



Anantavarmana Chodagangadeva founder of the Ganga dynasty in Utkala, was a member of the Eastern Ganga family of Kalinganagara. This family since centuries had worshipped *Siva-Gokarnesvara* on the Mahendra mountain in Kalinganagara, as their family deity. In a brilliant military carrier, Chodagangadeva reigned the ancestral territory of Kalinga. He had overthrown the Somavamsi dynasty of Utkala and united the kingdom of Utkala and Kalinga and shifted his capital from Kalinganagara to Kataka on the bank of the river Mahanadi. He was one of the powerful monarchs in the Ganga dynasty. His reign covered

two titles as *Paramavaishnava* and *Paramabrahmanya* and omitted *Paramamahesvara*. In the 2nd Visakhapatnam grant, dated in the Saka year 1057 or 1135 AD. Chodagangadeva conventionally described as *Paramamahesvara*, *Parama-bhattaraka*, *Maharajadhiraja* and *Trikalingadhipati*.

In the early period Chodagangadeva like his predecessor worshipped *Siva-Gokarnesvara*, later on he changed his religious attitude and constructed a magnificent temple at Puri which was dedicated to the *Vaishnava* god *Purushottama-Jagannatha*. According to many



Lord Purushottama - Jagannatha and Anantavarmana Chodagangadeva

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a long period of seventy years and his kingdom expanded from Ganga to Godavari.

During the first 31 years of his rule Chodagangadeva styled himself as *Paramamahesvara*, but a change was marked in the Kornu copper plate grant of Chodagangadeva which was dated in the Saka year 1034 or 1112 AD. For the first time he assumed the religious title as *Paramamahesvara*, *Paramavaishnava* and *Paramabrahmanya*. Again in the Visakhapatana copper plate grant which was dated in the Saka year 1040 or 1118 AD., he retained only the last

scholars the conversion of Chodagangadeva from *Savaism* to *Vaishnavism* took place under the impact of *Vaishnava* preacher Ramanuja. The celebrated *Vaishnava* saint Ramanuja visited Puri; under his direct influence Chodagangadeva adopted *Vaishnavism* and erected a huge temple for god *Purushottama*.

The emperor Chodagangadeva after conquering Utkala constructed a huge temple at Puri. Chodagangadeva although a follower of saivism had been keenly aware of the religious trends of the time. This devotional attributes for *Purushottama-Jagannatha* aimed both as the



stabilization and legitimation of his royal power over Odisha. He raised his imperial status by erecting this temple. The epigraphical record reveals that Gangesvara or Chodagangadeva built the temple for the Lord *Purushottama*.

The first epigraphical record of the construction of the present *Purushottama* temple by Chodagangadeva is found from the Dasogoba copper plate grant of Rajarajadeva. He was the grandson of Chodagangadeva. The charter states that Gangesvara [Chodagangadeva] constructed a suitable temple for god *Purushottama*. *Purushottama* whose feet are the earth, the navel the mid region, the head the heaven, the ears the direction, and the eyes are considered the sun and moon respectively.

Next the charter describes that before the construction of this residence for *Purushottama*, He lived in the milk-ocean [khira-sagara], since ocean is the birth place of *Lakshmi*, *Purushottama* felt rather ashamed living there in his father in-law house. He was therefore pleased to get a new place of residence for Him and His wife *Lakshmi*. The charter was issued in the Saka year 1120 corresponding to 1198-99 AD.

The 2nd epigraphical record regarding the construction of the temple by Chodagangadeva is found from the Nagari copper plate charter of Anangabhimadeva.

The Nagari plate states that Chodadaganga built a temple for the great god *Purushottama*, as the earlier kings are afraid to take up this herculean task. The rulers of the Somavamsi dynasty built magnificent temples like Rajarani, Brahmesvara, Lingaraja etc. which are the masterpieces of religious architecture, but they failed to construct a temple for *Purushottama-Jagannatha* at Puri. The next verse suggests that

the temple was built on the sea-shore. Lord *Purushottama-Jagannatha* had been in worship at Puri for many years before the conquest of that region by Chodagangadeva, but the Saivite Somavamsis who lost control over Utkala had neglected the erection of a temple for Vaishnavite deity.

Purushottama-Jagannatha of Puri was originally worshipped by the local aboriginal people and later on gradually accommodated in the Brahmanical pantheon. The identification of this deity with the Brahmanical god *Vishnu* is however apparently earlier than the beginning of the 12th century when Chodagangadeva conquered the Utkala country. Though *Vaishnavism* advanced to Odisha from south and the west in the post Samudragupta expedition, but its progress was slow. The cult of *Purushottama-Jagannatha* rapidly spread in Odisha during the time of Chodagangadeva and his successors. The cult enjoyed the royal patronage under the Gangas and the Suryavamsis, which are gleaned from numerous epigraphical and archaeological records.

References :

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3. Ibid, pp.176.
4. EI, vol. XXXI [1955-56] pp.249-62.
5. Ibid, vol. XXVIII [1949-50], pp.235-58.
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