



## Tulasi Kshetra Kendrapara

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*Tulasi Kshetra* Kendrapara is one of the five holy *Kshetras* of Orissa. It houses the temple of Lord Baladeva Jiu in the heart of this *Kshetra*. The same rites and rituals of Lord Jagannath at Puri are generally followed here which makes Kendrapara equally attractive. It is only 95 Km away from the state capital Bhubaneswar. Literature like *Brahama. Tantra* written by Vedavyas and *Padma Puran* speak the glory of this place.

Here Lord Balabhadra married Tulasi, the daughter of the demon king Kandarasura and resided here secretly. So this place is called *Tulasi Kshetra* or *Gupta Kshetra*. It is also known as *Brahma Kshetra*, *Kandarapadi* or *Kendarapada*. From the

ancient times this *Kshetra* was extended from Bay of Bengal (Kalinga Sagar) in the east, the high hill of Lalitagiri as well as the Assia mountain range in the north-west, Holy river Baitarani in the north and river Mahanadi in

the south which was once known as Uttar Tosali or UCHA (ODRA) of Hiuen-Tsang. This deltaic region is a very fertile land formed by the three major rivers of Orissa namely Mahanadi, Brahmani and Baitarani falling to the sea.

People of the locality are worshipping the God of Agriculture and oxen/bull for prosperity. In the medeaval Bengali literature it appears that Lord Siva is represented by a cultivator who ploughs his field, seeds sow, take out weeds, cut grass and carries it to his house on his head. We know that the wisdom of Balabhadra is that of Siva of the Universe. Hence Siva - Balabhadra is the God of Agriculture from the ancient times.



In the *Oriya Mahabharat*, Adikavi Sarala Das has described the three deities - Balabhadra, Subhadra and Jagannath as the embodiments of *Nara*, *Bramha* and *Hari* respectively. In *Jagannath Charitamruta* by



Dibakara Das he is portrayed as "*shling Bija*", Subhadra as '*Hling Bija*' and Jagannath as '*Kling Bija*'.

According to Vedic literature, Devi Subhadra is *Kshar* (Perishable) called *Prakriti* and Baladeva, the Vedic Lord Rudra or the *Akshara* of Vedant, represent "Elemental self". Both *Kshra* and *Akshara* are sub-ordinated to Purusottama known as Jagannath, the Eternal Unburn as also the cosmic streaming forth.

In *Durga Saptasati*, the triad have a tantric eulogization. According to Tantrik devotees Balabhadra is none other than Saraswati, the Goddess of Knowledge. Subhadra is worshipped as the divine expression of Mahalaxmi, The Goddess of Wealth, Jagannath is the divine expression of Lord Vishnu, the Creator and Preserver of the Universe. Not only this the Tantric devotees also worship Balabhadra as Ugratara, Subhadra as Bhubaneswari and Jagannath as Dakhinakali.

There are several myths and legends surrounding Lord Baladeva Jiu at Kendrapara. Legend records that Kandarasura, a demon king, destroyer of *Jajnas*, was ruling over the area surrounding Lalitagiri and Assia mountain ranges. *Tulasikshetra Mahatmya* reveals that he lived near Lalitagiri - Alutigiri and was terrifying people. Lord Balabhadra defeated him in a fight as a result of which he left the place, went to Kapilas mountain near Dhenkanal and lived in disguise in the nearest mountain ranges as he was an ardent devotee of Lord Siva. Lord Balabhadra thoroughly searched every nook and corners of the hill and lastly ploughed the hill with his plough (*hala*) as a result of which one perennial spring emerged from the hill, which is now called '*Langal Siar Jharana*' (spring of the plough).

After persuading him from Kapilas, Lord Balabhadra killed the wicked demon Kandarasura in a fight and threw his slain body all over nearby places by cutting it into pieces.

It is a popular belief among the local people that the scattered body was fallen at Asureswar, Balagandi, Kamar Khandi, Navi Khandi which places are named after the head (*Aswa Sira*), trunk (Gandi of Aswa) waist (*Kamar-Khanda*) and *Naval* (peice of Navi) of the demon Kandarasura respectively. It is also belived that the Siva temples of Swapneswar at Kantia, Lankeswara of Gualisingh, Bileswar of Kagal were founded by Baladeva over the face, neck and waist of the demon respectively, Balagandi, the place where the trunk of Kandarasura had fallen is called *Kandara padi* (Kendrapara). One menhir with some *Tulasi* trees were existing there.

Before killing the demon, Lord Balabhadra at first killed Madhudaitya, the chief military general of Kandarasura at Lalitagiri through his war weapon plough. The blood gushing out from the body of the general formed a river named Madhusagar (now Gobari river) which flow towards east by the side of Kandarasura Menhir and ultimately meet the sea.

Lord Balaram married Tulasi, the only daughter of Kandarasura on the 12th day of the bright fortnight in the month of Magha which is observed with pomp and ceremony every year as '*Tulasi bibaha day*' (marriage day of Tulasi) in the Baladeva Jiu Temple, Kendrapara. The place where this marriage was performed is renamed as *Tulasi Kshetra*.

It is said that after the death of Balarama his dead body was transformed into a Manibigraha (stone image) which was



worshipped by *Devatas* at the door of *Patalpuri* which is identified with Lalitagiri in *Dwapar Yuga*. When *Kali yuga* appeared *Buddha Dharma* (Buddhism) spread over the area. *Devatas* kept the image of Balabhadra in disguise under water of Madhusagar (river Gobari). After Gopal Siddha Das, a cowherd boy discovered the stone image of Balabhadra near Siddha Sarobar it is worshipped at Kendrapara it is worshipped as Siddha Baladev Jiu after the name of Siddha Das, who discovered the deity first.

In the 13th century A.D., king Anangabhima III of Ganga dynasty constructed one temple for the worship of Lord Siddha Baladeva Jiu near present *Kacheri* of old Kendrapara town which is about 60 hands (28 mtrs) high over a *vedi* (*Mandapa*) constructed previously.

Some historians are of the opinion that stone image of Lord Baladeva Jiu on a plain and square *mandapa* (length 75 *dhanu*) was worshipped by Kalyan Devi, the queen of Madhav Raj of Sailodbhava dynasty during 7th century. This *Mandapa* was renovated by 2nd Indradyumna Yayati Keshari and was consecrated by the Brahmans brought from Jajpur.

Other historians differ from the above views and in their opinion, one *Mandapa* (*vedi*) was constructed during the period of Bhaumakaras for the worship of Lord Balabhadra at Kendrapara and subsequently reconstructed by the Ganga monarch Anangabhimadeva-III as stated above. Mention have been made of the Talcher Copper Plate of Sivakaradeva, the king Gayada of Bhaumakara dynasty, in which we come across the name of Hari, Damodar, Haladhar, Madhusudan, Govinda, Tribikram,

Gobardhana, Janardana, Purusottama, Sudarsana, Balabhadra, Vamana, Vasudeva, Visnu, Narayan, Narasimha and Padmanava. Thus the period of Bhaumakara rule is very important for Orissa from the religious point of view. For the first time we come across the name of Balabhadra in the Inscriptions of Orissa.

The original temple was demolished by Khan-i-Duran (1660-1667 AD), the then *Subedar* of Orissa during the time of Moghal Emperor Aurangazeb on 2nd April 1661 AD. He constructed one *Masjid* on the foundation of the dismantled temple in the year 1663 A.D.

Devotees of Lord Baladev Jiu, took the deity in disguise in a boat through the river Govari and kept the deity in a secret place near Baranga (Chhedara) Jungle. Afterwards it was shifted to Balarampur village near Luna river at *Sakhi Bata*. So this place is sacred for the Hindus.

The present shrine of Siddha Baladeva Jiu was constructed during the Maratha rule in Orissa (1761 AD) of Ichhapur (Kendrapara). It was constructed by the king of Kujanga, Raja Gopal Sandha and *Zamidar* (land lord) of Chhedara *killah*, Srinivas Narendra Mahapatra. One saint (*Santha*) Gopi Das and Sairatak Giri convinced the then Maratha Chief Janoji and constructed the *Jagamohan*, *Bhoga Mandapa* of the main temple, temple of Gundicha and compound wall. The *Viman* and *Jagamohan*, are built in *pidha* style of temple architecture. Afterwards *Mukti Mandap*, *Ananda Bazar*, *Bhandaraghar* (store house), Gouranga temple, Basudeva Temple and Garuda pillar were constructed inside the temple enclosure. Painting of some Hindu iconography was done on the roof ceiling and inner wall of *Jagamohan*. The entire area surrounding the



Lord Baladeva Jau temple is traditionally known as *Tulasi Kshetra*. The image of Tulasi Devi is worshipped in a temple near village Gochha on the northern side of the road from Kendrapara to Ichhapur.

The stone image of Lord Balabhadra and wooden idols of Jagannath, Subhadra and Sudarsan are also worshipped according to the rituals of the temple in Lord Jagannath at Puri.

*Tulasi Kshetra* (Kendrapara) and its adjoining areas were once upon a time a centre of Buddhist and Saivite cultures. Some of the Buddhist and Brahmanical images recovered from here have been preserved in the Indian Museum at Calcutta (Kolkata). This place is very near to Lalitagiri, Udayagiri and Ratnagiri where famous university of Puspagiri and Buddha Vihar flourished since 3rd-2nd century B.C. Therefore the entire deltaic area from Lalitagiri to the river Mahanadi and the sea is full of scattered Buddhist antiquity. Zamindar of Chhedaragarh also was worshipping one of the Buddha images in the dense forest of *Baranga Jhada* inside a temple facing north. The present Siddha Baladeva Jau temple, Kendrapara was constructed on the same spot. Now the old image of Buddha in the campus is being worshipped as the father of Lord Baladeva named Basudeva.

Car festival of Lord Balabhadra in the *Tulasi Khetra* is celebrated on the 2nd day of bright fortnight in the month of *Asadha* just like the Car Festival of Puri. He moves in a magnificent chariot called 'Taladhwaaja'. His chariot is 39 feet (12 mtrs) in height and 24 feet (7.5 mtrs) in diameter having 14 wheels. Two black and two white horses are fitted in front of the chariot.

*Zamindar* of Chhedaragarh was performing all royal duties of Puja like

*Chherrah Panhara* etc. After the death of the Zamindar, his widow queen sold all the rights of the temple to the then *Zamindar* of Kendrapara, the Radheshyam Narendra family. Now the *Chherrah panhara* rituals before the Lord Balabhadra is performed by the successors of late Radheshyam Narendra. *Bhoga* like 'Rasabali' is famous in Baladeva Jau temple. Besides this, the festival of *Makar Sankranti*, *Mahabishuva Sankranti* (*Pana Sankranti*), *Chandan yatra*, *Snana Purnima*, *Shravan Purnima* (*Baladeva Janma* and *Magha Sukla Dwadasi* (*Tulasi Bibaha*)) are some of the main festivals observed in the Baladeva Jau temple at Kendrapara.

*Tulasi Kshetra* Kendrapara is very much proud of poets, writers and artists like Achutananda Goswami, Madhu Das of Kantia Matha, Phagu Das, Bhikari Dibakar, Baikuntha Mahapatra, Baisya Sadasiva, Bhakta Kabi Gangadhar Narendra Bipra Madhuri of 16th century, Ramasankar Roy, Gourisankar Roy, Golaka Pradhan (2nd Bhanja), Kuntala Kumari Sabat, Bidyut Prava Das etc. There are also many renowned poet and writers those have contributed to the Oriya literature like late Arta Ballabha Mohanty, Kahnu Charan Mishra, Surendra Mohanty. Bhikari Charan Pattanaik, Kabi Prasad Mohapatra and renowned poet Sitakanta Mahapatra, Dipak Mishra, Sribatschha Nath, Nimai Charan Pani, Sukadev Sahu etc., poet and dramatist Natyarathi Gopal Dash, historian Pratap Kumar Roy and ancestors of Vyasakabi Fakir Mohan Senapati also hailed from this place.

Cultural contribution of *Tulasikshetra* towards *yatra*, Drama, Ramalila, *Chaiti Ghoda Nacha*, Idol dance (*Kandhei Nacha*) *Nama Sankirtan* and *Pala* are praiseworthy. *Pala gayak* Nidhi Nath, Mani Nath, Hari Nath, Narayan Kar, Keshab Kar, Golak Das,





Niranjan Kar, Parikshit Nanda, Rabi Mishra Bhagabata Panda , Anadi Nayak and about 70 or more *Pala gayaks* are pride of this place. Singers like Nimai Charan Harichandan, *Bhajan Samrat* Bhikari Bal, Violine artist Sunakar Sahu, Rakhil Mohanty, Dibakara Sahu and many others are glory of this *Tulasi Kshetra*.

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