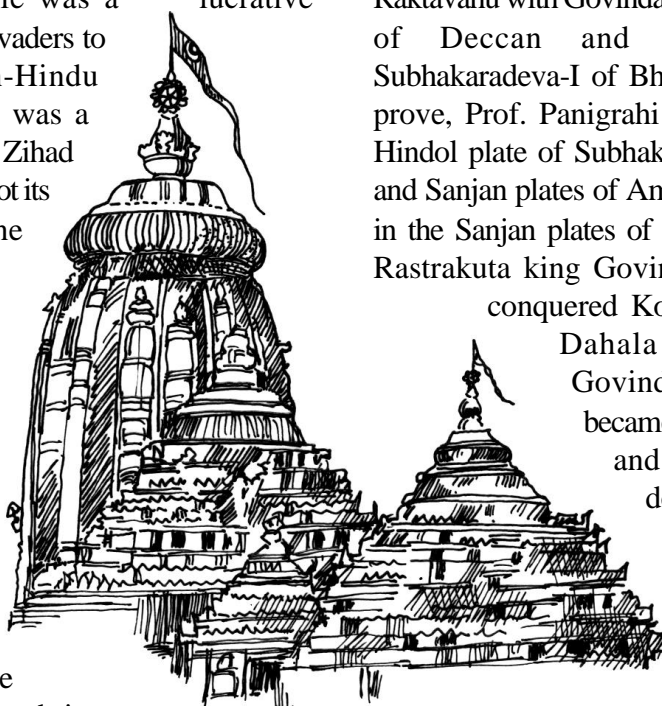




## Invasions on the Temple of Lord Jagannath, Puri

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Throughout the ages the temple of Lord Jagannath, Puri had been invaded and plundered for eighteen times in the annals of history. The temple was a lucrative place of wealth for invaders to plunder. To non-Hindu invaders the temple was a good place to display Zihad (Religious War). To loot its property and profane idols were motives behind every invasion. Owing to series of inroads on the temple of Lord Jagannath the triad were exiled at various regions of Orissa.



The invasion of Raktavahu on the temple of Lord Jagannath is considered as the first one as per the record of the 'Madalapanji', the temple chronicle. Andrew Stirling has reproduced the description of Raktavahu's invasion of the 'Madalapanji' in his writing in 1822. The story of Raktavahu's invasion recorded in the 'Madalapanji' indicates that he had defeated the King Subhanadeva of Orissa.

During this invasion the deities were taken away to Gopali, a village in Sonapur and kept underground. Prof. K.C. Panigrahi has identified Raktavahu with Govinda-III, the Rastrakuta King of Deccan and Subhanadeva with Subhakaradeva-I of Bhaumakara dynasty. To prove, Prof. Panigrahi has taken the help of Hindol plate of Subhakaradeva-III of 839 AD and Sanjan plates of Amoghavarsha. It is stated in the Sanjan plates of Amoghavarsha that the Rastrakuta king Govinda-III (AD 798-814) conquered Kosala, Kalinga, Vanga, Dahala and Odraka. Under Govinda-III the Rastrakutas became invincible everywhere and there is therefore no doubt that they invaded Odraka (Orissa). Basing on Hindol plate of Subhakaradeva-III Prof. Panigrahi states that Rastrakuta King's invasion of Orissa took place during the reign of Subhakaradeva-I.

Govinda-III alias Raktavahu approached Puri with his army through the sea. The king of Orissa fled from the city with the images of Jagannath and His associates lodged in a cart.



The images reached in Western frontier of Sonapur and buried at a place known as Gopali. After 146 years Yayati-I, the Somavamsi king got the images dug out, made new images, built a new temple at Puri and enshrined them there. Gopali, a village with a shrine of Jagannath, still exists at a distance of 16 miles from Sonapur.<sup>1</sup>

Yayati-I after bringing back triad performed 'Navakalebara' of deities at Puri because of degraded conditions with the help of servitors. The citadel of the Lords was fixed in the temple measuring 38 Hatas (cubits at present the temple of Lord Nrusingh) beside the Mukti Mandap in the precinct of Sri Jagannath temple. That is why king Yayati is regarded as the 'Second Indradyumna' in the annals of history owing to restoration.<sup>2</sup>

During the period of invasion of Raktabahu the deities were worshipped at Gopali in Sonapur. At present the place is at Chhalia mountain in Kotsamali. The deities returned to Shrikshetra during 814 A.D. and 819 A.D.<sup>3</sup>

The second invasion on the temple of Lord Jagannath was waged by Illias Shah the Sultan of Bengal in 1340 A.D. during the reign of Narasinghadeva-III. His defence system in the northern frontier of his empire was very weak. The military organization of the fort of Raibania in north Balasore was not strong. The commandants of the fort were bribed by Illias Shah. Narasinghadeva III felt insecure and kept his queens in the Giridurga near Simachalam. He prepared militarily to defend his empire of Utkal. In spite of his military arrangement to safeguard his empire Illias Shah suddenly attacked the temple of Jagannath in 1340 A.D. He made havoc among the religious minded people of Puri. The people ran in panic to save their lives. The soldiers of Illias Shah killed the people mercilessly and

looted the wealth of the temple. Narasinghadeva III was unable to protect his people and the temple. On the contrary he successfully hid the triad in an unknown place. The incident reveals the idea that no harm was done to the deities.

During the reign of the Ganga King Bhanudeva III the third invasion took place in 1360 AD by Feroz Shah Tughluq, the Muslim ruler of Delhi. At the time of invasion Bhanudeva - III was not in his capital. He got the news of invasion. He returned Puri with his army and found no Feroz Shah Tughluq. Feroz went back Delhi via Jainagar (Jajpur). Nothing is known about his desecration of the triad and plunder of the temple. But scholars believe that he had thrown the triad into the Mahodadhi (Bay of Bengal). This kind of view is not supported by historical evidence.

The fourth invasion was launched by Ismail Ghazi the commander of Allauddin Hussain Shah the Sultan of Bengal in the year 1509 A.D. The Suryavamsi King Prataprudradeva was the ruler of Orissa who was in South at the time of invasion. The priests of the temple sailed the triad to the forthills of the 'Chadheiguha Pahada' in the 'Chilika Lake'. On being informed, King Prataprudradeva rushed back from Deccan and drove away Ismail to the point at Huguli in the Bengal.<sup>4</sup>

The fifth invasion was launched by a Muslim invader Kalapahara in the year 1568 AD during the reign of Mukundadeva Harichandan, the Chalukya King of Orissa. Kalapahara was one of the army assistants of Sulaiman Karrani, the Afghan Sultan of Bengal. In this expedition Bayazid the son of Karrani was the commander of the Bengal army. He was assisted by Sikandar Uzbek and Kalapahara. The reasons of Karrani's attack on the temple of Lord Jagannath was Mukundadeva's entanglement in the political



diplomacy which created much bad blood between the two. Firstly, Mukundadeva gave political shelter to Ibrahim Sur who was a great enemy of Sulaiman Karrani. Secondly Mukundadeva committed another offence by exchanging envoys with the great Mughal emperor Akbar. In 1566 A.D Akbar sent envoys to the court of Mukundadeva and Mukundadeva in exchange sent a Hindu ambassador named Paramananda Ray to the Court of the Mughal emperor.<sup>5</sup> Akbar was a great enemy of Sulaiman Karrani. These two offences committed by Mukundadeva incurred great displeasure in the mind of Sulaiman Karrani which paved the way for his Orissan invasion.

Kalapahara the Assistant Army General of Sulaiman Karrani led the expedition against Mukundadeva of Orissa in 1568 A.D. On the contrary Mukundadeva sent Raghubhanja Chhotaraya to resist the army of Kalapahara but failed. Raghubhanja proved traitor and Kalapahara occupied Cuttack. So Mukundadeva surrendered before the Muslim army of Bengal. In the meantime Ramachandra Bhanja the commandant of Sarangagarh fort (Baranga) rebelled against Mukundadeva. The latter was killed at Gohiratikara (Near Jajpur) because of the two traitors Sikhi and Manai who were the generals of the King of Orissa. Ramachandra Bhanja was also killed by the invader. Ramachandra Bhanja who declared himself the king of Orissa finally proved himself as traitor behind the assassination of Mukundadeva, the last Hindu king of Orissa. In the Madalapanji this traitor has sometimes been described as Ramachandra Bhanja and sometimes as Ramachandradeva. The latter name seems to be more correct.<sup>6</sup> After occupation of the forts of Cuttack and Sarangagarh Kalapahara successfully led his army to Puri to demolish the temple of Jagannath. The servitors of the temple

got information of the fall of Katak (Cuttack) to the hands of the Muslims. They hid the triad in an island inside the 'Chilika lake' as stated in the 'Madalapanji'. The deities were hidden underground at Hastipatna in Parikuda identified with Chhapali, Khepali and Hatipada. Kalapahara could easily know about the secrecy of the hidden deities. He carried the triad from 'Chilika Lake' to the bank of the river Ganges on an elephant where he burnt them. Bisher Mohanty, a Vaishnavite saint followed Kalapahara and managed to bring back the 'Brahmas' to Kujanga Gada keeping inside a Mridanga. Later on the 'Brahmas' were brought to the Gopal temple of Khurda Gada in 1575 A.D. by King Ramachandradeva. Subsequently the 'Brahmas' were placed in the deities. The deities were brought back to the temple of Jagannath from Khurdagada.

It is stated in the same chronicle that Kalapahara destroyed the great temple of Jagannath upto the Amalakasila and defaced the images. It is difficult to ascertain the truth of the statement. But to us it seems that the temple was not pulled down or rased to the ground, though the images were damaged and disfigured as far as possible. There is no archaeological evidence to show that the temple was rebuilt at any time. The original temple as built by Chodaganga has come down to us, though the carvings on the outer faces of the temple have been damaged or disfigured.<sup>7</sup>

A tradition in Bengal avers that Kalapahara was earlier a Brahmin by caste. His name was Raju alias Kalachand. He fell in love with Dulari, the daughter of the Sultan of Bengal and married her. But he wanted to retain his religion. The Hindu society refused to accept him. He came to the temple of Jagannath at Puri for expiation. But the priests rebuffed him. This made



him reactionary and revengeful. He took a vow to exterminate Hindu religion, images and temples. This theory is only traditional and does not have any historical authenticity. Kalapahara was an Afghan. Kalapahara was a title used by many Afghans. A nephew of Bahalul Lodi bore this name. Prof. P. Mukherjee observes that “the Muslim chronicles conclusively prove that Kalapahara was a full blooded Afghan and not a Brahmin renegade.”<sup>8</sup>

Sulaiman Karrani died in 1572 A.D. followed by several invasions and plunders on the temple of Lord Jagannath at Puri by his successive rulers namely Bayazid, Daud, Kuya Khan and Kutlu Khan Lohani who ruled over Orissa one after another. After them the sixth invasion jointly waged on the temple of Jagannath in 1592 A.D. by Suleman, the son of Kuthu Khan and Osman, the son of Isha (ruler of Orissa). They havocked people at Puri and killed them mercilessly. They desecrated the images of the great temple and plundered its wealth. By such action the invaders violated the treaty earlier signed between Isha and Raja Mansingh in 1590 A.D. Mansingh the Mughal general finally suppressed the militant activities of these two Muslim invaders in 1592 A.D. During this time Ramachandradeva, the Bhoi dynasty ruler of Khurda took the leadership of feudatory rulers of Orissa who joined their hands against the Mughal rule. During the reign of Purushottamadeva of Bhoi Dynasty Mirza Khurum, the commander of Islam Khan the Nawab of Bengal invaded Puri in 1601 A.D which is considered as the 7th attack on the temple of Lord Jagannath. The servitors of the temple could smell of it and shifted the triad to village Kapileswarpur near Puri in vessels through the river Bhargavee. The deities were kept in the Panchamukhi Gosani temple at Kapileswarpur. Dola festival was celebrated in that temple. Thereafter the deities were shifted to Dobandha

— Pentha where the Lords passed eight months with ‘Shital Bhoga’ offerings. As per the description of the ‘Madalapanni’ Mirza Khurum invaded Puri temple during the time of Dola Yatra. He found no deities in the temple and so looted the underground treasury.

Hasim Khan, the Subedar of Orissa waged the eighth invasion on the great temple of Lord Jagannath at Puri. This time Purushottam Deva was also the King of Khurda. He shifted the deities to the Gopal temple at Khurda before Hasim's arrival at Puri. In order to satiate his master Jahangir the then Mughal emperor, Hasim Khan plundered the temple of Jagannath at Puri. The deities returned to the temple of Jagannath at Puri by the King in 1608 A.D.

The ninth invasion on the temple of Jagannath was launched by a Hindu Rajput Jagirdar Kesodasmaru in 1610 A.D. Kesodasmaru was serving under Hasim Khan. He was a friend of Jahangir. He came to Puri in disguise of a pilgrim accompanied by his faithful soldiers without military uniform during celebration of the car festival. They entered into the Jagannath temple and occupied it. They converted the temple into a fort. At that time the triad were in the Gundicha temple. Kesodasmaru plundered crores of treasury of the temple of Jagannath. Unfortunately the king of Khurda Purusottamdeva was absent at Puri as Chherapahanra (Sweeping the chariots) performed by Mudirath on behalf of the king. The king immediately rushed Puri with his Paik soldiers, chariots, cavalry forces, elephant forces, arms and ammunitions to Punish Kesodasmaru. The Paik soldiers jumped into the premises of the temple with the help of chariots through four gates. They fought against the Rajput soldiers who were looting the wealth of the temple. Kesodasmaru ordered his soldiers to counter attack Paik army. The Rajput soldiers decided to





bind up clothes tightly with bamboos, used oils in ignited clothes which turned into fireballs and threw them against the chariots to burn. The chariots very quickly caught fire and burnt into ashes. So many Paiks died. The King was unable to face the invader. The invader looted the wealth of the temple and went away. During the course of attack the deities remained in the Gundicha temple for eight months. They were brought back to the temple of Jagannath by the help of Vimana. Kesodasmaru being a Hindu became an invader on the temple of Lord Jagannath at Puri.

Prof. Surendranath Dash in his article 'Inroads on the temple of Sri Jagannath' in the book 'Cultural Heritage of Odisha' in Vol- XII, Page 214 has pointed out five reasons behind this invasion of Kesodasmaru in the following manner.

1. By the year 1610 A.D. the king of Khurda Purushottama Deva had acknowledged the overlordship of Delhi. However, he was independent from practical point of view. This did not satisfy Hasim Khan.
2. At that time the Mughal officers could not oppress or suppress the semi- independent Hindu Kings for which they could not acquire much wealth.
3. The concerned Subedars were always watching an opportunity to abolish the semi-independent Hindu states.
4. In this line, the more advanced officers were highly honoured.
5. The status and dignity of these officers were increasing in the Durbar of Delhi.

Kalyan Malla became the next Subedar of Orissa after Hasim Khan. He ruled Orissa in between the years from 1611 A.D. to 1617 A.D.

In order to satiate his overlord Jahangir he attacked Khurda. Kalyan Malla the son of Raja Todar Mall, the revenue minister of Akbar became the Subedar of Orissa in 1611 A.D. after Hasim Khan and remained in that post till 1617 A.D. He followed the path of Kesodasmaru to satiate his overlord Jahangir. In 1611 A.D. Kalyan Malla marched against Khurda and conquered many territories. Purushottamadeva, the King of Khurda was compelled to surrender before Kalyan Malla. On the eve of this tenth invasion the Sevayats were frightened and shifted the triad to the 'Mahisanasi' in the Chilika Lake. Subsequently the place was called 'Brahmapura' owing to the placement of 'Brahma' at that village. Since then the Lords were placed upon the 'Chakas' (Round Citadel). So the place was termed as 'Chakanasi'. The triad remained there for one year.

The King Purushottama Deva expressed his desire to surrender. To maintain peace and order he concluded treaty of understanding with Kalyan Malla. Accordingly he offered his daughter as present to the service of the Mughal emperor Jahangir. He also presented three lakhs of rupees as Peshkash (tribute) to the royal exchequer along with one of his best elephants 'Sesnaga' for the use of the emperor.

This raid of Kalyan Malla has been described in the 'Madalapanji' the temple chronicle. But according to Mirza Nathan the event of sending the daughter by Purushottam Deva is never true because the Gajapati Kings never keep their daughters at home after their birth. The daughters are generally sent to the house of the maternal uncle. This tradition is maintained even now in the Gajapati family. Therefore it is said that Raja Kalyan Malla might have sent some other girl to the emperor only to please him.<sup>9</sup>



The circumstantial evidences confirm our conviction that the attack of Kalyan Malla was launched to the Puri temple, but not of Khurda. Because according to 'Madalapanji', at the time of Kalyanmalla's plunder Lord Sri Jagannath was not in Srimandir but at 'Mahisanasi'. It is therefore, apparent that before his attack on Puri the triad had already been transferred to 'Mahisanasi'.<sup>10</sup>

Kalyan Mall is known to have attacked on Puri temple twice. First time he not only attacked the temple but also looted its treasure. Besides, he had treacherously murdered a minister and 16 skilled generals of the Khurda King. According to the version of 'Madalapanji', the King was not at Puri. The second attack might have occurred in 1612 A.D. But this time he was retaliated by the valiant Paiks who chased him upto Cuttack and killed many of his soldiers. As a result of this he did not venture to attack Odisha upto A.D 1617.<sup>11</sup> 'According to Rabindranath Pratihari during the second phase of attack of Kalyan Mall the Lords placed in the Chap (Fleet of Boats) at Gurubai Gada from Mahisanasi. The triad passed a few days beneath the 'Lotani Baragachha' (Baniyan tree) getting down from the fleet. After that triad were worshipped at 'Dadhibaman Temple'.

Jahangir appointed Mukarram Khan as the Governor of Orissa in 1617 AD. Mukarram Khan waged the 12th attack on the temple of Lord Jagannath in 1617 A.D. He created a situation of reign of terror by his iconoclastic activities. The priests of the Jagannath temple carried away the image of Jagannath to Gobapadar in panic. Enraged by Mukarram Khan's iconoclastic activities, Raja Purusottama Deva revolted. Mukarram therefore invaded Khurda. Purushottam could not withstand the attack and fled to Rajamahendri. The kingdom of Khurda was annexed to the Mughal territory

for a short time. Afterwards Purushottama Deva succeeded in installing himself as the Raja of Khurda. On the contrary Mukarram Khan failed to trace the deities, fled with riches and gold but was drowned in the waters. The deities kept in a Mandap in the precinct of the Bankanidhi temple for some days and returned to Puri in 1620A.D.

Thirteenth invasion on the temple of Jagannath was launched by Mirza Ahmad Beg, the nephew of Moghul empress Nurjahan. Ahmad Beg became the Governor of Orissa in 1621 A.D. He invaded Khurda as he found that King Purusottam Deva was trying to strengthen his position with the help of the chiefs of Banapur, Ranapur, Karnata (near Banpur) where he died. Thereafter Narasingha Deva the son of Purusottama Deva became the new King of Khurda. Ahmad Beg put two terms before Narasingha Deva to accept. The terms were as follows :

- (1) The new king of Khurda will acknowledge his sovereignty.
- (2) Ahmad Beg's family members will be stationed at Cuttack.

Above terms of Ahmad Beg were rejected by Narasingha Deva. So out of anger Ahmad Beg attacked Khurda in 1621 A.D. Narasingha Deva successfully resisted the Moghuls. At this stage the rebellious Moghul prince Shah Jahan arrived in Orissa with his army. Ahmad Beg left Khurda for Bengal out of fear. From Cuttack Shah Jahan proceeded to Allahabad and Oudh across Orissa. This march of Shah Jahan through Orissa caused panic among the priests of Jagannath temple at Puri. They carried away the image of Jagannath to 'Andharigada' in the mouth of the river Shalia across the Chilika lake. Efforts were made to transfer 'Brahma' to Gadamanitri in the Khurda



District. The deities returned Puri in 1624 A.D. The triad were reinstalled on the golden throne and Mahaprasad was reintroduced.

The invasion of Amir Mutaquad Khan alias Mirza Makki is considered as fourteenth one. Mirza Makki became the new Governor of Orissa and ruled till 1641 A.D. During his Governorship Narasingha Deva was treacherously killed by his nephew Gangadhar who occupied the throne of Khurda. Mirzamakki invaded the Jagannath temple for two times. His commander plundered the temple and the old palace at Balisahi. The invasion took place in the year 1645 A.D.

The fifteenth invasion was waged by Amir Fateh Khan in 1647 A.D. He attacked the temple and plundered valuable gems like diamond, pearl and gold etc.

In 1692 A.D. Aurangzeb the Moghul emperor issued an order to destroy the temple of Lord Jagannath. At that time Divyasingha Deva was the king of Khurda. Ekram Khan was the Nawab of Orissa who waged this invasion on the temple with the help of his brother Mastram Khan. The Nawab entered the temple and climbed to the - golden throne of Jagannath. The treasure of the temple was looted. The King was unable to face the invader hidden in an unknown place.

Lord Jagannath was hidden behind the 'Bimala Temple' in the precinct of the Srimandir. The triad were shifted one after another to 'Maa Bhagabati Temple' at Gadakokal located at Brahmagiri block. As per records of the 'Madalapanji' the Bije- pratima (Representatives of Lords) were transferred to Gadakokal. Then the deities were shifted to Bada Hantuada in Banpur across the Chilika Lake. The deities were returned to Puri in 1699 A.D. This was the sixteenth invasion on the temple of Lord Jagannath.

Muhammad Taqi Khan became Naib Nazim (Deputy Subedar) of Orissa from A.D. 1727 to 1734. During his time he invaded the temple of Jagannath for two times in 1731 A.D. and 1733 A.D. He invaded the temple with iconoclastic zeal. He invaded to demolish the temple, desecrate the God and plundered its treasure. So the servitors removed the idols to Hariswar in Banpur, Chikili in Khalikote, Rumagarh in Kodala, Athagada in Ganjam and finally to Marda of Kodala. Kodala located in Athagada region considered as a safe place for the idols as this place was under the rule of Nizam of Hyderabad and not of Moghuls. Marda itself was situated inside a dense forest and hills. So the place was invincible for the invaders. The ruler of Athagada Jagannath Harichandan Jagadev had strong family relation with the Gajapati rulers of Khurda. The idols were kept at Marda from 29.12.1733 to 31.12.1736. At Marda a beautiful temple was hastily constructed and arrangement was made for all the rituals of Lord Jagannath. Even it is believed that the Rath Yatra was held here with full vigour. The temple is a two chambered Pidha style with Jagamohan and Vimana. Marda is considered as the second home of Sri Jagannath. A regular temple of reasonable size and shape with all architectural features was constructed here within a very short period and regular worship was arranged with full austerity. After the departure of the gods the temple continues to remain vacant for centuries. The gods stayed there for two and half years. However the stay of gods at Athagada is recognized by lighting of a lamp on every Ekadasi day during evening followed by the recitation of a Sloka in honour of Harichandan Jagadeva. There did exist a close link between the two ruling families.<sup>12</sup>

The King Birakishore Deva was frightened with the Maratha Bargis. So Maratha Dewan Bahadur Khan wrote a letter to the King



in 1752 A.D. with the assurance that no invasion would be launched on the Jagannath temple during the Maratha rule. The servitors should continue worship of the deities as usual without fear. It was the direction of the Maratha Dewan to King Birakishore Deva.

But an unwanted incident occurred at Puri in the year 1881 A.D. That the followers of Alekh religion did not recognize Jagannath worship. In that year a large number of the followers of the Alekh religion came from Sambalpur and Raipur regions to Puri. They entered the Jagannath temple. According to 'Utkal Dipika' they brought the images of Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra out of the temple and burnt them on Grand Road at Puri which was recorded in the records of police. As a result the invaders were imprisoned.<sup>13</sup>

The most significant feature in the history of invasion on the great temple of Lord Jagannath at Puri that in no case the 'Brahma' of the deities were destroyed which continued till today. The servitors played an important role in safeguarding the triad at the time of danger. The Kings have taken care of the temple from destruction by surrendering before the invaders. In Ayodhya, Kasi and Mathura the mosques have been built in place of the temples due to Muslim invasion. At Puri the temple of Lord Jagannath remained standstill at the time of invasion. No mosque had been erected which is the miracle of the deities. The people of Puri have suffered but kept the temple safe.

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