



Shri Jagannath and Adiguru Shankaracharya

Parikshit Mishra

The date and time of revelation of Shri Jagannath in the present form is unknown to gods, demons and humans. Lord Jagannath is described in Rig Veda, the oldest text. It has 1000 hymns addressed to gods to propitiate divinities. It was completed in 12th century BC. It appears Lord Jagannath is older than oldest text. Before the appearance of wood (Daru) quartet stone idol of Lord Nila Madhav was worshipped on Blue Hill. He bestowed deliverance. In Bamadev Samhita and Niladri Mahodaya the chronological background of disappearance of Nilamadhav and descent of Lord Jagannath with his siblings is

underscored. "Purusottam Jagannath is the sovereign Lord of universe. He existed before time and space. He is the source of matter and energy : omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscience."

King Indradyumna the fifth generation of Lord Brahma was a devout Lord Visnu-worshipper in Krita (Satya) yuga. In a dialogue between Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati it was reiterated that five-faced Brahma was born from Lord Narayan's navel lotus and there and then emerged Madhav, worshipped as Nilamadhav in Purusottam Kshetra. Sacred Purusottam Kshetra



is the best place on earth where Lord Brahma is settled. He performed oblation (Yajna) and Nilamadhav came out. It is difficult to define the merit and excellence of the blessed Purusottam or Sankha Kshetra. It is Utkal in Bharat Varsha where this holy land lies. People living here are pious, shy and obedient. Brahmins are well versed in scriptures, rituals and maintain life of purity.

Once king Indradyumna of the city of Abanti in Malab Kingdom heard adulation of Purusottam Kshetra from a beaming nonagenarian with tangled locks. The old man gave out comprehensive information and mysteriously disappeared. It evoked interest in king. He deputed younger brother of the royal priest Vidyapati on a fact-finding-mission to Purusottam Kshetra. Vidyapati rightly reached the destination. He befriended tribal chieftain, a devotee of Lord Vishnu, for that Lord Nilamadhav, Viswvasu. It was an arduous work, but Vidyapati gained holy *darshan* of Lord Nilamadhav and was captivated. On his return to Abanti city he placed his report verbally before the king. The king was overwhelmingly elated and appreciated Vidyapati's efforts.

Now King Indradyumna set out to Purusottam Kshetra with an entourage of subjects, kith and kin, military-men and above all saint of gods Narada giving charges of the state to prince Birabhadra, his son. But on reaching Purusottam Kshetra the king was crestfallen with the news that Lord Nilamadhav had disappeared in a devastating sand storm the previous night. Now Debarshi Narada told the king what transpired to Lord Brahma elaborately about the revelation of Lord Jagannath. This gave the king some comforts.

Events took place very fast. The king dreamt of a sandal-wood tree emitting fragrance

with conch and wheel marks afloat at sea-shore. It likened the perfect image of Lord Jagannath.

The king was extremely happy. The holy tree was brought with pomp to the erected house where yajna was to be performed. In the meantime a fragile old carpenter appeared from nowhere and built the sacred idols in a closed door house in fifteen days. The deities, the proper idols of Brahma, appeared radiantly on opening of the doors, but the old hag (who believed to be none other than Lord Jagannath himself) disappeared. This episode prolonged. King Indradyumna went to Brahmlok with Debarshi Narada and returned with Lord Brahma after aeon who sanctified the temple and installed the quartet on the jewel-altar after performing scriptural rituals.² Niladri Mahodaya, composed in later period has almost the similar description. Skanda Puran stated that the old carpenter built out of wood (Daru) the images of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Chakraraj Sudarshan with conch, wheel, mace and lotus in their hands.³

Opinions differed on the exact period of king Indradyumna's rule who was instrumental in carving in sacred wood (Daru) the idols in the present form. Pandit Suryanarayan Dash says, "Some people opine Mahabharat was composed in 5th or 6th century BC. Some others observed that it was 1st or 2nd century BC. Thus, it has to be recognised that Indradyumna existed several centuries Before Christ."⁴

It was possible many temples were built to accommodate the deities but vagaries of nature crumbled them. Pious Kings rebuilt them. The size of the temple was unequal. Attacks of religious antagonists could have destroyed the temples. Man doesn't know the prehistoric status. The



temples also faced the attacks of Islamic fundamentalists who were crazy iconoclasts.

Biographies of Adiguru Shankaracharya carry varied period of his life including dates of his birth and death. Records of Dwaraka, Govardhan and Badrinath shrines showed that the saint was born in 509 B.C. and died in 477 BC. This conformed to the writings in Hindu legends (Puranas). Commentator Anandagiri maintained that the savant was born in 44 BC and passed away in 12 BC. Venkateswar believed the Acharya lived a long life of 92 years, born in 805 AD and died in 897 AD without which he could not have amassed depthless knowledge and produced over 300 texts including huge commentaries, philosophical exposition, hymns and psalms. He laid the foundation of Advait Vedanta School of thought. He perambulated the whole of India more than once, held religio-philosophical discourses, won debates with his superior knowledge, led by example a pure and austere life of a true sanyasin and established four mutts in four corners of India. Shri Shankar was born to Shivguru (Father) and Aryamba (Mother) at Kaladi in Kerala in a devout Brahmin family. He died at the young age of 32 years at Kedarnath. He was also a child prodigy mastering Veda, Vedanta, Upanishads and Puranas at very early age. Some texts state the place of his death as Kanchipuram. It could be in Tamil Nadu or Kerala.⁷ Scholars and philosophers such as Max Muller Macdonnel, Pathak, Deussen and S.Radhakrishnan asserted that Shri Shankar was born in 788 AD and departed in 820 AD. He lived a small period of life of only 32 years, but etched his name in history in golden letters. His superior philosophical and spiritual works provided teeth to the interpretation of Veda, Vedant, Upanishads and Puranas.⁸

Shankaracharya perambulated the whole of Bharat Varsha more than once barefoot with his disciples, passing through the difficult terrain aeon ago. He held religious discussions in different centres of learning and demonstrated his depth, defeated his rival pundits in intellectual, philosophical and spiritual debates. He founded shrines (Mutts) and reached Utkal. Jajanagna (the present Jajpur) was the capital of Utkal. Mahabhava Gupta Jajati Keshari held the reins of administration. Reaching Jajpur Shri Shankar had a holy dip in the sacred waters of the river Baitarani. He had the Darshan of Yajna Varah.

The king received the Acharya with utmost love and respect. The Acharya asked the king whereabouts of Lord Jagannath. The king expressed his ignorance and sent an emissary to Shrikshetra to gather news from the sarvitores. The emissary returned with information that the idols were shifted to Sonepur as the yavans attacked the temple.

As recorded in the Madalapanji in the second year of rule of Shovan Dev, Raktabahu of Delhi attacked the temple at Puri. The priests took away the holy idols (Parameswar), buried them at Sonepur and planted a banyan tree over it. The idols were left there for long 144 years. During this period hostile Afghans and Moguls ruled India. Yavana invasion panicked servants of Lord Jagannath.

At the behest of the Acharya King Jajati Keshari moved to Sonepur. It was back-breaking experience. The earth at the root of the banyan tree was dug deep, the Daru was lost but Brahma matter was in tact. At Sankha Kshetra the Acharya and the king executed their plan. New idols were carved in neem wood (Daru) and ceremonially placed at Ratnabedi, performing scriptural rituals.⁹ Some others maintained that the



holy idols were completely lost. The sacred *salagram*s were collected from the Ganduki river of Nepal and new images were built.

“The wood cutters were engaged to cut down the tree and remove the Lord safely from the cave. The Lords were removed and examined by Shankar who found that the Brahmas were getting destroyed, worm-stricken. Then he sent one Bharati Acharya to Nepal whose Hindu king cooperated with Bharati in finding out lively *salagram*s from the river Ganduki which were placed in the Brahmas of the Daru icons.” At the instance of the Acharya King of Nepal was decorated with a prestigious title of Pattamahayanayak and held the right to worship the Lord directly. Three deities were re-installed on Ratnasimhasan.¹⁰

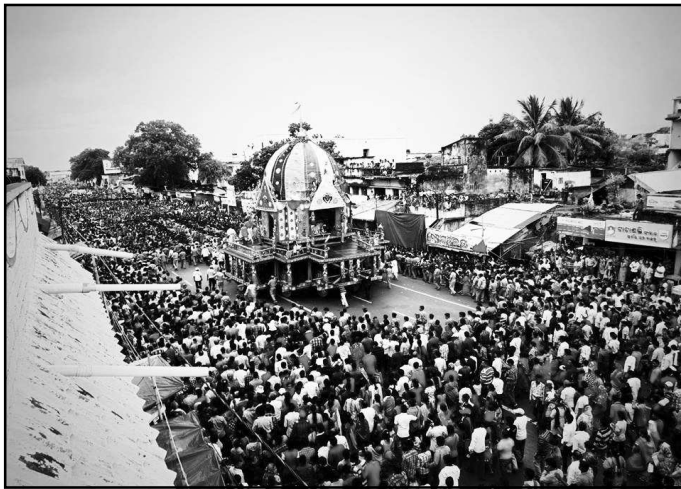
Adi Shankaracharya as established Govardhan Matha on the sea-shore, brought accord between Shaivites and Vaisnavites, introduced *smarta* rites and rice Mahaprasad of Lord Jagannath. He was also unifier of Hari, Hara and Shakti cults. He could see the integration at Lord Jagannath. He composed Jagannathastaka, stotras or Lord Shiva and Visnu, in praise of the Lords. He appointed his beloved disciple

Padmapada as the head of Govardhan Matha. Great soul Shri Adi Shankaracharya’s praise of the Lord in “Kadachit Kalindi tata Bipina Sangita Karabo etc.” adorns lips of every devotee at Shree Kshetra.¹¹

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Parikshit Mishra, Rajendra Nagar, Cuttack-753010.



Baripada Rath Yatra