The Cult of Jagannath

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The political greatness of Orissa is long past, but her religious greatness continues unabated. Her temples, images and many other monuments that stand proudly today rising above the ravages of the time bear eloquent testimony to her predominence in the religious sphere and establish beyond doubt the antiquity of the sanctity of her soil. Most of these monuments now stand forlorn and forshaken, but in the days gone by, they were the centres of varied activities of a brave jolly folk vibrating with rich gay life. These brave people are gone, and with them has departed the soul of all those that they created, loved and respected. Their gods and goddesses, their temples and stupas and all that they held so dear to them are mostly dead things today lying uncared for here and there. Out of these gods and goddesses, Tathagatas and Tirthankaras has emerged the Great Lord Jagannath as the sole representative of all the extinct gods and goddesses embodying in Him the chief elements of all. So the cult of Jagannath is a curious mixture of many elements heterogeneous and homogeneous, welded into one through a long synthetic process of evolution. In short, Jagannathism, if we may say so, is the synthetic epitome of the different Indian cults that had gained currency among the people in different periods of the history. To appreciate it fully it need be studied against historical background. So I have traced below, in general outline, the course of religious history of Orissa to provide the necessary background for the study of the cult of Jagannath.

For sake of convenience of the readers I may say here that the history of Orissa up to the mediaeval ages is mainly the history of Kalinga, Kongada, Tosala and Kosala, but ultimately Kalinga dominated. In the eleventh century Ananta Verman Chodaganga of Kalinga became the master of the whole of Orissa comprising Kalinga, Tosala, Odra and Utkala. So the term Orissa, as it is used here should be taken in the aforesaid context.

The geographical situation of Orissa has been the main factor contributing to her religious greatness. Bounded on the west by inaccessible jungle tracts and rugged mountains, the vast sea in the east, she lay in holy isolation from the rest of India, little affected by the political turmoils and confusion that convulsed other parts in the middle ages. Thus comparatively a calmer and more tranquil atmosphere prevailed in Orissa than in other parts of India. Besides Orissa served as the connecting link between northern India and the Deccan in the east. These geographical advantages were always alluring to different religious sects. The recesses in the jungles and
mountains of Orissa provided them with veritable sanctuaries and ideal atmosphere for carrying out their religious activities in peace and tranquility without any fear of oppression or persecution. Mainly for these reasons Orissa has been, in all ages, the favourite haunt of religious preachers.

It is difficult to ascertain the time when Aryan culture was established in Orissa. In the early Vedic period and in the time of the sutras Orissa was certainly beyond the pale of Aryan culture. Even in the times of Mahavarta it was not fully Aryanised. It is quite probable that the people of Orissa had adopted Brahmanical faith before the advent of Buddhism or Jainism. Kalinga was known to the Aryans, from the Vedic times. The name Kalinga occurs in connection with the origin of the sage Kakshivat, who was the son of Dirghatama by the wife of the king of Kalinga. Odra, Utkala and Kalinga are mentioned in Manu and the epics. By the time of the epics the kings of Orissa were taking part in the politics of Aryavarta, So it is not unreasonable to think that slow infiltration of Aryan culture in Orissa must have started long before the appearance of Jainism and Buddhism.

The infiltration of the Aryan culture must have been a slow and long-continued process on account of the hilly nature of the place and backwardness of the primitive inhabitants. The few Aryans that came settled down in the plain regions and Aryanised the non-Aryans.

The wave of religious upheaval of the 6th century B.C. did reach Orissa. Buddha is said to have preached in Orissa in his life time. According to one Buddhist legend Sakymuni promulgated Kalachakra system in Orissa in his life time. According to another story in the Vinaya Pitakam, Tapus and Bhallik, two merchants from Orissa, were the first worshippers of Buddha. So Buddhism spread to Orissa from the very beginning and was probably established before the conquest of Kalinga by Asoka in the 3rd century B.C.

Similarly Jainism had spread to Orissa from very early times, probably earlier than Buddhism. According to a legend in the Jaina Harivamsa Purana, Mahavira Vardhamana preached his religion in Orissa. In Jaina Kshetra Samasa, Paraswanath is said to have visited a place called Kopakakataka, which according to Mr. N.N. Vasu, is Kupari in the Balasore district where many Jaina images are found. Paraswanath is the favourite tirthankara of Orissa. According to Jaina traditions he flourished in the 8th century B.C. So his coming to Orissa takes us back by two centuries from the starting of Buddhism.

The abduction scene in the frieze of the queen’s palace in the Udayagiri hills is ascribed to Paraswanath. According to Paraswanath Charita by Bhavadeva Suri, Paraswanath saved Prabhavati, the daughter of the king of Kusasthala (Kanauj) while she was being abducted by the Yavana king of Kalinga. Paraswanath subsequently married her.

Whatever may be the truth of these stories there can be little doubt that Jainism entered Orissa from very early times, may be, before the Buddhism.

Before Brahmanism was firmly established Buddhism and Jainism made their appearance. They were comparatively simpler faiths, as such, they might have made more favourable impression on the minds of the people than the tough Brahmanism.

In the 4th century B.C., Orissa was probably under the Nandas. Nandas were pro-
Jaina, so under their patronage Jainism would have made much headway.

In the 3rd century B.C. Asoka conquered Kalinga. The Kalinga war resulted in him a deep aversion for war and bloodshed. He wanted to atone for the loss of lives by adopting the non-violent creed of Buddhism. In his zeal for doing good to the humanity he raised a petty local religion to the status of a world religion. Thus Kalinga will remain eternally associated with the momentous event of the history.

Buddhism naturally came to the forefront under the patronage of Asoka, but not at the cost of her sister religions. Asoka followed a policy of religious toleration. Hence all the three religions flourished side by side.

History of Orissa becomes enveloped in darkness after Asoka till we come to the great emperor Kharavela in 2nd century B.C. From his Hatigumpha inscription it appears that he professed Jainism. But all the same, he was equally lenient towards Brahminism. His coronation was performed according to the Vedic rites and he performed the mahadana of Kalpa tree. He made rich gifts to the Brahmans. So in the second century B.C. Brahmanism and Jainism flourished side by side. Buddhism was probably eclipsed and pushed to the background for the time being.

After Kharavela again we find ourselves in deep darkness as to the course of the events of the history of Orissa. We do not know how the successors of Kharavela ruled. We have only a short votive inscription of Maharaja Kadampa and another of prince Vadukha. These were however recorded, probably in the life time of Kharavela in whose 13th year it is mentioned that 117 caves were excavated by himself, his queens, sons and officers. We know that the Satavahana king was his rival whom he disregarded and sent his army to the western quarter in the 2nd year of his reign. The Satavahanas were very powerful and there seemed to exist a rivalry with the Satavahana king of the Deccan in the 1st century B.C., and they extended their power as far as Pataliputra. So it is quite probable that they conquered Kalinga about the close of 1st century B.C. or the beginning of the Christian era. Kalinga probably remained under their control till their fall in the 1st quarter of the 3rd century of the Christian era.

This is corroborated by the tradition preserved in the Tibetan chronicle that the king of Otisha (Orissa) was converted to Buddhism with one thousand of his subjects by Nagarjuna, the great Mahayanist teacher who flourished about 200 A.D. in the court of the Satavahanas. In Taranath's account the name of the king who was converted is given as Munja.

This tradition provides us with two important information. Firstly, the king of Orissa in the times of Nagarjuna was not Buddhist; secondly, Mahayana system was introduced into Orissa in the beginning of the 3rd century A.D.

Next we come to Guha Siva, the devoted worshipper of Buddha in about the middle of the 3rd century A.D. In my article on 'The Coins of Orissa I have tried to prove that Guha Siva was a historical personality. So Buddhism reigned supreme in Orissa from the beginning of the 3rd century to the middle of the 4th century.

In the middle of the 4th century Mathara Kings were ruling in Kalinga and their rule lasted till about the middle of the 4th century. They professed Hinduism, all of them called themselves as 'Parama Daivata or 'Parama
Bhagavata' excepting Ananta Varman of Srungavara-pukata plates who called himself as ‘Parama Mahesvara.

Towards the close of the 5th century or in the 6th century the eastern Gangas were ruling in Kalinga. They were staunch Saivites, their family god being Siva Gokarnesvara on the Mahendra mountains.

Almost contemporaneously with them were ruling the Sailodbhava kings of the Kangoda Mandala. They too were Saivites. The Sirpur kings, Jayaraja, Sudevaraja and Pravararaja who ruled probably from the last quarter of the 5th century to the first quarter or a little later of the 6th century were Vaisnavas. Their seals bear the figure of Gaja-Lakshmi. Sudevaraja and Pravararaja call themselves Parama Bhagavata. Tivara Deva who ruled subsequently from 530 to 550 A.D. according to Prof. V. V. Mirashi calls himself as Parama Vaisnava in his Rajim inscription. Harshadeva was also a worshipper of Vishnu, while Mahasiva Gupta Balarjuna was a Saiva.

Towards the close of the 7th century the Sailodbhavas were supplanted by the Karas in the same region. The early Karas were Buddhists as appears from the Neulpur plates of Subhakara Deva. But the latter Karas were all Saivas excepting Tribhubana Mahadevi who was a Vaishnava.

When Ywan Chwang visited Orissa in 639 A.D. he found Buddhism disappearing in Kalinga. In ‘Ota corresponding to modern districts of Cuttack and Balasore he found Buddhism in fair condition, while in Kongoda corresponding to modern north Ganjam and Puri districts he found it waning. Harsha conquered Orissa in 643 A.D. His conquest probably helped the revival of the Buddhism, which like the last flicker of a lamp shone brightly for a short period of less than a century and disappeared leaving innumerable monuments of its activities in the holy land of Orissa. According to Huen Tsangs account Jainism was in a better position than Buddhism in Kangoda and Kalinga. Besides the early Karas, we have two more inscriptions of about 10th century A.D. showing existence of Buddhism in Orissa.

Udaya Varaha of Bonai, Copper Plates and Dhrubananda Deva of Dhenkanal, Copper Plates were Buddhists. Naghusa Mahabhava Gupta may be taken to have adopted Buddhism if we agree with Mr. P.C.Rath that he was the reigning king of Kosala at the time of Huen Tsangs visit.

In Orissa Buddhism ceased to exist in its true form in the 8th century A.D. But its spirit did not die out altogether. It got transformed into another form. In the 8th and 9th centuries (770-850 A.D.) Dharmapala and Devapala, the Buddhist kings of Bengal, exercised some suzerainty over north Orissa. They might have tried to arrest the decline of Buddhism in Orissa. Ramai pandit of Dharmapalas time preached Dharma Cult, the theory of void. To him is attributed the authorship of the Dharma Puja Vidhana and Sunya Purana. Ramais son Dharmadas is said to have converted a king of Kalinga.

Mr. N. N. Vasu, in his book, ‘Modern Buddhism and its followers in Orissa has dealt at length on the crypto-Buddhists of Orissa. According to him the five celebrated Vaishnava poets of the 16th century, Balaram Das, Jagannath Das, Achyutananda Das, Yasobanta Das and Chaitanya Das were crypto-Buddhists who regarded Jagannath as an incarnation of Buddha. Sunya Samhita, Tula Bhina, Gupta Gita, Virata Gita etc. written by
those poets were essentially Buddhist in the garb of Vaishnavism. In Dharma Puja Vidhana Jaganath is called the Buddha incarnation of Hari.

In the 19th century some of these crypto-Buddhists took the present name of Alekha. The pioneer of Alekhism was Bhima Bhoi born of a Kandh family in Rerhakhol state sometime between 1850-60. Thus we see Buddhism gradually and slowly melting into Vaishnavism.

During the rule of the Somavamsi Kings in Kosala (South) and Utkala and Gangas in Kalinga between 7th to the middle of 11th century Saivism reigned supreme. Sakta Tantric cult followed in its trail. Sankaras visit to Puri in the 9th century imparted fresh strength to Saivism. With the end of the Kesari Kings Saivism gradually declined in its prominence to make room for the growing Vaishnavism. Ananta Varman Choda Ganga Deva was originally Saiva. Towards the later part of his life he adopted Vaishnavism and left behind him the glorious monument of his devotion to that faith in the temple of Jagannath which was constructed during his reign and subsequently developed by his successors. Vaishnavism rose to prominence from about the middle of the 11th century and is still continuing in that position.

In the first quarter of the 12th century Ramanuja, the great Vaishnava preacher of the South visited Orissa; Ananta Varman came in contact with him and was probably influenced by his preachings. The famous temple of Alarnath (Alwarnath) in the Puri district bears testimony to the influence of the preachings of Ramanuja, the last of the Alwars. It is believed that installation of the goddess Lakshmi in the Jagannath temple was due to Ramanujas influence. He and his followers looked upon Jagannath as Vishnu.

In the 12th century flourished two celebrated Vaishnava poets, Jayadeva, the writer of ‘Gita Govinda and Nimbarka, the author of Krishna Karnamrita. They popularised the ‘Radha-Krishna Lila. Jayadeva visited Jagannath and recited his Gita Govinda before Him. From the time of Kapilendra Deva recitation of Gita Govinda before Jagannath at night became a practice. The Radha-Krishna idea started by Jayadeva and Nimbarka in the 12th century was perfected by Sri Chaitanya in the 16th century. Since his time Jagannathism is closely associated with Radha-Krishna cult.

Madhavacharya, another famous Vaishnava teacher, flourished in the 13th century. He sent his disciple Narahari Tirtha to Jagannath to bring what was called the original idol of Rama and Sita. According to Sir R.K. Bhandarkar the cult of Rama must have come into existence in Orissa in the eleventh century.

Thirteenth century witnessed the erection of the marvellous structure of the temple of Konarka, the superb elegance of whose sculpture awakens admiration and wonder in the minds of the visitors from all over the world. It was erected for the sun-god. Sun-worship was prevalent in Orissa from very ancient times. In the friezes on the walls of Ananta-gumpha, the figure on a car, drawn by 4 horses is identified with sun-god. If the identification be correct sun worship in Orissa may be traced back to first century, B.C.

According to Varaha Purana, Samba, Krishnas son, established sun temples in India after his recovery from leprosy. One of them was located at Udayachala which is identified
with Udayagiri of Bhubaneswar. The mythology corroborates the antiquity of heliolatry in Orissa.

The Mago Brahmins introduced sun-worship into India. According to Mr. N.N. Basu, these Brahmins migrated into Bengal and subsequently to Orissa from Central India as far back as 6th century B.C.

We may presume on the basis of the above facts that sun-worship was prevalent in Orissa from very ancient times and it existed all through during the Saiva, Sakta and Vaishnava ascendancy till it flared up into immortal glory under Narasimha I in the 13th century. Purandara Kesari, according to the Madala Panji, built a temple at Arka Kshetra. We find traces of sun-worship at Jajpur, the centre of Saktism. All these corroborate the above presumption.

Ganapatyas, or the worshippers of Ganesha had their centre in Darpan estate in the district of Cuttack. It is not definitely known when they flourished. In the Udayagiri hills there is a figure of Ganesha in one of the caves which is known as Ganesha Gumpha assigned to first century B.C. That indicates the antiquity of Ganesha-worship in Orissa. Ganesha-worship bears close affinity to Saivism and Saktism, so we can tentatively take that they flourished about the 8th or 9th century A.D.

I have already referred to Saktism. Viraja kshetra at Jajpur was the main seat of that sect. According to Rai Bahadur Ramprasad Chanda, the two-handed Viraja may be assigned to a very early period, probably to pre-Gupta period. So Saktism existed in Orissa from a very early period though it acquired importance under the Saiva kings of the Kesari dynasty. Viraja is said to have been the patron goddess of Yayati Kesari.

From what has been stated in the foregoing paragraphs it is quite clear that all different sects of India had their seats in Orissa and had played important roles in the religious and political activities of Orissa in different periods of the history. Religious toleration formed the key-note of the religious policy of all the Orissan kings from the time of Asoka down to the time of Mukunda Deva without exception. Religious persecution in the holy land of Orissa was unknown. The different sects lived side by side, and carried on their activities without fear of persecution or oppression.

Antiquity of Jagannath

Among the celebrated deities of India Lord Jagannath stands out unique with his uncouth shape built of Daru and peculiar customs connected with his worship. His origin is shrouded in deep mystery. According to some Jagannath existed from Vedic times and in support thereof they quote the following sloka from the Atharva Veda which contains the word ‘Daru

Adou Yaddaru Plabate Sindhou Pare Apurusam.
Yada Labhamdha Durdhalo Tena Yahi Param Sthalam.

The supporters of the above theory explain ‘Daru as meaning the deity made of wood, while others, like Macdonelle, Keith etc. hold that the word has been used in connection with rope, earth and other words of hymn.

We come across the word ‘Purushottama (Tirtha) in the Matsya Purana.

Gangayam (Gayayam) Mangalanam Bimala Purusottame.
Gokarna Gaja Karnancha Tathacha Purusottamah.

Matsya Purana is ascribed to the close of the 3rd century A.D. In Tantra Jamala, Jagannath made of wood is mentioned.

Bharate Chotkala Dese Bhuswarge Purusottame.
Darurupi Jagannatha Bhaktanamabhayapradam.
Tantra Jamala is mentioned in Kurma Purana which is assigned to 4th century A.D. or earlier. So Tantra Jamala might have been written sometimes in 2nd or 3rd century A.D. In Rudra Jamala Tantra, we come across the name ‘Jagannath twice. In the Skanda, Brahmanda and Siva Puranas there are detailed accounts of Jagannath Kshetra. They are comparatively later in age and may be assigned to the 7th century at the earliest. Thus we trace the origin of Jagannath to 3rd century A.D. Jagannath must have existed long before Matsya Purana had acquired celebrity to merit mention in that Purana. In that case we may reasonably place Him in the 1st or 2nd century A.D. We have nothing to place the origin of Jagannath in the pre-Christian era excepting the doubtful sloka mentioned in the Atharva Veda referred to above. The Savara origin of Jagannath may be considered in this connection. Many eminent scholars are of opinion that Jagannath was a Buddhistic deity. According to them the three deities are representatives of the Tri Ratna of the Buddhists and that the uncouth forms of the deities represented the Buddhist Stupas. Much controversy has raged over this question and nothing definite has been reached. Uncouth form of the deities, the material of which they are made certainly provide strong clue for determining their origin. The similarity between Buddhist chaitya and the shape of Jagannath is so little that the supposition appears to be baseless and imaginary. No where do we find a chaitya in human form. If designed to represent Buddha why should it be in such uncouth form. More probably Jagannath is the representation of the original Savara deity mentioned in the mythology regarding Savara origin of Jagannath. The Savaras are mentioned in the post-Vedic literature. Plinys Suari and Ptolemys Sabaroi were Savaras. They were the original inhabitants of Orissa. When the Aryans came they had to face these animist Savaras.

Gradually the Savaras of the plain region were Aryanised and a mixed race was the outcome. The non-Aryanised Savaras followed their own faith in the jungle and hilly tracts. It is very probable that Jagannath was the cult image of the Savaras. With the advent of Jainism and Buddhism the foundation of the Aryan cult was shaken and in order to counteract the popularity of those faiths and enlist the good will of the Savaras, their God was probably Aryanised and taken into the fold of the Brahmanical deities.

The absorption of gods and goddesses of the primitive people down from the times of the stone age in the pantheon of the Aryan gods and goddesses is not uncommon. As a matter of fact, the Brahmanical pantheon includes in its fold the cult images of the people of different periods of the history of India. The Garudas, Vanaras, Nagas etc. are but reminiscent of the cults of the totem worshippers of the early stone age, whose cult was gradually absorbed in the Aryan cult and assigned to different gods in the mythology. The deities of these primitive people metamorphosed into Aryan ones under new names. Aiyanar, one of such gods was changed into Sasta originally and Hariharaputra subsequently in the Aryan mythology. Similarly Balliramayi, the second wife of Kartika, was originally one village goddess worshipped by the primitive people in the south and subsequently incorporated in the Aryan pantheon. In the next stage of evolution of religion in India arose the regional gods, Murugan, the god of the hills, Mayon, the Black god who played on flute and made love to
herds-women, the sea-god of the fisher-men and the sky god of the ploughmen. Korravai was the fine goddess of Victory. In the Aryan cult Siva became the god of the hills or the Himalayas, Vishnu of the sky, Krishna of the pastoral region and the corresponding regional gods of the primitive people became merged in them. The primitive goddesses were merged or associated with the Saktis of the Aryan Trinity.

Mohenjodaro and Harappa excavations provide us with the next phase of evolution in the religion. The cult of Divine mother was widely prevalent among the people who lived in pre-Vedic age.

The figure of a male god having three faces seated in Yoga posture surrounded by animals has been found in a seal. He is taken as the prototype of Siva. The main epithets of Siva, like Mahayogin, Pasupati or the lord of the beasts and Trinetra are traceable in the figure. This identification is further corroborated by the discovery of a stone piece which looks very much like Siva Linga. So it is believed, some cult like Siva and Sakti worship was prevalent among the people along with animism, the faith of the primitive peoples involving worship of trees, animals in their crude forms and Nagas and Yakshas in their developed form. All these have led to the belief that there was close relation between the Indus valley cult and the subsequent Aryan cult.

In view of what has been stated above it is quite natural to give credit to the Savara origin of Jagannath and accept it in preference to the theories of the Buddhistic origin.

There are some other facts that corroborate the presumption. In Utkala Khanda, it is stated that the gods (Jagannath, Balavadra and Subhadra) should not be seen in their naked wooden form. They should be carefully covered with silk clothes:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Amaradra Swarupena Dristhasya Papahetabah.} \\
\text{Gopaniya Prajatnena Patta Nirayasa Bandhanah.}
\end{align*}
\]

The reasons for keeping the deities well covered is also given:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Neksitabham Twaya Rajan Kadachidpakaarna.} \\
\text{Manusyei Schapi Rajendra Ddrusthaysurbhayahetabah.}
\end{align*}
\]

The people may be afraid of seeing them in their naked form. This extra precaution taken to keep deities covered up and not to expose them to the public view indicates that the deities were not the original gods of the Aryan pantheon and that these uncouth awe-inspiring figures were included in the fold in course of evolution as many such other gods of the primitive people were also absorbed.

The shape of the gods provide strong reasons for such supposition. As I have already said they do not resemble in the least the Stupas of the Buddhists. On the contrary, they resemble very much the uncouth figures worshipped by the primitive people not only in India, but in the other parts of the world. Still Savaras in south Orissa in the Ganjam Agency tract worship wooden poles with eyes and mouth. The goddess Hingula of the Savaras in Talcher is but a piece of stone. That the object of totemic worship is everywhere crudely shaped limbless queer figures designed more for inspiration of awe than for devotion all over the world is matter too well known to be dilated upon with examples.

According to tradition the Savaras of the Puri temple who are engaged in cooking and the Daita priests are descendants of the Savaras.

The aforesaid facts strongly lead to the conclusion that Jagannath was originally the
cult image or a deity of the Savaras, the primitive inhabitants of Orissa, and was subsequently changed into an Aryan deity with a view to enlist the good will and sympathy of the original inhabitants.

The next question that naturally arises is the approximate time when this metamorphosis took place. It is very difficult to say anything definitely on the point, but we may not be far from truth if we assign this event to the very remote period near about the advent of Jainism and Buddhism in Orissa. As I have already stated, Aryanisation of the Savara god was probably a counter-move against the popularity of the new simpler faith among the original inhabitants. To what sect of the Brahmanical faith Jagannath originally belonged is difficult to ascertain. In Kapila Samhita and Padma Purana Jagannath is one of the names of the sun-god. I have already indicated that the sun-worship was prevalent in Orissa from very ancient times. So it is quite probable that Jagannath originally stood for the sun-god. With the change of Vishnu, the solar deity of the Vedic period into Vishnu of the Trinity of the Puranic age, Vaishnavism started. Sun for all practical purposes was merged in Vishnu, though Sun-worship as an independent cult, continued to exist in the background. Jagannath might have undergone a corresponding change from a Solar deity to a Vaishnava deity. That Vaishnavism existed in the pre-Christian era in Orissa is proved by the Gaja-Lakshmi image found among the sculptures of the Ananta Gumpa which is assigned by scholars to 1st century B.C. next in the stage of evolution appeared the Bhagavatism which popularised Vasudeva Krishna as an incarnation of Vishnu who was eclipsed by him. Historically Bhagavatism is traced back to 6th century B.C. probably it existed much earlier to merit mention in Chhandogyu Upanishad and Paninis Ashtadhyayi. Mr. P. Mukherji in his book, ‘The History of the Medieval Vaishnavism in Orissa has traced the existence of Bhagavata cult in south eastern India in second century A.D. during the time of Yajna Sri Satakarni. According to him Bhagavatism found its way into Orissa between second century B.C. and 1st century A.D. In the absence of any historical data we may take the above date as most probable.

In fixing the date for change of Vaishnavism into Bhagavatism in Orissa we are to take into consideration the following facts.

(I) Absence of any image of Krishna in the sculptures of the Khandagiri Udayagiri hills.

(II) Presence of the images of the sun-god and Lakshmi therein proving prevalence of sun-worship and Vaishnavism in Orissa in 1st century B.C.

(III) Existence of Bhagavata cult in the Krishna district adjoining Orissa in the time of Yajna Sri Satakarni in the 2nd century A.D.

(IV) Most of the Mathara kings of Orissa of the 4th-5th centuries A.D. styling themselves as Parama Bhagavata.

(V) Mention of Purushottama Tirtha in Matsya Purana of 3rd century A.D. referred to above.

The above facts give us a rough time limit for introduction of the Bhagavata cult in Orissa. It made its appearance sometimes probably in the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D.

So Jagannath might have been identified with Krishna Vasudeva from about the 2nd century A.D. Bhagavata cult came into
prominence under the Gupta kings in the 4th-5th centuries. Chandra Gupta II, Kumara Gupta and Skanda Gupta styled themselves as Parama Bhagavata in their coins. The emblems of Guruda and Lakshmi are found on their official records. So Bhagavatism was raised to the status of a state religion under them and became fully developed in all its aspects. Orissa was within the pale of Gupta civilisation and culture. So the already existing Bhagavata cult must have received impetus and became fully developed by this period. With the development of Bhagavatism necessity of Sankarshana must have been felt, thus Balaram might have been added to lonely Jagannath-cum-Vasudeva by the 5th century A.D. if it had not been added from the very beginning.

When Subhadra came in is still doubtful. Subhadra, according to Utkala Khanda is the Sakti of Jagannath though popularly known as sister.

Bhagini Baladevasya Hwesa Pauraniki Katha.
Pumrupi Stirrupena Laksmi Sarbatra Tisthati.
Tasya Sakti Swarupeyan Bhagini Stri(Sri) Prabartika.

So Subhadra was conceived as the Sakti of Jagannath. Mr. P. Mukherjee, in his book already referred to, holds the view that Subhadra was the precursor of Radha who substituted Subhadra as Sakti of Vasudeva by the 7th century A.D. and that Subhadra was associated with Jagannath by the 5th century A.D. at the latest. In the beginning of Bhagavatism, Krishna-Vasudeva and Sankarshana Baladeva were being worshipped. Later on Subhadra was added, probably as Sakti of Vasudeva. Probably she took the place of Lakshmi in Vaishnavism. In Orissa the idea of Lakshmi was present in the pre-Christian era. So Subhadra might have been added as Lakshmi-substitute with the gradual development of the cult. Probably the addition of Balabhadra and Subhadra to Jagannath took place simultaneously in the 5th century when Bhagavatism had been fully developed. So Subhadra was just an intermediary stage between Lakshmi and Radha. It will not be out of place here to mention that the worship of Jagannath, Baladeva and Subhadra together is perhaps unique in Orissa.

**Jagannath and other cults**

I have already shown the relation between Jagannath and Vaishnavism and Totemism. The Saivas and Saktas looked upon Him as their supreme deity. This idea was prevalent in very remote periods of early Christian era. In addition to the sloka already quoted from Rudra Jamala Tantra the following one occurs.

Brahma Bishnuscha Rudrascha Iswarascha Sadasivah.
Tatah Para Sivah Sambhoh Satsivah Satprakasakah.
Etesam Stabanam Kurjat Paradeva Samanvitam.
Etat Prakara Karena Yascha Pratyahamasugah.
Kriyanibista Sarbatra Bhabana Graharupa Dhruk.
Sa Pasyati Jagannatha Kamalarugatam Harim.

The above sloka lays down that Jagannath can be seen if worshipped according to Saiva cult. The mention of Vimala in Purusottama Kshetra in the Matsya Purana and Tantra Jamala proves beyond doubt that Jagannath was looked upon as a Saiva deity by the Saiva sects, as such, His sakti was Vimala. This belief prevailed as far back as 2nd or 3rd century A.D. In the 3rd and 4th centuries of the Christian era Saivism was the dominating cult; the Nagas in Northern India, the Vakatakas in Central India; the Brihatphalayanas, Anandas and Salankayanas in the south were Saivas. In Orissa Saivism and Saktism dominated from the later part of the 5th century upto 11th century. Probably in this period of the upheaval of Saivism
Jagannath became associated with that cult. The association has not ceased since then, still Saivas and Saktas look upon Jagannath as a Bhairava form of Siva; goddess Bhairavi Vimala being his consort. The worship of Jagannath is carried on according to the Tantras. According to some Jagannath Cult is based on Chakrapuja of the Bhairavi Tantra. The goddess Ekanamsa standing between Krishna and Baladeva mentioned in Brihat Samhita by Varahamihira of 6th century A.D. is identified in the Puranas with Durga born to Yasoda and killed by Kamsa. Subhadra is also one of the names of Durga. Offering of Bhoga in earthen pots to Jagannath is believed to be a tantric form. Jagannathas rice Bhoga is offered to Vimala alone. We find the images of Bhadrakali, Vimala, Patalesvara, Visvesvara and Ganesha within the temple premises and they are regularly worshipped. In one of the niches of the Konarka temple the images of Durga, Siva and Jagannath and in another Jagannath and Siva Linga have been found together. This shows that in the 13th century Jagannath was closely associated with Siva and Sakti. In view of all these facts we cannot deny that Saivism and Saktism as also the allied Ganesha-cult formed the major constituents of the cult of Jagannath.

It has already been mentioned that sun-worship was prevalent in Orissa in very early times dating back to about 6th century B.C. or so and that Jagannath probably was a solar deity in the beginning. Sun-worship was never been extinct in Orissa. During the Saiva regime it flourished in their very capital Jajpur. Purandar Kesari is said to have built a temple at Arka Kshetra for Surya. In the 11th century or there about, the Puranas, specially Samba Purana extolled the sanctity of Konarka in high term. This drew the attention of the mass to Arka Kshetra which attained gradually more and more celebrity during the period of Vaishnava ascendency reaching its culmination in the 13th century. Thus sun-worship laid the foundation of Vaishnava Jagannath.

Rama cult, Sri Vaishnava cult and Narasimha cult are all Vaishnava cults and they influenced the cult of Jagannath in the different periods of its evolution already alluded to. Great controversy has raged over the Buddhistic interpretation of the cult of Jagannath. I have shown above that the image of Jagannath owes its origin to the totem worship of the primitive people not to Buddhism. But Buddhistic influence on the cult of Jagannath cannot be denied. Jagannath in the local mythologies is regarded as Buddha incarnation of Vishnu. It is written in Madala Panji that when Asoka was the king, Jagannath was worshipped according to Buddhist rites. Whatever may be the truth of the statement, we cannot deny the fact that Jagannath was associated with Buddhism in its days of predominance. Even now Jagannath is decorated in Buddha Vesa on a certain day in April as stated by R.L.Mitra.

The Pancha Sakha of Sri Chaitanya, Achyuta, Ananta, Balaram, Yosobanta and Jagannath were Vaishnavas and followers of the Buddhist cult of void at the same time. They regarded Sri Chitanya as an incarnation of Buddha. The influence of Buddhism on the cult of Jagannath has been exclusively dealt with by Mr. P.Mukherjee in his book. ‘History of Medieval Vaishnavism in Orissa. There is no doubt about the fact that Buddhism in its state of disintegration become amalgamated with the Neo-Vaishnavism of the 16th century. The net result of the amalgamation was the production of a curious cult which sought to interpret Vaishnava cult with the Buddhistic theories.
As regards traces left by the Buddhism in the cult of Jagannath many scholars take the Car Festival as the reminiscent of the Buddhistic ceremony, though many scholars are reluctant to admit its Buddhistic origin. We cannot be definite about the origin of the Car Festival.

Car Festival is not peculiar to the Buddhists alone, nor is the idea of car owes its origin to them.

Besides, in the Vedas there is mention of suns car. In fact, the Car Festival owes its origin to this Suryas car from very ancient times and has always remained associated with it. In course of time it has been adopted by other religious sects. Car-festivals were held at Sambarapura and Mathura in the 5th century A.D. But it is believed that the sun-gods of Mathura and Sambarapura founded by Samba belong to very remote period of pre-Christian era. So, Car festival was prevalent from very ancient times. According to Jaina traditions Car Festival was held in honour of Parasvanatha who flourished in 8th century B.C. From these we cannot take that Car Festival originated with Buddhism. It existed much prior to it.

As Car Festival is primarily connected with solar worship, we may take that it was prevalent in Orissa as far back as 6th century B.C. The Anantagumpha sculpture of the sun-god already referred to corroborate this view. As Jagannath was originally a solar deity the Car Festival must have been associated with it from that ancient period. We can admit this much that during the Jaina and Buddhist periods of ascendancy it might have been given more prominence and some changes might have taken place.

According to another tradition Car Festival of Jagannath is held in commemoration of the event of return of Jagannath to temple from 'Sundarachala' a solitary place to north-east of Puri. According to this tradition a Vaishnava king, Pandu Vijaya of Pandya country in the 3rd century A.D. took away the three images from the Buddhist king who worshipped them as Tri Ratna. He placed them in a car and took them to the secret place ‘Sundarachala where they were kept temporarily till the temple was purged of Buddhist rites. Then he brought back the image in a procession to the temple and installed them there. The car festival has been going on since then. The word Pahandi Bije used during car festival is said to be the perversion of Pahandi Bijaya.

Thus we cannot subscribe to the view that Car Festival of Puri is of Buddhist origin. Car Festival in Orissa is connected with Saiva, Sakta and sun-worship. We may trace its origin to the Car Festival of the sun-god, which, during the Saiva Supremacy was adopted at Bhubaneswar and Jaipur. So it may be safer to say it, Buddhism in its tottering stage merged into the all embracing Jagannath cult then to ascribe the origin of the Great God to the Buddhists.

Thus Lord Jagannath originating from among the primitive deities of the aboriginal people has slowly but steadily forged his way upwards through ages reaching the pinnacle of glory and greatness in the 16th century and assuming the role of Lord of the Universe. His course through ages has not been smooth or easy, He has been violently tossed between the conflicting cults all of whom laid claims on Him and have left indelible marks on His person that He bears proudly today as the positive proof of his universal love and all-embracing creed. Today He stands as the Great
Lord of Nilachala, as the representative of all the cults that originated and flourished in India in different ages from the dawn of civilisation right up to the modern times. Such is Lord Jagannath whom people from all parts of India offer their heartfelt devotion, and annually assemble in millions in his holy site of Puri to wash away their accumulated sins of years by only a view of Him.

Abbreviations:
11. I.H.Q.-Indian Historical Quarterly.