

Gajapati Rama Chandra Dev (I) as “Abhinav Indradyumna”

Dr. Bhaskar Mishra

Gajapati Maharaja Rama Chandra Dev (I), who was the founder of Bhoi dynasty, established his capital at Khurda and reinstalled the four Principal deities in the Ratnasinghashana of Shreemandira, Puri. His effective and smooth administration of the Khurda State as well as overall supervision in the field of religion, education, military power are very much memorable in the history of Odisha.

Raja Rama Chandra Dev, son of Danci Bidyadhar, ruled for about thirty years in Khurdagarh State. It is ascertained from the ‘Madala Panji’ (Temple Chronicle) & ‘Chakadapothi’ that Gajapati Rama Chandra Dev established his fort & palace in a remote village i.e. Khurda near ‘Kholapala’ at the foot hills of Barunei.

According to ‘Akbaranama’ the fort of Khordha was the strongest of the fortresses of Rama Chandra Dev. Rectangular in shape (4000’ x 3000’), comprising inner walls and outer walls with four gates, one in the each side, there was a moat with maximum breath of 75’, encircling the fort from all sides. The drainage system of the fort wall was nicely designed. In the middle, there was a tank with store embankment, locally known as ‘Rani Puskarini’.

The previous Capital of Odisha known as Barabati fort, Cuttack came under the rule of

king Anangabhim Dev of Ganga dynasty till the reign of Mukunda Dev, the king of Chalukya dynasty for a period 350 years. After his death, the Barabati fort came under possession of the Muslim rulers. So king Rama Chandra Dev without wasting his time to restore the Barabati fort at Cuttack, the then Capital of Odisha, wisely took necessary steps with the help of three Dalabehera’s or Chiefs of the ‘Garh namely Adhikari Baghu Patra of Kokalagarh, Jadhu Parida of ‘Ghoradia’ and Sarani Patra of ‘Mallipada’ under undivided Puri district and established his new fort and palace at Khurda in the dense forest for safety in the year 1571. Besides this, the founder of Chauhan dynasty king Balaram Das of Sambalpur state had rendered all assistance and help for the above work. According to ‘Madalapanji’ & ‘Chakadapothi’, the name of the new capital was ‘Khurda Kataka’ or ‘Jagannathpur Kataka’.

The new Gajapati king made sincere efforts to popularise and glorify his rule. It is said that the image of Shree Jagannath had been burnt by the fanatic Kalapahada after the occupation of Odisha by the Afghans of Bengal in 1568. Rama Chandra Dev (I) constructed the new images of the deities and installed them in the bejewelled platform of sanctum sanctorum of Shree

Jagannath Temple, Puri, for which he was acclaimed as the “Second Indradyumna”. According to Puri District Gazetter sources, some time in 1596 he set the famous Blue-Wheel (Neelachakra on the crest of the temple of Jagannath and this work was done by one Damodar Champatiray, the son of Barjena Mahapatra, a temple accountant.

Gajapati Rama Chandra Dev (I) was a patron of Brahmins. He established many Brahmin Villages in different parts of Puri district. These Villages were known as ‘Sasana’. It was during his rule that the Muktimandap in Puri Temple was renovated, probably by Rani Gaura Devi, the wife of General Mansingh in the year 1592 A.D.

The other significant work of Gajapati Maharaja Rama Chandra Dev was reintroduction of Mahaprasada in Shreemandir after a lapse of eight years. As per his initiation and advice of Rajgurus, Santhas, Sanyasi’s etc, Anna-Mahaprasada was offered to the deities near Ratnasinghashana and the same were distributed among the Brahmins, Santha, Sanyasis and Sevayats on the said occasion. He also took keen interest to celebrate the world famous Ratha Yatra of Lord Shree Jagannath at Puri, for which the devotees of Lord Shree Jagannath were very much pleased with him.

Under his active patronage, some Sanskrit and Odia Scholarly works were completed by the then Veteran Pandits. These include “Durgostava Chandrika”, “Karmangi” & “Madala Panji” (Temple Chronicle) etc. Rama Chandra Dev (I) took initiation for recording of

Madala Panji (temple chronicle) and also codified the rituals and *nitis* of Shree Jagannath Temple known as ‘Karmangi’ in palm leaf script by engaging his Karana Sebaks for the first time during his reign.

Rama Chandra Dev was an able and benevolent administrator. Some of his outstanding works include maintaining peace and safety for general public in the State, reinstallation of Principal deities in Shreemandira, introduction of Madala Panji (Temple Chronicle), establishment of new fort and palace at Khurda and strengthening military powers as well as encouraging his Council of Ministers and Subordinates for smooth functioning of the State. Not only he was very much popular among the various section of the Society for his dedication to the State, but also he was a great devotee of Lord Shree Jagannath Mahaprabhu. He was religiously discharging his duties during the period of his entire regin.

According to some historians of the State, the name of the King Rama Chandra Dev (I) is very much memorable during the golden era of the Bhoi Dynasty in Odisha and he was otherwise known as “Abhinav Indradyumna” or “Duti Indradyumna” due to his effective administration and service rendered for the well being of the people of the State.

Dr. Bhaskar Mishra, OSD (JTA), Law Department, Bhubaneswar.