



The Antiquities of Sri Purusottama Kshetra

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The sacred place of Sri Jagannath, the Lord of the Universe is known as various names- Puri, Nilachala, Purusottama, Sreekshetra, Sankhakshetra, Sankhanavi Mandal, Abikarpatana etc. In ancient time Lord Jagannath was worshipped as Purusottama. So in different Purans the greatness of Lord Jagannath and his holy city Purusottama Kshetra are described beautifully. According to Padma Puran it is stated that the Purusottama Kshetra is situated on the north shore of the sea and south of the river Mahanadi. In Brahma Puran it is described that the length and breadth of this Kshetra is ten jojana (nearly 80 miles) and five jojana (nearly 40 miles) respectively.

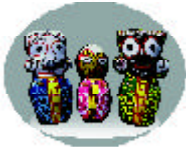
If we intend to trace the time of the Purusottamakshetra, we will have to go through the Pujaripali inscription of Gopal Dev (last part of 11th century) in which we find the name of this sacred Kshetra. Besides this, our attention is drawn to the hints of the eastern sea and the Purusottama Kshetra in the inscription of Nagapur of 1104 A.D.

Before these two inscriptions we also get some information on this Kshetra in the drama of Anargharaghab of Murari Mishra. As per Skanda Puran we come to know that the sacred image of Lord Jagannath has been made of the log of wood

floating on the ocean. We can also find this type of interpretation in the Atharva Veda and Rg Veda. But this idea is not so clear by which we can put the time of Lord Purusottama as the time of Rg Veda.

On the whole we may interpret the time of Purusottama Kshetra is not earlier than the Puranic Age. In different Purans we find the detailed description of this sacred Kshetra. In Matsya Puran we find the name of Purusottama twice- in the description of “Bimalapitha” and in different sacred Hindu Tirthas. There we also find a description of Mourjya kings and their successors in this Puran. So as per this description we can easily interpret the time of this Puran is not earlier than the Mourjya period. According to Pergitar Saheb the time of the Matsya Puran is the last part of 3rd century A.D. According to Dr. Raghaban, the place of this Puran is nearly Narmada province. So from this interpretation we can assume that the famous publicity of Purusottama Kshetra has been spread over Narmada province for which the author of Matsya Puran able to give an information of this Purusottama Kshetra.

And also Pergitar Saheb described in Bishnu Puran that there is information of “Uddradesha” and “Puri town” instead of



“Andhra” and “Champa nagar” respectively. He also assumed the time of the Bishnu Puran is not earlier than the last part of 4th century A.D.

After thorough study of Brahma Puran, Wilson described that the worship of Sri Krishna as Lord Jagannath has been found in 13th or 14th century A.D. In the journal of Aryabartta there is an interpretation of the greatness of Sri Jagannath Kshetra in the book Tantra Jamal and Rudra Jamal. In “Uttartantra” of Rudra Jamal when we find Bhairab and Bhairabi discussion, there is some information of Lord Jagannath. Not only in Rudra Jamal but also in Tantra Jamal it is stated that Purusottama is the heaven of the world.

Though these two tantric texts are modern it is sure and authentic that it was written earlier than the Kurma Puran, because we find the references of these two Tantra texts in the Kurma Puran. Some scholars discussed the time of Kurma Puran is 4th century A.D. or much earlier than that. As per these descriptions of Purusottama and Lord Jagannath we can directly

say that there must be a historical value of these two Tantric texts like Rudra Jamal and Tantra Jamal. But according to Manmohan Chakrabarti Skanda, Brahma and Siva Puran had been written after 10th century A.D. Depending on this we cannot be able to trace out the time of the sacred “Purusottama Kshetra”.

So considering the subject matter and facts described in the above Purans and Tantric texts we can easily trace the time of the holy “Purusottama Kshetra” as earlier as 3rd century A.D.

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