



There are four ancient Ashramas or hermitages situated in four different quarters of sages like Bhṛigu, Angira, Markandeya and Kandu. Bhṛigu and Angira are Vedic *rishis* whereas Markandeya and Kandu are *puranic rishis*. These Ashramas prove the antiquity of Purushottama Kshetra. The four Ashramas are related to Sri Jagannath Temple in several rites. The images of Nrusingha, Narayana and Sudarshan visit the Ashramas in consonance with the rites on the occasions namely Ashramabije, Amabasyaneeti, Chakrabula ekadashi neeti, Balabhadra Janmaniti, Radhastaminiti and Kumarapurnima etc.

to assist in her attempt. Pramlocha by her sweet words and enticing manners was successful to win the heart of the sage. Kandu accepting her as his wife went to the valley of Mandara and lived their happily for a hundred years.

One day Pramlocha went and bowed before her husband and sought his permission to go back to Devalok.

‘Dear, stay here for some time-more’, replied the sage. Another hundred years went by. Again one day she went and sought permission to go home. Again the sage asked her to stay for

Kandu - Ashrama in Purushottama Kshetra

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Maharshi Kandu’s Ashrama is situated in Gaudabada Sahi. Regarding Kandu's arrival in Purushottama Kshetra there is a story depicted in Brahmapuran and Vishnupurana as follows.

Sage Kandu, chief of *devajnas* was performing penance in a hermitage on the banks of the river Gomati. The glory of the sage was indescribable. Devaraj Indra was afraid of the result of penance of the sage which could give him the kingship of Devaloka. So Devendra sent Pramlocha, an enchanting nymph to Kandu to distract him from his penance. Cupid, Spring and Malaya are also sent to accompany Pramlocha

a while more. Centuries passed without the sage losing even a little of his amour. On the other hand everyday it found different channels of expression. One evening the sage stepped out of his Ashrama and on seeing that Pramlocha inquired where he was going.

Sage : ‘The sun is going to set. I am going to do my *sandhyavandana*. I do not want to bring a break in my daily ablutions and duties.’ Pramlocha : ‘Oh, Righteous one, did the sun set for you only today ? The sunset of hundreds of years has gone by without your knowing. Sage : ‘Dear, you came to this holy river-shore only this



morning. It was only this morning that I saw you coming to my Ashrama for the first time.

Now the day is over and dusk is coming. Why this ridicule ? Please do tell me the truth.

Pramlocha : ‘Nine hundred years, six months and three days have passed since I came to you.’

Hearing this the great sage became very angry and scolded Pramlocha much. That beautiful maiden heard it all standing bathed in perspiration. The sage in rage commanded the trembling nymph to go away immediately from his presence.

Kandu was overwhelmed for loss of his spiritual power and vigour. He cursed himself again and again for his past deed. Devendra was successful in his plan and his seat was secured. The sage was impatient and his grief and sorrow knew no bounds. Finding no other way when he was going to commit suicide he heard a heavenly voice.

Oh Kandu ! Do not do so. Now you proceed to most sacred Purushottama Kshetra, meditate there and be successful in your attempt.

Somehow Kandu felt hopeful of his deliverance. Maharshi Kandu arrived at Purushottama Kshetra which was like the heaven on earth. The land was full of gardens and orchards. The Ashramas of great sages like Bhrigu, Angira and Markandeya were there. he saw Purusottam in the temple. It is said that Purusottamkshetra was the king of holy places and God Purusottam was the king of gods.

Sage Kandu made a hermitage and practised right living, introspection, self analysis and meditation on the pure, inner self and recited Brahmaparastotra written by Pitamaha Brahma.

That *stotra* was very much powerful which could give immortality, freedom, perfection, eternal bliss and everlasting peace.

Brahmaparastotra –

“Param param Vishnuraparaparam parah parebhyah paramatmarupah. Sa brahmaparah Paraparabhutah parah paraliyamapi paraparah. Sa karanam karanasamshritopi tasyapi hetuh parahetuhetuh. Karyopi chaisha saha karmakarturoopairanekairabatiha sarvam. Brahma prabhurbrahma sa Sarvabhuto brahmaprajanam patirachyutoasau. Brahmabyayam nityamajam sa vishnurapakshaya-dyairakhi-lairasangah. Brahmaksharamaj am nityam yathaasau purushottamah. Tatha ragadayo doshah proyantu prashamam mama.”

‘Maha Vishnu, the all pervading Paramatman, the self luminous is the highest goal of worldly way. It is difficult to cross over his limit. He is beyond perishable matters and higher than sky etc. He is endless. He is in the form of truth. He is accessible only to mendicants. He is beyond the universe which turns round from creation to preservation and destruction, from destruction to creation. His form is not to be seen by senses.

He is the great Atman who is beyond senses.

He is the protector of devotees and fulfills their desires.

He is the beginning, the origin of the causes of *panchamahabhutas* or the five rudiments of matter and *tanmatras* or Sukshmabhutas. He is the great self who is principal cause of everything. He is the supreme, He becomes possessed of supremacy. Thus He is the creator or progenitor of all creatures, actions and subjects.



The universal soul is the master of beings, assuming all forms, protects all creatures. He sustains all and is designated as the universal soul and the imperishable Lord. As the supreme person He is unborn, eternal, everlasting and primeval, a devotee like me who with his mind constantly fixed in Him, the evils like passion, desire should come to an end’.

Bhagaban Purusottama was very much pleased to hear ‘Brahmaparastotra’, appeared before Kandu and wanted to grant him a boon. Sage Kandu paid Him a prostrating salute, felt himself fortunate and offered a long prayer.

‘Oh Jagannath ! I want to attain that imperishable supreme state having reached which, devoted to Him, I will never return. The Supreme Lord advised to meditate on him and grant him full liberation from the mortal world. Sage Kandu attained supreme satisfaction, his life was a great success.

Heavenly nymph, Promlocha, thus reprimanded and sent away, rose up in the air and travelled by it. As she flew, the perspirations of her body was absorbed by the tender leaves of trees on the way. She was pregnant at that time and the embryo which went forth along with her perspiration was absorbed in bits by the tender leaves and sprouts. Wind gathered them

from the different trees and made everything into one. Moon light gave it development and gave it the form of a woman. She was named Marisha.

That was how Marisha was born of trees. Marishta, daughter of Kandu became the wife of Prachetas. (Chapter 15, Amsa I, Visnupurana)

Actually sage Kandu was the worshipper of Nrusingha, who is also called Purusottam. Near Kandu-ashrama there is a temple of Nrusingha. The stone image is eight armed having iconic importance is a rare Nrusingha image in India. It is said that Nrusingha is the former shape of Sri Jagannath. Kandu used to come to Purusottam temple regularly.

Once upon a time Kandu’s dear son aged sixteen died in a forest and curse of Kandu made forest a desert. There was no water and all the trees became dried and dead. Hanuman and party who went in search of Seeta came to this place. (Chapter 48, Kiskindha Kanda, Valmiki Ramayana).

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