

Visnu and Radha Worship

Dr. A.K. Tripathy

In the absence of authentic historical records, it is difficult to trace out the exact period of origin of Visnu worship and the spread of Vaisnavism in Odisha. Some earliest archaeological evidences in support of the worship of Visnu in the 4th century AD, during the rule of the Mathara dynasty in Kalinga, has come to light. The image of Visnu used to be worshipped as a two or four-armed deity. From a copper plate found in the village Sarsandha in the Gajapati district, it is learnt that Maharaja Visakha Verma (314-330 A.D.) of the Mathara dynasty had declared himself as *Parama Daivata* and *Parama Bhattaraka Padabhakta* (*Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXI pp. 23-25).

It has been mentioned in the copper plate of Ananta Sakti Verman (392-426 A.D.) of this dynasty that he was *Bhagavatah-Kamalanilay-akkranta-vakshaso-narayana-svaminah-pada-bhaktah* (*Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 175 ff). The plate reveals that he was an ardent devotee of Laksmi Narayana.

In the second copper plate of Maharaja Chanda Verman (426-441 A.D.) a mention has been made of the gift of the village Kohatra to the Brahman Brahmachari Devasarma on the 5th day of the lunar fortnight of the month of *Chaitra* (March-April) during the 6th year of his reign. In this plate he calls himself *Parama Bhagavata*.

Maharaja Prabhanjana Verman II (521-536 A.D.) has in his Nigondi copper plate inscription, termed himself as *Bhagavata Swami Narayana Padabhakta* (*Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 175 ff). From an inscription of 3rd century A.D. found in Nagarjuna Konda, it is learnt that Narayana was regarded as *Parama Daivata*. The term *Daivata* is applicable to the Sun. In the 1st and the 155-6th *sloka* of the *Rg Veda*, Narayana and Savita (Sun) are taken to be identical.

In the kingdom ruled by the kings of Mathara dynasty there was the Mahendrachala (Mahendra) hills. A district Mahendra Bhoga was created in the kingdom named after it. The wooden image worshipped by the *Savaras* on the Mahendra hills was also worshipped by the kings of Mathara dynasty as the State deity. In course of time, this image of the tribal people was worshipped as Narayana or Purusottama. (*The Cult of Jagannath*, pp. 4-5 ff)

The territory lying between Kalinga and Toshali those days was known as Kangod and it constituted one independent kingdom. The major portion of Khallikote and Jagannath Prasad in the district of Ganjam and a considerable portion of the present Khurda sub-division of Khurda district

were included in this kingdom known as Kangod. According to the Kanas copper plate of king Sri Loka Vighraha of Vighraha dynasty of Kangod, he had issued royal orders from Tatichha Pattanam, a village in the district of Satid in Tosali to Visayapati (Collector) and other officers of the State to the effect that the village *Urddhvasrnga* located in the same district was dedicated for the worship of Jaya Varaha gifted at the feet of *Parama Daivatadhi Daivata Parama Bhattaraka* (OHRJ Vol. IV p.6 & p.233). There are two *sambats* mentioned in this copper inscription. The first one, if calculated according to Gupta Era may date back to 520 A.D. and the second calculated according to *Mana* to 240 A.D. But this contradiction has to be sorted out by further research. Jaya Varaha mentioned in the copper inscription obviously refers to the Varaha Avatar of the ten incarnations of Visnu.

After the defeat of Sasanka by Harsavardhan, Maharaja Madhavara (590-604 A.D.) conquered the kingdom of Loka Vighraha of Kongod and established himself as an independent king assuming the title *Sakala Kalingadhipati*. According to a copper plate inscription found in the Khurda region he introduced himself as *Sailodbhavanvavayanata sakala kalingadhipatya kalavapta kaumudeva jagatapramadah pravrutta chakraschakadharaiva Bhagavan Madhavah Sri Madhavarajah*. From another inscription it is seen that Madhavaraja bore another name *Sri Sainyabhritasya* (O.H.R.J. Vol II Nos. 3 & 4, pp-20-24 ff).

During the reign of Madhavaraja the images of Visnu were worshipped in Kalinga under the name Madhava. In the densely populated region of the kingdom of Kangod and the adjacent ancient valley of the river Prachi, a

large number of shrines of worship of Madhava Visnu were established. By the by it may be mentioned that the present Prachi valley comprising some parts of Sadar sub-division of Puri, Bhubaneswar of undivided Puri district and Jagatsinghpur sub-divisions of the undivided Cuttack district. The then powerful Nala dynasty named after Nalaraja who perhaps ruled from a place Puskari near Nabarangpur of Odisha. Their predecessors had been ruling over Vidarbha territory. A rock inscription of 13 lines of Skandha Verman, son of Bhabadutta Verman of this dynasty is found at a little distance of the dilapidated Siva temple in the village Potagarh in the Umakot Taluk of the district of Nabarangpur. In this inscription salutations have been offered to Hari at the outset.

1) *Harina-jitam-jayati-jesyate-(tya)sha gunastutinna-[hi-sa][1]-nanu-bhagva (niva)*

2) *Jaya-jetavyam-chadhijeta (cha).*

(*Epi. Indica*, Vol. XXI, pp. 157).

Scholars are of opinion that this rock inscription belongs to the 5th century A.D. Skandha Verman had installed a stone slab with the foot prints of Lord Visnu engraved on it in a temple and worshipped.

The Sarabhapuriya royal dynasty ruled over South Kosala. Mahasudeva Raj (426 AD to 441 AD.) bore the title of *Parama Bhagavata* as recorded in his Koutavalla copper plate. In his copper plate the image of Gajalaksmi (Goddess Laksmi with elephants) was engraved. The figure of Gajalaksmi was set on a full-blown lotus with two elephants on both sides sprinkling water.

After the reign of Sarabhapuriya royal dynasty, Mahasiva Tivara Deva became the king

of the whole of Kosala. In his copper plate he declared himself as *Parama Vaisnava* (*Odishara Itihas*, p. 484). In the coins of the State the figure of Garuda, the conveyor of Visnu was engraved.

Tivara Deva ruled in the latter part of the 7th century A.D. His son Mahananna Raj was a devotee of Visnu and had conquered the kingdom of Utkal in the 9th year of his reign. In the copper plates he has described the Brahmins as Bhagavata.

After Mahananna Raj, Mahasiva Gupta Balarjuna became the king of Sakala Kosala. There are 42 verses of Mahasiva Gupta engraved in a long rock inscription of Sirpur (*EP Ind.* Vol. XI, pp. 184-202 ff). As it contains at the outset the expressions “*Om Namah Purusottamayah*”, it may be considered the first inscription of its kind in the 8th century A.D. The name of Jagannath as Sri Purusottama has been recorded for the first time. After this there are salutations to the Nrsingha incarnation, to Lord Krsna, the destroyer of Kamsa and to Lord Balarama. It is clear from this that Mahasiva Tivara Deva and his forefathers of Pandu dynasty worshipped Sri Jagannatha, Laksmi, Nrsingha, Krsna, Balarama as their ancestral Gods. So the figure of Laksmi was engraved as the royal emblem.

As king of Sarabha dynasty who ruled before the Pandu dynasty termed themselves as Parama Bhagavata, it is clear that Visnu worship was widely in vogue in South Kosala much before the 7th century A.D. It is learnt from another rock inscription at Sirpur that Mahasiva Gupta Balarjuna, son of Sri Harsa Gupta (Swabhaba Tunga) and queen Vasata (daughter of Surya Verma) had engaged the florists of *Nabahatta* at Sripura to make beautiful garlands everyday to be offered to Lord Visnu. In the Sambal region of Kosala, Indrabhuti (714 A.D.) in his work

Jnanasiddhi has offered his salutations to Lord Jagannatha. In the lyrics or religious scriptures the mention of Lord Jagannatha is first of its kind. The name of Lord Jagannatha did not find place in any scripture before this.

**“Pranipatya Jagannatham sarvajina
vararchitam,
Sarva Buddhamayam siddi vyapinam
gaganopamam”**

(*Jnansiddhi*, 1/1)

Indrabhuti is also known as the expounder of Vajrayana, a school of Tantrayana Buddhism. His sister Laksmikara and his adopted son Padma Sambhava went as far as Tibet on their assignment to preach this religion. Padma Sambhava is even now regarded as the founder of Tibetan Lamahood. The Sahajayana cult of Buddhism developed from the Mahayana cult. The bliss of inter-communion with God is transformed to *Maharasa*. In this *Maharasa* the soul merges with Brahma.

Indrabhuti has offered his oblations to Lord Jagannath as the deity worshipped by the *Mahajinas*. Among the ten incarnations, the incarnation of Buddha is taken to be Lord Jagannath Himself. On the left walls of the *Bhogamandapa* behind the Garuda pillar inside the Puri Jagannath temple and upon the upper part of the Lion's gate (*Singhadvara*) in the engravings of the ten incarnations the image of Lord Jagannath is substituted later in place of Buddha which is highly meaningful though objectionable. It is objectionable because Lord Jagannath who is Vishnu Himself cannot be an incarnation or Avatar. The Odia literature also sings in abundance of the glory of Buddha, as an incarnation of Lord Jagannath. Instances of this can be found in the figures pictured on the old

palm-leaf scriptures of Odisha. It is widely believed that the sacred stuff placed in the navel part of Lord Jagannath, which gets transferred to the new deity, is regarded as *Brahma*, is the tooth of Buddha. But some others even believe it to be the unburnt navel portion of Srikrishna.

Hiuen Tsang has in his account described the Buddhist Burma region as Sriksetra. Puri, the abode of Lord Jagannatha, is also termed as Sriksetra. Consequent upon the spread of Sahajiya Buddhism, people of the lower castes of the society were attracted to it. This led to a mixture of Hinduism and Buddhism. Almost at every home Buddhist pillars set up earlier got converted to bases of *Tulsi* plants and worshipped daily. These were converted to *tulasi* *basements* and they got widely spread to all parts of India. In this way Buddhist consciousness merged into the vast arena of Hinduism and gave rise to the development of a new religious order.

It is ascertained from Daspalla copper plate that Sri Satrubhanja Deva Tribhuban Vilas, the king of Visnubalka was a great devotee of Vaisnavism. In the copper plate there is mention of the name of a village Santosa Madhava. This copper plate belonged to Bhauma era 198 or 812 A.D.

During the reign of Bhaumakara dynasty, Tribhubana Mahadevi, the chief queen of Santikar I (846 A.D.) termed herself, in a copper plate inscription, (*Ep. Ind.* Vol. XXIX, pp. 210-220 ff.) as *Paramavaisnavi Parama Bhattarika-Maharajadhiraja Paramesvari*. Subhakar Dev II (836 A.D) bore the name of *Singhadhvaja* or *Singhaketu* and was a great patron of Buddhism. But from his Hindol copper plate it is confirmed that he also sang the glory of Lakshmi-Narayana and Chandrasekhar (*Odisha Itihas* p. 450). His other name was Ramdev.

Madhavi Devi, the chief queen of Subhakar Deva, had built the Madhavesvar temple on the top of Udayagiri hill. The verse “*Khyatoayambhuvi Madhavesvara iti Sriman Bhavasyalayam*” (*Odisha Itihas*. p. 447, Neulapur copper plate, (*Ep. Ind.* Vol. XV, pp 1-8 ff.)) has been inscribed on the wall of the Hansesvar temple. As her husband Subhakar Deva posed himself as a great worshipper of *Parama Saugata* (*E.I.*, Vol XV, pp 1-8), it can be assumed that he was a patron of Buddhism. But Maharani Madhavi Devi having already built the temple of Madhavesvar also established many shrines of Visnu worship which shows her religious tolerance and patronisation of Hinduism. This resulted in a strange co-ordination of Hinduism and Buddhism. Side by side with the worship of Buddhist gods and goddesses, the worship of Madhava spread far and wide in Odisha.

In the east of the Mahendra hill, adjacent to the southern part of the kingdom of Kangod, there was an independent kingdom named Svetaka. After the kings of Sailodbhava dynasty, the kings of Ganga dynasty rules over Kalinga conquered the southern territory upto the river Rsikulya. In course of time the Svetakas mingled with the Bhauma kingdom and established themselves as feudatory chiefs of Bhauma kings. According to Sankhamedi copper plate, Maharaja Indraverma of this dynasty had gifted a village for worship of Loka Madhava Visnu and Svayambhukesvara Visnu and Siva and had appointed some Brahmins to take care of the rites of worship. Among them were Somapa and Savaripa, the great saints.

It is learnt from a copper plate of queen Tribhubana Mahadevi (895 A.D.) found from Boudh that after the death of her husband Lalitabhara, she took over the charge of the

administration of the kingdom Toshali. The Chedi king Laksman Raj conquered the kingdoms of Kosala and Udra and carried away from the latter the valuable Kaliya image beset with gold and jewels as ascertained from Bilhari rock-inscription.

**“Jitva Kosalanathamodranrupateraptastu
yah kaliye,
Ratna svarnamayah sa yena vihita
somesvarabhyarcchanam”**

(*Ep. Ind.*, Vol I, p. 256 ff.)
(Odishara Itihasa P.459)

From this it is learnt that Laksman Raja (Odishara Itihas- P.459) had stolen away the image without encountering Udra Raj in a battle. This incident took place during the reign of Kosala king Janmejaya Mahabhava Gupta Svabhava Tunga. To take revenge, Janmejaya waged a war against the Chedi king and burnt his territory to ashes. This has also been mentioned in the copper plate of Yajati, son of Janmejaya found in Bolangir Patna. (*Odishar Itihas*, p. 459). Probably the Chedi king Laksman Raj was living in the 10th century A.D.

But what is this Kaliya image spoken of above ? It may probably be either the Kaliya-Dalana (killing of the serpent Kali) posture of Lord Srikrishna or the image of Lord Jagannatha (black in colour) adorned with gold and jewels.

Maharaja Yajati II of Soma dynasty became the king of Kosala, Kangod and Utkala and built the temple of Lord Lingaraj known then as Kirtibaseswara at Bhubaneswar. Though he had made the preliminary arrangements for construction of the temple of Sri Jagannatha, he could not implement it. It has been mentioned in the *Madala Panji* (chronicle of important events of Jagannatha temple) that 146 years before Yajati,

Lord Jagannatha was buried underground at Sonapur (Suvarnapur) in fear of the invasion of Raktabahu. Yajati Kesari had unearthed the divine images and had reinstalled them at Puri. He was given the title of Dwitiya Indradyumna i.e. Indradyumna II. Afterwards, the Ganga emperor Chodaganga Deva had built the present lofty and majestic Puri temple. It is generally believed that one Lalatendu Kesari had built the Lingaraj temple of Bhubaneswar. But history does not record any such name. It could be Udyot Kesari or Yajati II and in all probability they could be one and the same king. Though the kings of Soma dynasty were Saivas themselves, they made equally sincere wholehearted effort for establishing Visnu worship.

The images of Nila Madhava and Siddhesvara Siva Linga at Gandhradi near Boudh situated at the south-valley of the river Mahanadi were probably constructed in 8th or 9th century A.D. The simultaneous worship of Lord Hari (Visnu) and Hara (Siva) in the same part of the country bears ample proof that in the Kosala region these two worships had long been in vogue concurrently. Similarly the image of Lakshmi Nrsingha inside the Lingaraj temple walls at Bhubaneswar symbolises joint worship of Vaisnavism and Saivism at this holy place of pilgrimage. On the western border of the Boudh town, the temple of Ramesvara a Visnu temple is built. Close to this there are two small temples which may date back to 9th century A.D.

Near Talcher in the district of Angul, the biggest image of Lord Visnu in India is found in a sleeping posture. From top to toe it is 46 ft X 5 ft. in length & breadth respectively. Historians are of opinion that the construction of this image may date back to 8th century A.D. In the Svarna Jaleswar temple at Bhubaneswar built in the 7th or

8th century A.D., the beautiful figures of Saptasala Chhedan of Sri Rama and crushing of the Kaliya serpent by Srikrnsa are found. The Kaliya Dalana image of Srikrnsa has been preserved in the State Museum at Bhubaneswar.

To the south of the Lingaraj temple built during the reign of the Soma dynasty there are engravings of figures of Nanda, Yasoda and baby Krsna. Such figures have been engraved in a small temple at the north-east corner of the Brahmesvar temple at Bhubaneswar. In this picture Nanda has beard and Yasoda is seen churning curd and baby Krsna found to be curiously watching it. During the reign of the same Soma dynasty an attractive image of Lord Visnu has been installed at Jalauka near Chhatia in the district of Cuttack. Thus Viasnavism was in vogue in present Odisha for more than eight centuries before the advent of the Ganga dynasty.

Ananta Verman Chodaganga Deva (1078-1174 A.D.) at first worshipped Gokarnesvar installed on Mahendrachala (Mahendra Mountain). In this connection, it has been discussed before that on the Mahendra Mountain the indigenous *Savaras* had been worshipping the wooden image which was considered to be their State deity by the kings of Mathara dynasty. It is learnt from the Korne copper plate that through the influence of his ancestral preceptor Ramanuj, Chodaganga Deva was attracted towards Visnu worship. His copper plate say that at the beginning of his reign he had built the temple of Laksmi Narayan on the seashore.

Dasgobra plate of Rajraja-III-Saka-1120

47. "*Lakshmi-Janama-griham-*

payonidhir-asau- sambhavitasya-sthitir-nno-dhamni-svasu (s'vas'u) -rusya- pujiyat- iti-kshir-avdhi (bdhi)-vasa(d)-dhruvam (vam I),

48. *ttamah-Pramuditas-tad-dham-Labhad-Ram-apy-etad-bhrtri-griham Varam pitri-grihat – prapya pramod- anavita"*

(*Ep-indica-vol.XXXI-P.225*)

There was an old temple of Lord Jagannatha at Jagannath Puri, built by Yayati Keshari which was in a dilapidated condition and Chodaganga Deva renovated this old temple and rebuilt it totally. This is supported by the description in Vaisnava Lilamrita composed by Madhav Patnaik in the first part of the 16th century A.D. during the reign of emperor Gajapati Pratap Rudra Deva.

The same temple which had been built for installation of Laksmi Narayan is now the temple of Lord Jagannath. Lord Jagannath is till today known as Purushottam and many elderly persons in an around Puri refer to it as Purastam (Rural pronunciation of Puroshottam). Since the reign of Chodaganga Deva, Visnu worship got widely spread in Odisha as he got the worship instituted with all the arrangements physical and financial. That became the model for other princes of Odisha to construct Jagannatha temples and provide land for their worship. Purusottam Puri, the abode of Lord Jagannath became the centre of Visnu worship and Vaisnavism. After the preaching of Advait philosophy by Sankaracharya, there appeared on the scene Madhvacharya, Visnusvami, Ramanujam and Nimbarka, the preachers of Dualism. For propagation of their own teaching they had established several shrines at Puri. From the ten slokas composed by Nimbarka, it is learnt that he was a staunch supporter of the worship of Radha-Krsna. The fifth of these ten slokas reads as follows :

*"Angetu vame vrsabhanujema
mudabirajamana manurupasaubhagyam*

*sakhisahasreih parisebitam sada smarema
devim sakalestakamadam”.*

(Sri Jayadeva O Sri Gitagovinda, p. 147)

It means that Radha the daughter of Vrsabhanu who resembles Laksmi and is ever blissful sits on the left of Srikrnsa surrounded by thousands of mates devoted to her service. She, who is the bestower of peace and grants all desires, is ever memorable and worthy of devotion and worship. The followers of Nimbarka are of opinion that Srikrnsa is the beloved of the Gopis and Radha resembling Laksmi is conjoined with him as his pleasing counterpart. But the conjoined image of Radha and Krsna as conceived by Nimbarka had not yet been discovered. Nimbarka has prepared a commentary on the principles of Vedanta named *Vedanta Parijata Saurabha*..

After this in the middle of the 12th century A.D. the *Gitagovinda* of Sri Jayadeva considerably influenced the common people in Odisha. The sweet and melodious verses of the *Gitagovinda* based on the blissful divine union of Radha and Madhava resounded all around and even penetrated to the distant interiors of Odisha and India. The influence of Vaisnavism on the then society in Odisha and the inspiration derived from dualism might have prompted Jayadeva to compose the love episode of Radha and Krsna. Though there was an impact of teachings of Buddha and Nimbarka in the mind of Jayadeva, his *Gitagovinda* was unique in its own way and invoked devotional and enchanting feelings in the hearts of the common mass of Odisha. In latter times literature, music, art and architecture in Orissa and India were greatly influenced by the *Gitagovinda*.

The four-armed image of Madhava-Visnu holding the conch, wheel, mace and lotus, with Krsna consciousness installed into it, was subsequently found to be holding the conch and the wheel in upper two hands and the flute by the lower two hands. This image in the pose of standing in triflection is adorned with the engraving of ten incarnations all around. Among such type of images in Odisha one found in Dharmasala of Cuttack (now in Jajpur) district, has been preserved in the Odisha State Museum, Bhubaneswar. Of the other images, one is preserved in the Jagannatha Ballabha *matha* and another in the Gouranga *matha* at Puri.

The intense devotional ardour contained in the *Gitagovinda* of Jayadeva brought in course of time, the transformation of the image of Madhava to that of two armed Krsna with flute. Gradually, this image assumed the form of Krsna-Gopinatha with two arms holding the flute and was worshipped all over Odisha. The mode of sculpture of the image of Krsna-Gopinatha all over Odisha resembles that of Ksirachora Gopinatha of Remuna in the district of Balasore.

Close to the village Kenduli, the birthplace of Jayadeva, in the villages of Baliana, Sarkana, Hirapur, Naharakanta and Barimund in the undivided Puri district, Nagari, Adaspur and Varahapur in this sadar sub-division of Cuttack district such types of images are installed and worshipped. In the Brahmin *sasanas* near Puri the images of Gopinatha are worshipped but the image of Krsna with two hands is without his counterpart Radha. The date of these images may be in the latter part of the 12th or the middle of the 13th century A.D. In the Alarpur copper plate of the emperor Narasingha Deva IV, there is mention of installation of three images of Gopinatha at (1) Alarpur, (2) Sarkana and

(3) Hirapur (Allarpur plate of Narasingh Dev II *E.I.*, Vol XXI, No. 3, pp. 17-24)

Maharani Chandrika Devi, the daughter of Anangabhimha Deva II (1211 -1238 A.D.) of the 13th century A.D., was a devotee of Lord Visnu. On the eastern bank of Bindusagar Tank of Bhubaneswar, she built the temple for worship of Ananta Vasudeva and Subhadra and mentioned this in a long rock inscription set in the temple which records as follows :

Bhubaneswar Ananta Basudev temple inscription of Chandrika Devi (*E.P. Indica*- Vol. XIII- P.152)

Line-5 - *Krishnena trishnavati*

Line-10 - *Tat-tirtha-mandanshya-asya
tire nana-vani-ghane
Sri-krishna-Sri-Vala-Avas-
Vasite nandanayite*

Line-17 - *Mukuta-adyair-alankarah
Saktya bhaktya mud-anavita
Vala-Krishnau Subhadra an-
cha sreyase-sav avusah yat*

(Inspired with energy, devotion and joy she (Chandrika Devi) decorated with diamonds and other ornaments Baladeva, Krishna and Subhadra with a view to (her find) bliss).

The rock inscription referred to above has been removed elsewhere. In its place, some one has set up a fake rock inscription of Bhavanatha, the king of Burdwan.

Images resembling those of Krsna, Balarama and Subhadra in the Ananta Vasudeva temple are found in *Kaliyuga* Baghalpur and Shisilo (Sri-Shailo) near the village Kenduli. This has also been discussed in Jayadevkrut *Gitagovinda*.

Due to popularity the *Srimad Bhagavat* had earned among the people in Odisha, Sridhara Svami has prepared a commentary on it. Sridhar Svami belonged to the village Maraigarh at a distance of 4 kilometres from the temple of Ksirachora Gopinatha at Remuna in Balasore district. This village Maraigarh was a *sasana* of Brahmins belonging to the 'Paipalada' cult of the *Atharva Veda*. In the *Atharva Veda* there are many verses of the *Tapini Upanisad* containing descriptions of Krsna, Radha, Vrindavan etc.

It was in Odisha that the *Tapini* literature originated and influenced the growth of Vaisnava Bhagavata in Odisha. As a result, Visnu was worshipped as Krsna or Gopinatha. After the propagation of image worship in Odisha, the *Gitagovinda* of Jayadeva was composed and got wide circulation in Vaisnava literature. The worship of Radha was not in vogue from 13th to early 15th century in Odisha or Bengal. It has been mentioned in the *Chaitanya Charitamrta* by Krsnadas Kaviraj in the 17th century A.D. that Sri Chaitanya used to listen to the *slokas* of the *Gitagovinda* and songs of Chandidas and Vidyapati recited to him by Raya Ramananda.

*Vidyapati Chandidas Sri Gitagovinda
Bhabanurupa sloka padhen Ray Ramananda
(Anyalila)*

*Vidyapati Jayadeva Chandidaser giti
Asvadena Ramananda Svarupa sahita (Adi Lila)
Chandidas Vidyapati Rayer Natak giti
Karnamruta, Sri Gitagovinda swarupa
Ramanandasane*

*Mahaprabhuratridine gayasyane paramananda
(Anyalila)*

Sri Chaitanya stayed at Rajamahendri on the bank of the river Godavari with Raya Ramananda, for ten days. Ray Ramananda explained to him in details, the philosophy of Vaisnavism and the cult of Radha-Krsna and

Gopinatha. He explained to him the texts of the *Srimad Bhagavat*, *Brahma Samhita*, *Srikr̥ṣṇa Karnamṛta* and *Gitagovinda*. That Radha tatva or marga is the best way of worshipping Kṛṣṇa Sri Chaitanya learnt it from Raya Ramananda according to the *Vaisnava Lilamṛta* of Madhava Pattanayak. It, therefore, goes without saying that nobody before Chaitanya in Bengal had heard of the *Gitagovinda*. Had the *Gitagovinda* spread before in Vanga, a saint like Sri Chaitanya would have surely heard of it earlier.

According to the *Chaitanya Charitamṛta* Madhavendra Puri had at first installed the image of Gopal-Kṛṣṇa on Govardhana Giri. On his way from Vr̥ndavana to Puri he had spent a night in the temple of Gopinatha at Remuna. Legends say that Gopinatha himself had stolen the cream to feed his devotee Madhavendra whom He knew would be late to arrive at Remuna and hence the image of Gopinatha was popularly known as Ksirachora Gopinatha (Stealer of milk cream).

After Madhavendra Puri, Sri Chaitanya visited Vr̥ndavana. While returning from Vr̥ndavana, Sri Chaitanya had left instructions with Rupa Gosvami and Sanatan Gosvami for restoring Vr̥ndavan to its former glory. It has been mentioned in the middle part of *Chaitanya Charitamṛta* that these two saints made sincere efforts, for reviving Vr̥ndavana. The deities of Madana Gopala and Govinda in Vr̥ndavan were installed by Sanatana and Rupa Gosvami. But the image of Radha had not been installed at that time. Madhavendra Puri had installed there the baby Kṛṣṇa (Bal Gopal) on *Giri Govardhana*.

Sanatana and Rupa Gosvami had met at Vr̥ndavan Jiva Gosvami, Raghunatha Bhatta, Gopal Bhatta and Raghunatha Das. These six saints are known as *Sada Gosvamis*. They made

strenuous efforts to turn Vr̥ndavan to a holy shrine and finished the composition of *Chaitanya Charitamṛta* in 1615 A.D. In this scripture there is no mention of worship of Radha with the images of Madan Gopal and Govinda. So it is certain that worship of Radha had not been introduced by the six Gosvamis at Vr̥ndavan. In the *Chaitanya Chandrodaya Nataka* written in 1579 A.D., there is mention of the conjoined images of Radha and Kṛṣṇa. In the 7th chapter of this play, Sri Chaitanya has enquired from Ramananda regarding the deity worthy to be worshipped. In reply Ramananda said that it was proper to worship the conjoined image of Radha and Kṛṣṇa.

***Bhagawan (Sri Chaitanya) :
Kimupasyamatra ?***

Ramananda-Mahasi Srikr̥ṣṇa Radhamedhe

In the *Brahma Vaivarta Purana* there is mention of the marriage of Radha and Kṛṣṇa. As described in the *Purana* the marriage of Radha and Kṛṣṇa had been performed before her marriage to Yasoda's brother Ayana. It is peculiar that Yasoda's brother Ayana in the literature of Bengal and other places in India is known as Chandrasena in Odia.

***“Maharaj, sa khalu sahaja vaisnava bhavati
Purvamayamasmakamupahasapatra masita
samprati bhagavadanugrahe jate
tanmahimajnata no jata”.***

(Maharaja, he is follower of this Sahaja cult of Vaisnavism. Previously he was a person of ridicule by us. Now being favoured by Bhagavan we are apprised of his power.) (*Souvenir on Jayadev-1968*)

On his way to Puri, Sri Chaitanya witnessed the images of Gopinatha with flute in hand at Remuna, Cuttack, Alawarpur, Hirapur,

Sarkana, Danda Mukundapur being worshipped. All these discussions go to prove the fact that the worship of the image of Gopinatha was widely in vogue by the time of Sri Chaitanya in Odisha. As mentioned earlier, the Allarpur copper plate inscription of Narasingha Deva II of Ganga dynasty (1238-1264 A.D.) throws light on this.

After composition of the *Chaitanya Charitamrt*, Narahari Chakravorty in his *Bhakti Ratnakara* has recorded the achievements of Vaisnavas of Goudiya Branch. This work belongs to the 18th century A.D. and it records that the image of Radha was taken from Utkal and was installed beside Madan Gopal and Govinda at Vrindavan. In the 6th chapter of *Bhakti Ratnakara* the following verses are found :

**“Sri Govinda ye samaye prakata hoila,
Se samaya srimati Radhika nahin chhila
Chhilen Sri Madanamohan prabhu echhe
Sanmksepe kahiye sri jugal haila jaichhe**

(Souvenir on Jayadev-1968)

The above verses prove that the image of Radha had not been worshipped earlier beside Madanamohan and Govinda.

According to *Bhakti Ratnakar* a Brahmin of south India named Vrsabhanu was living at Radhanagar in Utkal. He had installed the image of Radha as his daughter. After the death of the Brahmin, the Gajapati emperor, on receipt of the news, came to Radhanagar and witnessed the image of Radha, who appeared before the Gajapati emperor of Utkal in a dream and instructed him to place her in the *chakrabedha* of *Srimandira* compound. After her installation in the *Srimandira* compound, when the time of her retreat to Vrindavan came, she again appeared in a dream before Gajapati emperor Purusottam Deva and directed him to send her image to

Vrindavan. So the image of Radha was removed to Vrindavan where it was installed on the left side of Govinda. These stories have been recorded in the *Sadhana Dipika*. Again it has been mentioned in the 13th chapter of the *Bhakti Ratnakara* that Jahnvi Devi, the wife of Nityananda had installed the image of Radha beside Gopinatha at Vrindavan. There is a place named Radhanagar close to Kisanagar (Krsnanagar) in the district of Cuttack. Similarly, there is another place named Radhanagar at Remuna near the temple of Ksirachora Gopinatha. These two villages are kin to Radhanagar mentioned in the *Bhakti Ratnakar* and might have been the centre for origin of Radha worship. But there is absolutely no truth in these stories.

Purusottama Jena of *Bhakti Ratnakar* was the Gajapati emperor Purusottam Deva (1607-1623 A.D.) of Bhoi dynasty of Khurda. Rasikananda is considered to be the expounder of joint worship of Radha and Krsna. But he appears to be ignorant of the image of Radha of Radhanagar, its installation in *Srimandira* compound and its transport to Vrindavan. But surely enough the joint worship of Radha and Krsna had its origin from Odisha. In the 17th century A.D. it was carried to Vrindavan and from there it spread all over India.

The greatest mission of Sri Chaitanya was the revival of Hindu culture and restoration of Vrindavan *Dham*. The strenuous efforts which the six *Gosvamis* had made for the revival of Vrindavan has been stated before. With a view to preaching Vaisnava literature and the Gospels of Vaisnavism at Gauda and Utkal, these six *Gosvamis* had deputed Narottam Thakur, Srinivas Acharya and Syamananda to the eastern India. While carrying the palm leaf scriptures in a bullock cart, these were robbed away on their

way near Bankuda and were rescued by Vira Hamir, the then king of Visnupur. This incident took place during 1600-1605 A.D. up to which Jiva Gosvami was alive.

Syamananda was commissioned for preaching Vaisnavism in Odisha. He enlisted Rasikananda Deva Gosvami as his disciple which represented the Syamananda school of the cult of Vaisnavism. One Baladeva Vidyabhusana of Odisha belonged to this school. During the plundering raids of the Moghul emperor Aurangzeb on Hindu images and monuments, the images of Vrndavan were transported for safety at the kingdom of Ambar in Rajputana and preserved there. Sawai Jayasingh, the king of Ambar (1699-1743 A.D.) had built the city of Jayapur in 1728 A.D. and removed his capital there. Jayasingh belonged to the Syamananda cult and was an avid worshipper of Radha-Krsna. But the Vaisnavas of south India who were believers in the *Vedanta* Philosophy were opposed to worship of Radha beside the image of Krsna. Jayasingha and the supporters of Radha-worship failed to prevail upon the Vaisnavas of south India for worship of Radha. As a result, Raja Jayasingha recorded his discourses on Radha-worship and invited the learned saints of Vrndavan for a discussion on the matter. At that time Visvanath Chakravarti was the head of the Gaudiya cult of Vaisnavism. But due to advanced old age he could not come to Jayapur and deputed Pundit Baladeva Vidyabhusan of Odisha, another exponent of Gaudiya Vaisnavism.

Baladeva Vidyabhusan was born near Remuna in the district of Balasore of Odisha. He had acquired vast learning on Vaisnava literature and on Radha worship. He joined the religious conference of the Pundits at Jayapur and listened carefully to the arguments put forth by the scholars

of the south against the worship of Radha. He had composed the *Govindabhasya* (*Bhagavat Gita* and *Dasopanisad*) which he presented at the conference of the scholars putting forth sound and logical arguments in support of joint worship of Radha and Krsna. This convinced the scholars of the south and they had to accept both Radha and Krsna as the obverse and converse of one and the same reality. Since then the joint worship of Radha and Krsna spread like wild fire in the whole of India.

To sum up, Nimbarka, is the first propagator of Radha-Krsna worship in India and no definite date or place of birth of Nimbarka is available. He came to Odisha, stayed in Puri and established an Asram there which still exists.

Late J.N. Banerjee in his work *Panchopasana* recorded that Nimbarka or Nimbadiya was the founder of the Sanaka *Sampradaya*. In a place Nimba or Nimbapur in south India, Nimbarka was born in a Brahmin family. The religious life of Nimbarka was spent at Vrndavan and at Puri. He preached Vaisnavism based on the conception of the theory of Radha and Krsna. He prepared a short commentary on the *Vedanta Sutra* called the *Vedanta Parijata Saurabha* and his teachings were embodied in ten verses known as *Dasaslokis*. The main deities of worship of the disciples of Nimbarka and Sanaka *Sampradaya* were Gopijana-Vallabha-Gopalkrsna and His beloved counterpart Srimati Radhika. From these discussions it is learnt that the worship of Radha-Krsna dates back to the 12th century A.D. But, no image representing the then worship of Radha-Krsna has been discovered so far.

Probably the name Radha has been borrowed by Nimbarka from the Sanskrit scripture *Dhvanyaloka* and *Suvasita*

Ratnakara. The scripture *Sadukti Karnamrtam* by Sridhara Das was finished in 1205 A.D. No contemporary writing regarding worship of Radha-Krsna as propagated by Nimbarka has come to light so far. Vallabhacharya and Sri Chaitanya were contemporaries. Vallabhacharya was born in 1479 A.D. and lived up-to 1531 A.D. Sri Chaitanya took his birth in 1485 A.D. and passed away in 1533 A.D. Vallabhacharya had discourses with Chaitanya at Puri on the

commentary of the Bhagavata. Vallabhacharya had also attempted to introduce the worship of the joint image of Radha and Krsna. The credit of popularizing the joint worship of Radha Krsna and the Radha *Bhakti* as the way to get Krsna goes to Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda*. Stories about saint Jayadeva personally carrying joint images of Radha Madhav to Vrindavan in the 12th Century AD and installing them there are just not true. (*Souvenir on Jayadev-1968*)
