



## Some Early Jagannath Temples of Western Orissa

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Jagannath, the Lord of the Universe, who is worshipped at Puri is the supreme deity of the Hindu Community. Puri the sacred city of Orissa is well known for the great temple of Lord Jagannath. Shree Jagannath is heartily loved and respected by all Oriya speaking people and others alike. Jagannath culture influences every sphere of life in Orissa, whether it is political, social, cultural, religious or economic. Puri the seat of Lord Jagannath is the greatest religious centre of India. Great temple of Lord Jagannath is situated near the sea-coast of Puri. All Oriya speaking people respect Sri Jagannath as their supreme Lord and in every social, culture and religious activities people of Orissa at first take His name in adoration. There are a number of Jagannath temples in various parts of Orissa. Jagannath temple at Brahmapura village near Patnagarh town of Balangir district is one of ancient temples of Orissa. Ramai Deo, the founder of Chauhan dynasty of Balangir-Patna kingdom in the 14th century constructed this Jagannath temple. This temple symbolizes the spread of Jagannath culture in Western Orissa. Ramai Deo, the first Chauhan ruler of Balangir-Patna installed the images of Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra, which he took from Puri. Ramai Deo also took thirteen Brahmana families from Viraja Kshetra, who were engaged in the Seva Puja of the deities. Ramai



Deo granted them two villages named Hirapur and Chandanbhati for the maintenance of the temple. Those Brahmana families are living in Brahmapura village till now.

There are number of Jagannath temples in Sambalpur town, which were constructed by Balabhadra Deva, the third Chauhan ruler of Sambalpur kingdom. Brahmapura temple situated in the heart of the Sambalpur town is one of them, where he has installed the images of the Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra in the sanctum. The temple observes all rituals of Jagannath culture. Spiritual scripture *Adhyatmya Ramayana* was translated into Oriya verses by poet Gopal Telenga under the patronage of Maharaja Ajit Singh of Sambalpur (1726-42 A.D.). Another



important early Jagannath temple in Sambalpur is in the Gopalji Matha, popular for its religious activities. Bansigopal, the third son of Madhukar Deva, the fourth Chauhan ruler of Sambalpur became a great Vaisnava and founded the Gopalji Matha in the Sambalpur town on the bank of the Mahanadi. There he spent his whole life as its first *Mahanta*. He had constructed two temples in this Matha complex, one is Gopalji temple and the other is Jagannath temple.

The Dadhivaman temple at Bhatli of Baragarh district is famous as Jagannath is worshipped as Dadhivaman here. Bhatli is an old village, where, according to tradition the temple of Dadhivaman was built by a rich merchant named Paramananda Sahu. At the time of Car Festival thousands of people congregate here to worship the Lord. The time of construction of the temple of Dadhivaman at Bhatli may be the 18th century. Anangabhima III, the Ganga ruler had constructed many Jagannath temples in Baragarh area after the conquest of western Orissa by his ablest general Vishnu Acharya around 1220 A.D. Anangabhima Deva had granted lands for the running of those temples. He had granted land with a total area of 52.36 acres in village Deshkumhari in Baragarh district. He had granted certain land with a total area of 78 acres in the village Tamparsara, also in Baragarh district as

an endowment for the temple of Dadhivamana of that village. The Dadhivamana temple located at Tamparsara is the oldest in Western Orissa.

Sonepur, the head-quarter of Suvarnapur district is famous for its temple culture. It is situated on the confluence of the rivers Tel and Mahanadi. There are many temples in and around this historic town. It is known as the temple city of western Orissa. The Jagannath temple at Sonepur town stands near by the damaged royal palace on the bank of the Mahanadi.

Another ancient Jagannath temple of western Orissa is situated at Junagarh in Kalahandi district which is called Dadhivaman temple. Junagarh was the old capital of Nagavamsi kings of Kalahandi. The Dadhivaman temple at Junagarh is existing there since 1718 A.D. as an important centre of Jagannath Culture.

These early Jagannath temples of western Orissa were constructed by the kings of various dynasties ruling this part of Orissa in the mediaeval period to spread far and wide the inner ideology and philosophy of Jagannath culture.

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