



## Lokanätha Temple at Puri

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The temple of Lokanätha is situated at a distance of about 2½ kms to the west of Jagannätha temple of Puri. The western boundary of the Puri town is guarded by the temple of Lokanätha, which is traditionally said to have been established by Sri Rämacandra, the Hero of Rämäyan. There is nothing however, in it to indicate that remote antiquity.<sup>1</sup> This temple is one of the most important Saiva shrines of Orissa.<sup>2</sup> The place of Lokänatha temple is surrounded by a number of mango trees and in the midst of the tope there is a group of temples within a specious compound and also a big tank (Pärvatisägara) in the close neighbourhood. Many small temples are found in the temple premises. From the religious point of view, the Shaiva shrine of Lokanätha occupies an important position in the cultural history of Orissa. According to tradition the devotees who come to visit Lord Jagannätha, also visit Lokanätha.

The place of Puri is also known as Sankha Ksetra. The lay out plan of this sacred city is often described as resembling the shape of a conch shell. Skanda Puräna, in its Purusottama Mahätmya, even mentions different deities residing in various parts of the Conch-shell. The majestic temple of Jagannätha occupies the navel or center portion

of the Sankha Ksetra. The areas from Belesvara to Älabukesvara or Lokanätha temple is regarded as the place of Sankha Ksetra.<sup>3</sup> On the basis of the cultural importance, Sunil Ratha has referred that Lord Lokanätha has been worshipped as the protector of the Sankha Ksetra.<sup>4</sup> He is also regarded as the custodian of the treasury or bhandära-raksaka of the Jagannätha temple.

The deity Lokanätha is said to have been mentioned in the Mahäbhärata (fourth-century B.C.).<sup>5</sup> The legend says that Lord Räma on his way to Sri Lanka for searching Sitä reached Purusottama Ksetra and sat with a vow to see Siva here. At that time there was a Sabarapalli nearby. Sabaras presented him a Läu or Läuuka (Pumpkin; one type of vegetable) looking like a Siva-Linga, Räma installed that as the replica of Siva-Linga at that place and prayed Siva to fulfill his desire. From that day Siva Linga placed by Lord Räma was called Läuakanätha.<sup>6</sup> It is believed that the word Lokanätha is a later innovation from the word Läuakanätha or Alabukanatha or Älabukesvara. This information has been given by Jagabandhu Pädhī.<sup>7</sup> On the basis of the Bämadeva Samhitä and some other legends, it is known that Älabukesvara is a Saiva shrine situated to the west of Yamesvara temple. Perhaps when the

name of Purusottama was replaced by Jagannätha, then the name of Lokesvara or Läukanätha might have been converted to Lokanätha. The time period of the conversion of Lokesvara to Lokanätha might have occurred in the 12th or 13th century AD.<sup>9</sup> Natives of Puri town hold that this shrine is traditionally known as Lokanätha, which Sivalinga is installed by Rāma Chandra in Treteyā Yuge.<sup>10</sup>

There is a reference in Mahābhārata, which tells that Panca-Pāndava (Yudhistira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva) during the time of disguise for one year visited "Yajna Vedi" while undertaking Tirtha Yātrā. They reached this place in the evening, stayed for one night and worshipped Lord Vishnu here for their safe journey.<sup>11</sup> As a symbol of this Yātrā, five Mahādeva temples were constructed in the place of Purusottama Ksetra to memorise their stay in this Dhāma (holy place). According to M.M. Tripathy, those prominent five Saiva Shrines are viz. Lokanätha, Yamesvara, Kapālamocana, Märkandesvara and Nilakanthesvara. They are known together as Panca Pāndava or the five Pāndavas.<sup>12</sup> The temple of Lokanätha is the most important (shrine) among the Panca-Mahādeva temples of Puri. This Shiva shrine is locally called as Bhimasena, the strongest brother amongst the Panca Pāndava.

### **Architectural features of the temple**

The temple of Lokanätha is one of the most important temple at Puri and conspicuous because it is oriented towards the west. According to H.C. Das, the Pasupata temples of Orissa of the Sailodbhava period had such a typical orientation towards the west.<sup>13</sup> The temple consists of four structures such as Vimāna, Jagamohana, Nätamandapa and Bhogamndapa. This temple is built in

sandstones locally called Sänlä Pathara. Due to many natural calamities, the present temple of Lokanätha is buried near about 15 feet under the sand.

### **Vimāna**

The Vimāna of the Lokanätha temple is a Pancaratha Rekhā deula and its height is about 30 feet from the ground level.<sup>14</sup> Most of the bada portion of the Vimāna have been covered with marbles. So the detail architectural features of the bada are not distinct. The baranda of the bada is completely plain and also covered with marbles.

### **Parsvadevatäs**

The central niches of the three sides of bada are housed with the pärsvadevatä figures of Umä-Mahesvara, Kärtikeya and Ganes'a. The image of Umä-Mahesvara is the pärsvadevatä of the northern side. The image of Siva or Mahesvara has been installed on a plain pedestal. Devi Pärvati or Umä is in seated posture on the left lap of Siva. Out of the four hands of Mahesvara, three hands display trisula, dambaru, abhaya mudrā and the remaining hand is lying upon the shoulder of Devi Pärvati or Umä. The left hand of Devi Umä (Pärvati) possess a lotus flower while the right hand lies on the shoulder of Lord Mahesvara (Siva). The back-slab of the Umä-Mahesvara image is carved with trefoil Makara arch. Two flying apsarā figures are carved on either side in the top corner of the background slab of this side deity. Lion and Bull, the traditional mounts of the both deities are also found on the pedestal. Three female devotees in kneeling postures are also carved on the pedestal. China plates finely cover the inner walls of the northern side pärsvadevatä niche. Marbles cover the ground floor of the northern side pärsvadevatä niche. The front side of

pärsvadevatä is covered by a shrine of Pidhä order and its height is about 15 feet from the ground of the temple. The outer walls of this shrine are also covered with marbles. The inner walls of the nishä shrine are adorned with a group of female deities some of which can be identified with Pärvati, Laksmi, Sarasvati, Mahesvari and Kaumäri. Their mounts below the pedestal and attributes in hands can we be recognized.<sup>15</sup>

Kärtikeya is the pärsvadevatä, whose image is housed in the eastern niche. There is a small slab, which contains the image of Kärtikeya. Out of the four hands of this deity, three display kukuta (rooster cock), spear, dambaru and the attribute in the remaining hand is not distinct. Peacock, the conventional mount of the deity is found in the right side of the pedestal. The front niche of the Kärtikeya image is also in a subsidiary shrine of pidhä order and its height is about 7 feet from the surface of the temple complex. There is an image of Narasimha installed close to the subsidiary shrine of the eastern side. His upper two hands display conch and cakra. The image of Narasimha is carved in the Uttänasayi pose.

The four handed image of Ganesa is the Pärsvadevatä of the southern side of the bada. The image has been installed on the double petalled lotus pedestal. His right two hands display broken tooth and rosary while the left two hands hold parasu and sweet balls. Mouse, the conventional mount of Ganesa is installed on a pillar of two feet high and it is noticed in front of the subsidiary shrine. A flat roof covers the mouse pillar. The image of Ganesa is also housed in the subsidiary shrine of pidhä order.

The curvilinear superstructure is surmounted on the gandi of the Vimäna. It also continues the Pancaratha plan of the bada. The

entire gandi portion of the Vimäna is covered with marbles. The middle portion of the Rähä paga of the gandi is projected with Gajasimhas on each side. There is a niche above the Gajasimhas of the southern side Rähä paga of the gandi and it is housed with a slab, which contains the images of Siva and Pärvati. Both lion and bull, as the traditional mounts are finely carved on either side pedestal of the deities. The eastern side Rähä paga of the gandi contains an image of the four handed Siva (Lokanätha) who is standing on a bull and his upper two hands hold a snake while the lower two hands display abhaya and varada mudrä respectively. Other pagas of the gandi are devoid of decorative ornamentation due to the covering of marbles. The dopichhä lions are finely fixed on the top of the känika pagas of the gandi.

The figures of the deula cärinis are inserted in the four cardinal directions of the beki above the rähä. These figures are the supporting elements of the amalakasilä of the mastaka.

The mastaka of the Vimäna consists of usual elements of beki, amalakasilä, khapuri, kalasa, äyudha (trident) and dhvajä.

The sanctum preserves the Sivalinga as the presiding deity of the temple. This linga is shown to the devotees once in a year. The sanctum including the linga is filled with water throughout the year by a natural fountain. The water is finally discharged to the neighbouring Pärvatisägara through an open channel. In the night of Pankoddhär Ekädashi (3 days before Shivarättri), the 14th day of the dark fortnight in the month of Mägha, all the water is bailed out and the divinity becomes visible and thousands of devotees enable to worship the Lord. This is looked upon as a miracle and

signifies the great sanctity of the place.<sup>16</sup> Masonry steps are provided for approach towards the sanctum. According to M.M. Ganguli, there is nothing striking in the temple except the Lingam, which is always under water of a spring.<sup>17</sup>

The Vimāna has one doorway through the Jagamohana, which is invariably kept closed and the devotees peep through a window into the interior where dwells the Lord of Universe. The doorjambes of the sanctum are completely undecorated. The image of Gaja-Laksmi is carved on the middle portion of the doorway lintel. The figures of Nandi and Bhṛngi are finely carved on either side base of the doorjamb. They are acting as the dvārapālas of the main deula.

### **Jagamohana**

The Jagamohana of the Lokanātha temple is a pidhā deula and its height is about 22 feet from the ground of the temple. The bada portion of the Jagamohana is completely buried under the earth. The pyramidal superstructure is surmounted on the gandi of the Jagamohana. It consists of seven pidhās and the sides of each pidhā are decorated with tankus. The bada and gandi of the Jagamohana are thickly plastered with lime mortar.

The mastaka of the Jagamohana consists of usual elements of beki, ghaṅṭā (bell-shaped member) above which there is another beki, amalakaśilā, khapuri, kalasa, āyudha (trident) and dhvajā.

The outer southern wall of the Jagamohana contains a composite image of Hari-Hara (half Vishnu and half Siva). This composite image of Harihara is installed on a double petalled lotus pedestal. The right two hands of this composite deity display trident

and damburu while the left two hands possess conch and cakra. The pedestal of the composite deity contains both the figures of Bull and Garuda as the conventional mounts of Siva and Vishnu respectively. Pārvati and Laksmi as consorts of both the Gods are also carved on either side of the lotus pedestal. The background slab of the composite deity is decorated with trefoil arch with makara head at the base and flower medallion at the apex. Apsarās and Kinnārās holding garlands in their hands carved on either side top corner of the slab. Its workmanship convey the artistic tradition of a very late period.<sup>18</sup>

The Jagamohana has three doorways, which are devoid of decorative ornamentations. The image of Gaja-Lakṣmi is carved on the middle portion of the door lintel of the eastern side. A stepped passage through this porch leads the devotees to the presiding Sivalingam within the sanctum. The inner walls of the Jagamohana are completely undecorated.

The antarāla portion between the Jagamohana and the nāōamēḍapa is covered by the small pidhā deula, which is supported by the four circular pillars.

### **Nātamaēḍapa**

The nātamaēḍapa of the Lokanātha temple is a pidhā deula and its height is about 20 feet from the ground of the temple. The badahas five divisions such as pābhāga, tala jangha, bandhana, upper jangha and baranda. The base of bada is square of 15 feet on each side. All the component parts of the bada are completely undecorated. The pyramidal superstructure surmounts the gandi of the Natamandapa. It consists of three bell-shaped pidhās. The mastaka of the Natamandapa consists of Khapuri and Kalasa only.

There is a bull-pillar of 3 feet in height noticed in the middle portion of the floor of the Natamandapa. The recumbent bull has been installed on the top of the pillar and it is made of black chlorite stone. The inner walls of the Natamandapa contain some crude sculptures of Sarasvati, the head of Rāhu, Nandi and Bhrngi etc. The Natamandapa of the Lokanātha temple has doorways on all the four sides. The base of the doorjambs of the eastern side contain figures of Nandi and Bhrngi . They are acting as the dvārapālas of the eastern side door. The central portion of the doorway lintel contains an image of Gaja-Lakṣmi. She is carved on the double petalled lotus pedestal. The figures of the Navagrahas are carved on the architrave above the doorway lintel. Other doorways of the Natamandapa are completely undecorated.

### **Bhogamandapa**

The bhogamandapa is a pidhā deula and its height is about 22 feet from the ground of temple. It is a rectangular hall and measures approximately 45 feet in length and 25 feet in width. The bada of the structure is consisting of five elements such as pābhāga, tala jangha, bandhana, upper jangha and baranda. All the elements of the bada are devoid of ornamentation. The pyramidal superstructure is surmounted on the gandi of the bhogamandapa. It consists of three pidhās. There is only one kalasa found from the top of the upper pidhā.

The inner western wall of the bhogamandapa contains some sculptures in its niches. They are viz. Narasimha, Bhairavi, Siva-pārvati, Shyāmākālī and Swami Sankarāchārya.

The four handed image of Narasimha has been installed on the plain pedestal. His upper

two hands possess conch and cakra and lower two hands are engaged to take out the entrails of Hiranya Kasyapu (demon). The astabhujā Bhairavi image has been also installed in a niche of the western wall. Her right four hands display dambaru, khadga, panapatra and the remaining hand is empty while the left side two hands possess severed head and flower. Other two hands of the left side are completely broken. Another slab contains the images of Siva and Pārvati. They are in seated postures with usual attributes in hands. Both lion and bull have also been carved on either side of the pedestal. Two flying apsara figures are carved on either side in top corner of the slab. Devi Pārvati is seated on the left lap of Siva. Another niche of the western wall contains the figure of Swāmi Sankarāchārya. He is seated in Padmāsana posture. The western inner wall of the bhogamandapa also contains the figure of Shyāmākālī. The four handed image of Devi Shyāmākālī is standing on the prostrate body of Siva who is lying on the pedestal. Her four hands display - Khadga, severed head, Abhaya mudrā and Varada mudra.

The inner walls of the bhogamandapa are also depicted with paintings of Mārkaṇḍesvara, Kailās mountain and the ten-armed Bānāmbār (Shiva). The local artists of Puri have finely executed these paintings.

### **Other Minor Shrines**

Besides these four structures, there are some other minor shrines which are noticed in the premises of the Lokanātha temple.

A miniature shrine to the left of the inner courtyard preserves images of Surya-Nārāyana and Candra-Nārāyana. It is a pidhā deula and its height is about 10 feet from the ground level.

There is a small shrine of the Rekhā order found in the southern side of the main deula. It

is the replica of the main temple (Vimāna) of Lokanātha.

There is a small shrine of Narasimha, which is closely attached to the eastern side nishā-shrine of the main deula. Within the premises can be noticed footprints under worship on a masonry pedestal.

The Satya-Nārāyan shrine within the premises preserves images of Vishnu, Laksmi and several brass idols. The mandapa in front of the main shrine contains several broken figures of Umā Mahesvara, Cāmunda, Bhairava, Navagrahas, bull and brass idols etc.

The panca-devatā shrine is located in the northeast corner of the temple complex. These deities are viz. Ganesa, Narasimha, Rudra (Shiva), Mahisāmardini Durgā (Ambikā) and Bhāskara (Surya-Devatā)

At the very entrance to the premises one can notice a series of female divinities worshipped in the name of Cāmunda, Hādaphuti and Sitalā. They have been very badly mutilated and the available parts are thickly coated with vermillion. Their proper identity is very difficult to be arrived at.

The walls around the entrance to the inner courtyard preserve within their niches figures of Hanumān in different poses, Pārvati and a scene representing Siva's marriage with Pārvati. The Hanumān figures are holding the branch of a tree and a piece of rock in both hands. The figures of Pārvati is seated by crossing the leg with lion as her mount is carved to the left. Her three hands display varada mudrā, snake and goad. The remaining hand is damaged. The panel representing the marriage of Siva with Pārvati reveals Siva on his mount, the bull. Pārvati with offerings in hands is standing in front of him. Out of the

four hands of Siva, three display rosary, trident, dambaru and the remaining hand stretched over his right knee. Attedānts of Siva holding umbrellas, flywhisks and playing on musical instruments have assembled in front in a row. The navagrahas are finely carved on the architrave above the door lintel of the inner main entrance porch. They are seated in Padmāsana with usual attributes in their hands. Kutāb Candi image has been installed on the niche of the right side wall of the main entrance (inner).

The middle gateway of the temple complex is covered by the makara headed torana. It faces to the north towards the tank of Pārvatisāgara.

There is another main gate (outer) built in the eastern side of the boundary wall. The Trust Board under the control of the State Endowment Commissioner has constructed it. The gate is decorated with trefoiled arch; Makara head at the base and the Gaja-Lakṣmi image at the apex. Two lions are also leaning in both sides of the Gaja-Laksmi image. Two big sized lions are in seated postures in both sides of the main gate. Other two additional gateways are constructed on the both sides of the main gate. These two gates are used at the time when the temple complex is very crowded. Two galloping horses are installed on either side of the additional gates. Thus, there are three gates found in the complex of the Lokanātha temple. These gates are viz. first one in the inner main entrance, second one in the middle and the third one in the main outer entrance gate of the temple complex.

The compound of the Lokanātha temple is about 10 feet below the road level. The steps made of stones are provided for entry into the temple complex. In short, the Lokanātha temple

though primarily dedicated to Lord Shiva, is a storehouse of cult icons of other faiths.

### **Date of the Temple**

There is lot of controversy among the historians as well as the archaeologists with regard to the approximate date of the Lokanätha temple of Purusottama Ksetra or Puri. According to R.L.Mitra, the oldest temple extant is the temple of Älabukevara built by Lalätendu Keshari (AD 623 to 627 AD).<sup>19</sup> Dr. B.K.Rath has described that the temple of Lokanätha was constructed in 19th century A.D.<sup>20</sup> Jagabandhu Pädhi has referred that Udyata Keshari (AD 1040-1065), son of Yayäti-II of Soma dynasty had a second name Älabuka Keshari and it is stated that he had constructed the temple of Lokanätha at Puri and that it originally had the name LäuKANätha, Älabukesvara or Älabuknätha.<sup>21</sup> Architectural designs and sculptural features of the temple also suggest that it belonged to the Somavamsi period of Orissan history. Most of the scholars accept that the Saiva temples of Puri town or Purusottama Ksetra were constructed during Somavamsi period of Orissa history. On the basis of the architectural style, the construction period of the Lokanätha temple can be tentatively assigned to the eleventh century AD and probably it was built before the construction of the present temple of Jagannätha. The available sculptures, which are now in the precincts of the temple complex, were made in the later period of the temple construction.

### **Rituals and Festivals**

Lord Lokanätha's Bije Pratimä (His representative image) is in the Sri Jagannätha temple, known as Bhandära Lokanätha. He is the guardian deity of the Ratnabhandara (treasure house) of Sri Jagannätha temple.<sup>22</sup>

Lokanätha is associated with Jagannätha in several rituals like Sivarätri, Candan Yäträ and Sital Sasthi. The festival of Sivarätri is observed in the temple of Lokanätha with great devotion. On the Mahäsivarätri lot of devotees arrive near the temple to offer their prayer to Lord Lokanätha. On that day, devotees with great enthusiasm worship the image of Hari-Hara. Accordingly to Pt. S.N.Dash, the temple of Lokanätha is the co-ordinating place of both Saivism and Vaishnuaism. The followers of both sects assemble here to worship Harihara.<sup>23</sup> On the day of Sivaratri, a meet is arranged between Lokanätha (Hara) and Jagannätha (Hari). The union seems to be an assimilation of Vaishnavism and Saiva-cult.<sup>24</sup> The Harihara cult is highly significant, "as light is submerged into light and cannot be separated".<sup>25</sup> It signifies the emotional integration and mutuality of Saivism and Vaishnavism at Puri. Large numbers of devotees also gather here on the last Monday of Baisakha to worship the Lord Harihar. According to a local tradition, people who suffer from incurable diseases come here for prayer.

A Trust Board under the control of State Endowment Commissioner is managing the temple of Lokanätha.

It is known from the above discussion that the temple of Lokanätha is one of the prominent Saiva Shrines of the Purusottama Ksetra or Puri. Among the five prominent Saiva Shrines of Puri, the temple of Lokanätha is the most important from the cultural point of view. It is said that the temple of Lokanätha is the first established Saiva shrine of the place of Purusottama. The shrine of Lokanätha is actually a temple complex with compound wall; much like that of the Jagannätha temple. On the whole, from the architectural point of

view, the temple of Lokanätha has no such importance but from the religious point of view, it is next to the Jagannätha temple of Puri.

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Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Naveen Patnaik receiving a Demand Draft of from Working President of Friend's Association, Baramunda for Tsunami Victims at Secretariat on 17.2.2005.