana Mahadevi, the chief queen of Santikar I (846 A.D.) termed herself, in a copper plate inscription, (Ep. Ind. Vol. XXIX pp. 210-220 ff) as Parama Vaisnavi Parama Bhattarika-Maharajadhiraja Parama Paramesvari. Subhakar Dev II (836 A.D) bore the name of Singhadhvaja or Singhaketu and was a great patron of Buddhism. But from his Hindol copper plate it is confirmed that he also sang the glory of Laksmi-Narayana and Chandrasekhar (p. 450, Odisa Itihas). His other name was Ramdev.

Madhavi Devi, the chief queen of Subhakara Deva, had built the Madhavesvar temple on the mountain top of Udayagiri. The verse “Khyatoayambhuvi Madhavesvara iti Sriman Bhavasyalayam” (p. 447, Odisa Itihas / Neulapur copper plate Ep. Ind. Vol. XV pp.1-8 ff). has been inscribed on the wall of the Hamsesvar temple. As her husband Subhakar Deva posed himself as a great worshipper of Parama Saugata (E.I., Vol XV pp 1-8), it can be assumed that he was a patron of Buddhism. But Maharani Madhavi Devi having already built the temple of Madhavesvar also established many shrines of Visnu worship which shows her religious tolerance and patronisation of Brahmanism. This resulted in a strange co-ordination of Brahmanism and Buddhism. Side by side with the worship of Buddhist gods and goddesses, the worship of Madhava spread far and wide in Orissa.

In the east of the Mahendra hills adjacent to the southern part of the kingdom of Kangod, there was an independent kingdom named Svetaka. After the kings of Sailodbhava dynasty, the kings of Ganga dynasty of the city of Kalinga conquered the southern territory upto the river Rskulya. In course of time the Svetakas mingled with the Bhauma kingdom and established themselves as feudatory chiefs of Bhauma kings. According to Sankhimedi copper plate, Maharaja Indraverm of this dynasty had gifted a village for worship of Loka Madhava Visnu and Svayambhukesvara Visnu and Siva and had appointed some Brahmins to take care of the rites of worship. Among them were Somapa and Savaripa the great saints.

It is learnt from a copper plate of queen Tribhubana Mahadevi (895 A.D.) found from Boudh that after the death of her husband Lalitabhabra, she took over the charge of the administration of the kingdom. The Chedi king Laksman Raj conquered the kingdoms of Kosala and Udra and carried away from the latter the valuable Kaliya image beset with gold and jewels as ascertained from Bilhari rock-inscription.

“Jitva Kosalanathamodranpaterapastu yah kaliyo, Ratna svarnamayah sa yena vihita somesvarabhyarachanam”

(Ep. Ind., Vol I, p. 256 ff)

From this it is learnt that Laksaman Raja had stolen away the image without encountering Udra Raj in a battle. This incident took place during the reign of Kosala king Janmejay Mahabhava Gupta Svabhava Tunga and queen Mahadevi Tribhubana. To take revenge, Janmejay waged a war against the Chedi king and burnt his territory to ashes. This has also been mentioned in the copper plate of Yajati, son of Janmejay found in Bolangir Patna. (Odisar Itihas, p. 459). Probably the Chedi king Laksaman Raj was living in the 10th century A.D.
But what is this Kaliya image spoken of above? It may probably be either the Kaliya-Dalana (killing of the serpent Kali) posture of Lord Srikrsna or the image of Lord Jagannatha (black in colour) adorned with gold and jewels.

Maharaja Yajati II of Soma dynasty became the king of Kosala, Kangod and Utkala and built the temple of Lord Lingaraj known then as Kirtibaseswara at Bhubaneswar. Though he had made the preliminary arrangements for construction of the temple of Sri Jagannatha, he could not implement it. It has been mentioned in the Madala Panji (chronicle of important events in Jagannatha temple) that 146 years before Yajati, Lord Jagannatha was buried underground at Sonepur (Suvarnapur) in fear of the invasion of Raktabahu. Yajati Kesari had unearthed the divine images and had reinstalled them at Puri. Afterwards, the Ganga emperor Chodaganga Deva had built the present lofty and majestic temple. It is generally believed that one Lalatendu Kesari had built the Lingaraj temple of Bhubaneswar. But history does not record any such name. Though the kings of Soma dynasty were Saivas themselves, they made equally sincere wholehearted efforts for establishing Visnu worship.

The images of Nila Madhava and Sidhesvara Siva Linga at Gandharadhi near Boudh situated at the south-valley of the river Mahanadi were probably constructed in eighth or ninth century A.D. The simultaneous worship of Lord Hari (Visnu) and Hara (Siva) in the same part of the country bears ample proof that in the Kosala region these two worships had long been in vogue concurrently. Similarly the image of Laksmi Nrsingha inside the Lingaraj temple walls at Bhubaneswar symbolises joint worship of Vaisnavism and Saivism at this holy place of pilgrimage. On the western border of the Boudh town, the temple of Ramesvar Visnu is built. Close to this there are two small temples which may date back to 9th century A.D.

In the district of Dhenkanal near Talcher, the biggest image of Lord Visnu in India is found in a sleeping posture. From tip to toe it is 41.5" feet in length. Historians are of opinion that the construction of this image may date back to 8th century A.D. In the Svarna Jalesvar temple at Bhubaneswar built in the 7th or 8th century A.D., the beautiful figures of Saptasala Chhedan of Sri Rama and crushing of the Kaliya serpent by Srikrsna are found. The Kaliya Dalana image of Srikrsna has been preserved in the State Museum at Bhubaneswar.

To the south of the Lingaraj temple built during the reign of the Soma dynasty there are engravings of figures of Nanda, Yasoda and baby Krsna. Such figures have been engraved in a small temple at the north-east corner of the Brahmesvar temple at Bhubaneswar. In this picture Nanda has beard and Yasoda is seen churning curd and baby Krsna found to be curiously watching it. During the reign of the same Soma dynasty an attractive image of Lord Visnu has been installed at Jalauka near Chhatia in the district of Cuttack. Thus Viasnavism was in vogue in present Orissa for more than eight centuries before the advent of Ganga dynasty.

At the advent of the Ganga dynasty, Ananta Verman Chodaganga Deva (1078-1174 A.D.) at first worshipped Gokarnesvar installed on Mahendrachala (Mahendra hill). In this connection, it has been discussed before that on the Mahendra hill the indigenous Savaras had been worshipping the wooden image which was considered to be their State deity by the kings of Mathar dynasty. It is learnt form the Korne copper plate that through the influence of his ancestral preceptor Ramanuj, Chodaganga Deva was
attracted towards Visnu worship. His copper plate says that at the beginning of his reign he had built the temple of Laksmi Narayan at the sea shore.

“Laksmi jnanagrahram payonidhirasau sambhavitayasthitira Nodhanni svasurasya pujyata iti ksiradh take basaddhrvam, Nivignah purusottamah pramuditasta damalabhadrama Baitad bhartrgrham baram pirgrhat prapya pramanvita”.

There was an old temple of Lord Jagannatha at Jagannath Puri which was in a dilapidated condition and Chodaganga Deva renovated this old temple and rebuilt it totally. This is supported by the description in Vaisnava Lilamrita composed by Madhav Patnaik in the first part of sixteenth century during the reign of Gajapati Pratap Rudra Deva.

The same temple which had been built for installation of Laksmi Narayan is now the temple of Lord Jagannatha. It is Purusottama who is also Lord Jagannatha. Since the reign of Chodaganga Deva, Visnu worship got widely spread in Orissa as he got the worship instituted with all the arrangements physical and financial. That became the model for other princes of Orissa to construct Jagannatha temple and provide land for their puja. Purusottam Puri, the abode of Lord Jagannatha was the centre of Visnu worship and Vaisnavism. After the preaching of Advait philosophy by Sankaracharya, there appeared on the scene Madhvacharya, Visnusvami, Ramanujam and Nimbarka the preachers of Dualism. For propagation of their own teachings they had established several shrines at Puri. From the ten slokas composed by Nimbarka, it is learnt that he was a staunch supporter of the worship of Radha-Krsna. The fifth of these ten slokas reads as follows:

“It means that Radha the daughter of Vrsabhanu who resembles Laksmi and is ever blissful sits on the left of Sriksra surrounded by thousands of mates devoted to her service. She, who is the bestower of peace and grants all desires, is ever memorable and worthy of devotion and worship. The followers of Nimbarka are of opinion that Sriksra is the beloved of the Gopis and Radha resembling Laksmi is conjoined with him as his pleasing counterpart. But the conjoined image of Radha and Krsna as conceived by Nimbarka has not yet been discovered. Nimbarka has prepared a commentary on the principles of Vedanta named ‘Vedanta Parijata Saurabha’.

After this in the middle of the 12th century A.D. the Gitagovinda of Sri Jayadeva considerably influenced the common people in Orissa. The sweet and melodious verses of the Gitagovinda based on the blissful divine union of Radha and Madhava resounded all around and even penetrated to the distant interiors of Orissa and India. The influence of Vaisnavism on the then society in Orissa and the inspiration derived from dualism might have prompted Jayadeva to compose the love episode of Radha and Krsna. Though there was an impact of teachings of Buddha and Nimbarka in the mind of Jayadeva, his Gitagovinda was unique in its own way and invoked devotional and enchanting feelings in the hearts of the common mass of Orissa. In latter times literature, music, art and architecture in Orissa were greatly influenced by the Gitagovinda.

The four-armed image of Madhava-Visnu holding the conch, wheel, mace and lotus, with Krsna consciousness installed into it, was subsequently found to be holding the conch and the wheel in upper two hands and the flute by the lower two hands. This image in the pose of standing in triflection is adorned with the engraving

“Angetu vame vrsabhanjam mudabirajamana manurupasabharagham sakhisahasreih parisebitam sada amarema devim sakalestakamadam”.

(Sri Jayadeva O Sri Gitagovinda, p. 147)
often ten incarnations all around. Among such type of images in Orissa one found in Dharmasala of Cuttack (now in Jajpur district), has been preserved in the Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar. Of the other images, one is preserved in the Jagannatha Ballabha matha and another in the Gouranga matha at Puri.

The intense devotional ardour contained in the Gitagovinda of Jayadeva brought in course of time, the transformation of the image of Madhava to that of two armed Krsna with flute. Gradually, this image assumed the form of Krsna-Gopinatha with two arms holding the flute and was worshipped all over Orissa. The mode of sculpture of the image of Krsna-Gopinatha all over Orissa resembles that of Ksirachora Gopinatha of Remuna in the district of Balasore.

Close to the village Kenduli, the birthplace of Jayadeva, in the villages of Baliana, Sarkana, Hirapur, Naharakanta and Barimund in the undivided Puri district, Nagari, Adaspur and Varahapur in this sadar sub-division of Cuttack district such types of images are installed and worshipped. In the Brahmin sasanas near Puri the images of Gopinatha are worshipped but the image of Krsna with two hands is without his counterpart Radha. The date of sculpture of these images may be in the later part of 12th or the middle of 13th century A.D. In the Alarpur copper plate of the emperor Narasingha Deva IV, there is mention of installation of three images of Gopinatha at (1) Alarpur, (2) Sarkana and (3) Hirapur. (Alarpur plate of Narasingh Dev II E.I, Vol XXI, No. 3 pp. 17-24)

Again Maharani Chandrika Devi, the daughter of Anangabhima Deva II (1211 -1238 A.D.) of 13th century A.D., was a devotee of Lord Visnu. On the eastern bank of Bindusagar Tank of Bhubaneswar, she built the temple for worship of Ananta Vasudeva and Subhadra and mentioned this in a long rock inscription set in the temple which records as follows:

“(i) Krsnena trsnavati (6th sloka), (ii) tathirtha mandanasyasya tire nanavani ghane, Sriksrsna, Sribhala vastie nandanayite (13th sloka) (iii) mukuta dairalankaraiai saktya bhaktya mudanvita, balakrsnu subhadrancha sreyasesa vabhusayat”.

The rock inscription referred to above has been removed elsewhere. In its place, some one hostile has set up a rock inscription of Bhavanatha, the king of Burdwan.

Images resembling those of Krsna, Balaram and Subhadra in the Ananta Vasudeva temple are found in Kaliyuga Bagalpur and Shisilo (Sri-Shailo) near the village Kenduli. This has also been discussed elsewhere.

Due to popularity the Srimad Bhagavat had earned among the people in Orissa, Sridhara Svami has prepared a commentary on it. Sridhar Svami belonged to the village Maraigarh at a distance of 4 kilometres from the temple of Ksirachora Gopinatha at Remuna in Balasore district. This village Maraigarh was a sasan of Brahmins belonging to the “Paipalada” cult of the Aharva Veda. In the Aharva Veda there are many verses of the Tapini Upanisad containing descriptions of Krsna, Radha, Vrndavan etc.

It was in Orissa that the Tapini literature originated and influenced the growth of Vaisnava Bhagavata in Orissa. As a result, Visnu was worshipped as Krsna or Gopinatha. After the propagation of image worship in Orissa, the Gitagovinda of Jayadeva was composed and got wide circulation in Vaisnava literature. The worship of Radha was not in vogue from 13th to early 15th century in Orissa or Bengal. It has been mentioned in the Chaitanya Charitamrta by Krsnadas Kaviraj in the 17th century A.D. that
Sri Chaitanya used to listen to the slokas of the Gitagovinda and songs of Chandidas and Vidyapati recited to him by Ray Ramananda.

Vidyapati Chandidas Sri Gitagovinda
Bhabanurupa sloka padhen Ray Ramananda
(Anta Lila)
Vidyapati Jayadeva Chandidaser gita
Asvadena Ramananda Svarupa sahita (Adi Lila)

Sri Chaitanya stayed at Rajamahendri on the bank of the river Godavari with Ray Ramananda, for ten days. Ray Ramananda explained to him in details, the philosophy of Vaisnavism and the cult of Radha-Krsna or Gopinatha. He explained to him the texts of the Srimad Bhagavat, Brahma Samhita, Sriksrsna Karnaamrta and Gitagovinda. Radha tatva or marga is the best way of worshipping Krsna and Sri Chaitanya learnt it from Ray Ramananda according to the Vaisnava Lilamrta of Madhava Pattnayak. It, therefore, goes without saying that nobody before Chaitanya in Bengal had heard of the Gitagovinda. Had the Gitagovinda spread before in Bengal, a saint like Sri Chaitanya would have surely heard of it earlier.

According to the Chaitanya Charitamrta Madhavendra Puri had at first installed the image of Gopal-Krsna on Govardhana Giri. On his way from Vrndavana to Puri he had spent a night in the temple of Gopinatha at Remuna. Legends say that Gopinatha himself had stolen the cream to feed his devotee Madhavendra and hence the image of Gopinatha was popularly known as Ksirachora (Stealer of milk cream) Gopinatha.

After Madhavendra Puri, Sri Chaitanya visited Vrndavana. While returning from Vrndavan, Sri Chaitanya had left instructions with Rupa Gosvami and Sanatan Gosvami for restoring Vrndavan to its former glory. It has been mentioned in the middle part of Chaitanya Charitamrta that these two saints made sincere efforts, for reviving Vrndavana. The deities of Madana Gopal and Govinda in Vrndavan were installed by Sanatana and Rupa Gosvami. But the image of Radha had not been installed at that time. Madhavendra Puri had installed there the baby Krnsa on Giri Govardhana. It was Bal Gopal.

Sanatana and Rupa Gosvami had met at Vrndavan Jiva Gosvami, Raghunatha Bhatta, Gopal Bhatta and Raghunatha Das. These six saints are known as six Gosvamis. They made strenuous efforts to turn Vrndavan to a holy and finished the composition of Chaitanya Charitamrta in 1615 A.D. and in this scripture there is no mention of worship of Radha with the images of Madan Gopal and Govinda. So it is certain that worship of Radha had not been introduced by the six Gosvamis at Vrndavan. In the Chaitanya Chandrodaya Nataka written in 1579 A.D., there is mention of the conjoined images of Radha and Krsna. In the 7th chapter of this play, Sri Chaitanya has enquired from Ramananda regarding the deity worthy to be worshipped. In reply Ramananda said that it was proper to worship the conjoined image of Radha and Krsna.

Bhagawan (Sri Chaitanya) : Kimpasyamatra ?
Ramananda : Mahasi Sriksrsna Radhamedhe

In the Brahma Vaivarta Purana there is mention of the marriage of Radha and Krsna. As described in the Purana the marriage of Radha and Krsna had been performed before the marriage of Yasoda’s brother Ayana. It is peculiar that Yasoda’s brother Ayana in the literature of Bengal and other places in India is known as Chandrasena in Oriya.

“Maharaj, sa khalu sahaja vaisnava bhavati Purvamayamasmakupahasapatra masita samprati bhagavadanugrahe jate tanmahimajnata no yata”.
(Maharaja, he is follower of this Sahaja cult of Vaisnavism. Previously he was a person of ridicule by us. Now being favoured by Bhagavan we are apprised of his power.)

(Souvenir on Jayadev-1968 Page 59 published by J.S.P., BBSR)

On his way to Puri, Sri Chaitanya witnessed the images of Gopinatha with flute in hand at Remuna, Cuttack, Baliana, Hirapur, Sarkana, Danda Mukundapur worshipped. All these discussions go to prove the fact that the worship of the image of Gopinatha was widely in vogue in Orissa. As mentioned earlier, the Allapur copper plate inscription of Narasingha Deva II of Ganga dynasty (1238-1264 A.D.) throws light on this.

After composition of the Chaitanya Charitamrta, Narahari Chakravorty in his BhaktiRatnakara has recorded the achievements of Vaisnavas of Goudiya Branch. This work belongs to the 18th century A.D. and it records that the image of Radha was taken from Utka and was installed beside Madan Gopal and Govinda at Vrndavan. In the 6th chapter of Bhakti Ratnakara the following verses are found:

“Sri Govinda ye samaye prakata hoila,  
Se samaya srimiti Radhika nahin chhila  
Chhilen Sri Madanamohan prabhu echhe  
Sanmkspe kahiye sri jugal haila jaichhe”

The above verses prove that the image of Radha had not been worshipped earlier beside Madamohan and Govinda.

According to Bhakti Ratnakar a Brahmin of south India named Vrsabhanu was living at Radhanagar in Utka. He had installed the image of Radha as his daughter. After the death of the Brahmin, the Gajapati emperor, on receipt of the news, came to Radhanagar and witnessed the image of Radha, who appeared before the Gajapati emperor of Utka in a dream and instructed him to place her in the chakrabedha of Srimandira compound. After her installation in the Srimandira compound, when the time of her retreat to Vrdavan came, she again appeared in a dream before Gajapati emperor Purusottam Deva and directed him to send her image to Vrdavan. So the image of Radha was removed to Vrdavan where it was installed on the left of Govinda. These stories have been recorded in the Sadhana Dipika. Again it has been mentioned in the 13th chapter of the Bhakti Ratnakara that Jahnavi Devi, the wife of Nityananda had installed the image of Radha beside Gopinatha at Vrdavan. There is a place named Radhanagar close to Knsanagar (Krsnanagar) in the district of Cuttack. Similarly, there is another place named Radhanagar at Remuna near the temple of Ksrachora Gopinatha. These two villages are kin to Radhanagar mentioned in the Bhakti Ratnakar and might have been the centre for origin of Radha worship. But there is absolutely no truth in these stories.

Purusottama Jena of BhaktiRatnakar was the Gajapati emperor Purusottam Deva (1607-1623 A.D.) of Bhoi dynasty of Khurda. Rasikananda is considered to be the expounder of joint worship of Radha and Krsna. But he appears to be ignorant of the image of Radha of Radhanagar, its installation in Srimandira compound and its transport to Vrdavan. But surely enough the joint worship of Radha and Krsna had its origin from Orissa. In the 17th century A.D. it was carried to Vrdavan and from there it spread all over India.

The greatest mission of Sri Chaitanya was the revival of Hindu culture and restoration of Vrdavan Dham. The strenuous efforts which the six Gosvamis had made for the revival of Vrdavan has been stated before. With a view to preaching Vaisnava literature and the Gospels of
Vaisnavism at Gauda and Utkal, these six Gosvamis had deputed Narottam Thakur, Srinivasa Acharya and Syamananda to the eastern part of India. While carrying the palm leaf scriptures in a bullock cart, these were robbed away on their way near Bankuda and were rescued by Vira Hamir, the then king of Visnupur. This incident took place during 1600-1605 A.D. up to which Jiva Gosvami was alive.

Syamananda was commissioned for preaching Vaisnavism in Orissa. He enlisted Rasikananda Deva Gosvami as his disciple which represented the Syamananda school of the cult of Vaisnavism. One Baladeva Vidyabhusan of Orissa belonged to this school. During the plundering raids of the Moghul emperor Aurangzeb on Hindu images and monuments, the images of Vrindavan were transported for safety at Galta in the kingdom of Ambar in Rajputana and preserved there. Sawai Jayasingha, the king of Ambar (1699-1743 A.D.) had built the city of Jayapur in 1728 A.D. and removed his capital there. Jayasingha belonged to the Syamananda cult and was an avid worshipper of Radha-Krsna. But the Vaisnavas of south India who were believers in the Vedanta Philosophy were opposed to worship of Radha beside the image of Krsna. Jayasingha and the supporters of Radha-worship failed to prevail upon the Vaisnavas of south India for worship of Radha. As a result, Raja Jayasingha recorded his discourses on Radha-worship and invited the learned saints of Vrindavan for a discussion on the matter. At that time Visvanath Chakravarti was the head of the Gaudiya cult of Vaisnavism. But due to advanced old age he could not come to Jayapur and deputed Pundit Baladeva Vidyabhusan of Orissa, another exponent of Gaudiya Vaisnavism.

Baladeva Vidyabhusan was born near Remuna in the district of Balasore of Orissa. He had acquired vast learning on Vaisnava literature and on Radha worship. He joined the religious conference of the Pundits at Jayapur and listened carefully to the arguments put forth by the scholars of the south against the worship of Radha. He had composed the Govindabhasya (Bhagavat Gita and Dasopanisad) which he presented at the conference of the scholars putting forth sound and logical arguments in support of joint worship of Radha and Krsna. This convinced the scholars of the south and they had to accept both Radha and Krsna as the obverse and converse of one and the same reality. Since then the joint worship of Radha and Krsna spread like wild fire in the whole of India.

To sum up, Nimbarka, is the first propagator of Radha-Krsna worship in India and no definite date or place of birth of Nimbarka is available. He came to Orissa, stayed in Puri and established an Asram there which still exists.

Late Dr. J.N. Banerjee in his work Panchopasana recorded that Nimbarka or Nimbaditya was the founder of the Sanaka Sampradaya. In a place Nimba or Nimbapur in south India, Nimbarka was born in a Brahmin family. The religious life of Nimbarka was spent at Vrindavan and at Puri. He preached Vaisnavism based on the conception of the theory of Radha and Krsna. He prepared a short commentary on the Vedanta Sutra called the Vedanta Parijata Saurabha and his teachings were embodied in ten verses known as Dasaslokis. The main deities of worship of the disciples of Nimbarka and Sanaka Sampradaya were Gopijana-Vallabha-Gopalkrsna and His beloved counterpart Srimati Radhika. From these discussions it is learnt that the worship of Radha-Krsna dates back to the 12th century A.D. But, no image representing the then worship of Radha-Krsna has been discovered so far.
Probably the name Radha has been borrowed by Nimberka from the Sanskrit scripture *Dhvanyaloka* and *Suvasita Ratnakara*. The scripture *Sadukti Karnamrtam* by Sridhara Das was finished in 1205 A.D. But no definite mention of either the name of Jayadeva or Nimbarka has been made in it. No contemporary writing regarding worship of Radha-Krsna as propagated by Nimbarka has come to light so far. Therefore, it is clear that the credit of popularising the joint worship of Radha Krsna and the Radha *Bhakti* as the way to get Krsna goes to Jayadeva’s *Gitagovinda*.

Vallabhacharya and Sri Chaitanya were contemporaries. Vallabhacharya was born in 1479 A.D. and lived upto 1531 A.D. Sri Chaitanya took his birth in 1485 A.D. and passed away in 1533 A.D. Vallabhacharya had discourses with Chaitanya at Puri on the commentary of the Bhagavata. Vallabhacharya had also attempted to introduce the worship of the joint image of Radha and Krsna.

The twin images of man and woman discovered from the pillar of Pahadpur in West Bengal are believed to be the images of Radha and Krsna and are considered to belong to the 7th century A.D. In the Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India published in 1923-27, the then Director of Archaeological Department, Roy Bahadur K.M.Dikshit has accepted them as images of Radha and Krsna. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee has accepted the female image as Radha. Dr. Sukumar Sen has taken the woman image to be that of a Gopi. But the historian S.K. Saraswati in his book ‘Early Sculptors of Bengal’ published in 1937, has discarded the idea of treating these images of man and woman as those of Radha and Krsna. He says that the male image without the peacock feather on its head and the flute in hand cannot be taken as Krsna. It is not known how this idea spread among the people. So this can never be a fact that the twin stone images discovered at Pahadpur of the 7th century A.D. were those of Radha and Krsna. We are yet to come across any image of Krsna in India without these symbols of peacock feather or flute. Worshipping of a female goddess is as old as Mahenjodaro and Harappa in Pakistan and therefore, any twin image of man and woman joint cannot be taken to be that of Krsna and Radha. If it is taken that Radha and Krsna worship prevailed in Bengal from the 7th century A.D., then there would have been numerous such twin images found out by now. Krsna was not known as Madhava in Bengal till the 16th century A.D., when Chaitanya came.

Ajit Kumar Tripathy lives at 6R/1, Unit-6, Near Indira English Medium School, Bhubaneswar-751001.