



In the struggle for power, Mukunda Dev came out victorious and became the ruler of Odisha in 1560 A.D. He had to carry on battle against the political rivals of his time. While treachery was rife in internal politics, externally, the expanding Muslim power in the State of Bengal was becoming increasingly irresistible. At Delhi the ambitious Mughal emperor Akbar was also vigorously seeking territorial expansion.

In the meantime, two acts of Mukunda Dev incurred the wrath of Sulaiman Karrani, the sultan of Bengal. Firstly Ibrahim Khan Sur, the Afghan contender for the throne of Delhi was given shelter by Mukunda Dev after his failure to



Sri Jagannath and Kalapahad

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get the same from Karrani. Secondly, Ali Quli Khan, a rebellious Moghul official being defeated by Akbar fled to Bengal to secure help of Sulaiman Karrani. So to counteract the possible alliance between the above two sides, Akbar made alliance with Mukunda Dev which certainly proved helpful to the former as Sulaiman did not give shelter to Ali Quli Khan. This alliance of Mukunda Dev with Akbar also enraged Karrani.

Sulaiman made elaborate plans for an invasion of Odisha. In 1568 A.D when Akbar was engaged in the siege of Chitor, Sulaiman invaded Odisha. So Mukunda Dev could not get any help from his powerful ally because of the

latter's engagement in Chitor. Much to the surprise of Mukunda Dev, Munim Khan, the Mughal Governor of Bihar also did not come to the rescue of Mukunda Dev.

The Bengal army made a two-pronged attack on Odisha. One wing of army was led by Sulaiman Karrani himself and the other was by his son Bayazid and Kalapahad, Karrani's general. Mukunda Dev met Sulaiman in the battle on the bank of Ganges. Mukunda Dev fought alone and offered heroic resistance. But he was defeated and was compelled to take shelter in the fort of Kotsima. After some resistance, the city of Cuttack was conquered by Bayazid. In



this critical situation, Ramachandra Bhanja, the feudatory chief of Sarangagarh, rose in rebellion and proclaimed himself the king of Odisha. To face this odd situation, Mukunda Dev made a treaty with Sulaiman and marched against Ramachandra Bhanja. Mukunda Dev met Ramachandra Bhanja in the battle at Gohiritikira near Jajpur town of the then undivided Cuttack district and was killed by the latter. On that very day, Ramachandra Bhanja was also killed by Bayazid.

According to a tradition, Mukunda Dev lost his life while fighting with the Muslim army. As per the Khordha manuscript, Sikhi and Manai, the two agents of Mukunda Dev betrayed him and showed to Kalapahad a jungle path following which he attacked Mukunda Dev's army from the rear. Mukundadeva was defeated and killed in the battle. To the ill luck, no such power was there in Odisha to challenge the Afghan invaders. Odisha was thus conquered by the Muslim Sultan of Bengal in 1568 A.D.

The defeat of the Odishan army was followed by the iconoclastic and destructive activities of the Muslim General Kalapahada- a Hindu renegade. According to some historical documents his original name was Rajiv Lochan Ray or Kalachand Roy Bhadury, a Bengali (Barendra Brahmin) who fell in love with Dulari, the beautiful and charming daughter of the Sultan of Bengal. He married her after conversion to Islam. According to other sources Sulaiman Karrani planned to have Rajiv or Kalachand fall in love with his daughter by engaging her in meeting and feasts with him. After conversion he became Muhammed Farmuli. But repentance came when he faced boycott in the society. So he wanted to comeback to Hinduism. But the Hindu society refused to accept him as a Hindu.

At last, he came to the Jagannath Temple at Puri to perform expiation to come back to Hinduism. But the priest there refused him to accept as Hindu. He got enraged and took the name Kalapahad (Black Hill-the destroyer) and took a vow to extirpate Hindu religion, images and temples. It is also alleged that he forcefully converted thousands of Hindus into Muslims and terrorized the undivided Bengal, Bihar and Odisha by destroying many temples and Hindu deities.

Scholars like Prof. P.Mukherjee does not believe the historicity of this episode and firmly holds that "Kalapahad was a full blooded Afghan."

It is said that Kalapahad ravaged major towns and religious places of Odisha including Balasore, Cuttack, Jajpur, Sambalpur, Ekamrakshetra, Konark, Puri etc.

Odia couplet on the attack of Kalapahad-

*"Aila Kalapahad
Bhangila Luhara bada
Peeila Mahanadi pani
Suvarna thalire heda (Hira ?) parasile
Mukundadevanka rani."*

After destroying the Sun temple, Kalapahad reached at the Ramachandi temple to destroy it. A miracle happened there. Goddess Ramachandi dressed as a maid-servant asked Kalapahad to wait at the door till she brings water from the river for the Goddess. Kalapahad anxiously waited for a long time to get some cold water. But the maid-servant did not return. Being exhausted, he entered inside the temple and found the throne empty. He thought the maid-servant had taken away the deity with her. So with anger he followed her. When he reached at the bank of the Kushabhadra river he found the Goddess Ramachandi floating in the middle of the river. As



the river was overflowing, he could not be able to reach there and returned.

Odia couplet on this incident-

Bhalaa Ramachandi bhala re
Kalapahadaku duare basei
Bhalaa pani aani galaare.

With the objective to destroy Jagannath temple, Kalapahada entered into Puri town with Afghan soldiers sitting on 300 elephants. It is learnt from the accounts given by a Muslim writer that “in one temple there was an image made of 30 maunds of gold, whose eyes were of diamond. This image was surrounded by gold images of 7 maunds. Well-dressed, the women hid themselves inside different temples in the town and did not take any attempt to leave the town. They thought “who is he that is more powerful to do any harm to the servitors of our Thakur (Lord) ? But they were astonished when the invaders entered into the temple and captured them. According to the opinion of the religious saints those who accompanied Sulaiman, each soldier came back from plunder with a gold image of about a maund weight. But the most astonishing matter is that each of them those who joined the plunder suffered a lot and met death.

Madalapanji, the temple chronicle holds that Kalapahad desecrated the Jagannath temple. According to this tradition “when the servitors of the temple heard of Kalapahad’s design on the temple they took the images of temple and hid them at a place Hatipada near Chilka lake. But Kalapahad learnt of this and brought the images from that place on elephants. He carried them to the bank of river Ganges and set fire to them. Just at that time a miracle happened. His body got cracked in to pieces. Being perplexed by this, he brought out the gods from the fire and dumped

them in the Ganges. Holy Ganga carried the Brahma (or Brahma Pinda) downstream where a Vaishnava devotee Bishar Mohanty extracted the immortal part (Brahma). Later he consecrated the “Brahma” at Garh Kujanga temple. The ‘Brahma’ was worshipped there for seven years, (1568A.D to 1575 A.D). In 1575 A.D during the rule of Ramachandra Dev, the first king of the Bhoi dynasty, ‘Brahma’ was brought from Garh Kujang and kept at Khordha Garh by him. Next year in 1576 A.D the construction of new images, their entry in to the temple along with the installation of ‘Brahma’ in them were performed.

It is said that Kalapahad also ravaged several temples and images at Kamakshya Pitha and then at Benares, where he also severely tortured the Hindus. But suddenly a change came in him. The heart-rending, screams of the Hindu women created a deep impact in his heart. He considered himself as sinner for his determination to destroy his own religion. Once he was sitting on the bank of river Ganges and thinking deeply about his expiation for his sin, he came across his religious preceptor (*dikshya guru*), an ascetic Premananda by name. In his childhood this fatherless Rajiv Lochan or Kalachand was initiated in to his religious sect by him and had decided to lead a religious life. He fell at his feet and begged apology for his sin. He also entreated him to find out a path for expiation of his crime.

Premananda advised him to have faith in that merciful God. He told, “the person who repents for his sin gets his blessings and attains salvation. So, go to Puri and surrender yourself completely to Lord Jagannath. The compassionate Lord would relieve you from distress.”

Having heard these words from Premananda, tears rolled down his eyes. He became restless. He told His preceptor, with



heavy heart. “But my Lord, the Srikshetra of the past is no more. I have also burnt the images.”

Premananda laughed and told, “who is so powerful to destroy the Darubrahma, the supreme being? He is indestructible, immortal, eternal, without beginning and end. The sanctity of Srikshetra has remained unaffected as it was in the past. Darubrahma Jagannath adorns the bejewelled throne (Ratna Singhasana) of the temple with Balabhadra and Subhadra to fulfill the wishes of the devotees.”

Then Premananda disclosed all the events in detail to clear his doubts. He told the incidents starting from his attack on Jagannath temple to installation of the images on the Ratna Singhasana by Ramachandra Dev. Kalapahad got astonished to hear all the matter in detail.

The words of Premananda created hope in him and on that very moment he renounced the world. In the morning the next day, the Mughal soldiers without finding him in the camp, searched here and there, but in vain. Kalapahad’s wife Dulari got disheartened without seeing her husband. Later she met him after searching different places. Both of them went on pilgrimage and visited several holy places such as Haridwar, Brundavan, Dwaraka, Rameswar and at last reached at Srikshetra.

It was that Kalapahad, the evil-doer came to Lord Jagannath at last as an ascetic (Sanyasi) to take refuge at his feet. The couple entered inside the temple and gazed at the splendid images standing at the Garuda Stambha. Kalapahad observed as if Jagannath is telling him

with a smiling face “Kalachand, it is impossible to destroy the indestructible, the eternal and immortal. Get rid of ego and get merged in My unending being. Then only, you would get eternal peace and happiness.”

A feeling of self-surrender in the form of tears rolled down the eyes of Kalapahad. A strong desire came in him to be one with that supreme being.

The couple built a hermitage near the Swargadwar on the seashore and led a pious life. At Puri, the people around him knew them in the name as Kalapahad and Jogamaya.

Later on, the people were astonished to know that the pious couple were none else but the Kalapahad (the destroyer) of the past and his wife. They became curious to know about them and rushed towards their hermitage. To their utter surprise, when they reached there, they found neither the hermitage nor the couple. They had been disappeared and nobody could get any hints about them.

The Kalapahad episode is a black chapter in the history of Odisha. The life of Kalapahad starting from his conversion to Islam, marriage, iconoclastic activities, repentance and ultimate surrender to all-merciful Lord Jagannath, has remained as rare phenomenon in history.

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