



## Temple Administration - Past and Present

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Study of epigraphic records revealed that by 2nd century B.C., the celebrity of the shrine of Shree Purusottam was quite famous all over the country.

Ancient legend and epics like the "Ramayana" and the "Mahabharat" ascribe the period of celebrity much earlier (at least 5000 years back) to this.

According to the "Skanda Purana, in Satyayuga i.e. first phase of eternal time cycle, Maharaja Indradyumna of Abanti Nagar came and constructed a temple of 1500 hand length high for God Sri Purusottam Jagannatha who is self-originated and self-manifested.

History corroborates that in 4th century A.D. Buddhists and Hindus did perform their religious rituals like chanting of hymns (Purus Sukta etc) and performing introspection, contemplation, reflection sacrifice or ablation in a platform which was popularly known as "Purusa Mandap" located very close to the village Purus Gram.

Popularity of deity tempted many frantic bigots to invade and plunder the abode of Sri Purusottam. The name of Rakta Bahu, described in "Madala Panji" is one such example. He plundered a huge wealth in 6th century A.D. and returned to his destination

by sea-route. In that bloody storm to prevent the sacrilege of the shrine and deity, some close sevayats taken away the idol to an unknown place.

This proves that the shrine was well-established even in 6th century A.D. having some managerial system though not capable to protect the shrine preventing foreign invasion.

After regaining the idol from village "Gopal" of present 'Sonepur' district of western Orissa, Adi Shankara (788 AD-820 AD) constructed a temple (Potola) of 38 hand-length high and consecrated the idols by Royal Patronage.

In course of time reverence of the shrine went on increasing. Pilgrims, devotees even emperor offered their valuables in cash and kind as a token of their respect to the deities. This necessitated a strong managerial system for effective monitoring of regular rituals and safe custody of his assets.

Of course an extensive study of "Bhandar Khanja Madala" maintained by Pattajosi Mahapatra (abbreviation of the word Patta Jyotis Mohapatra who holds Maha Nayak seva of the temple) "Deula Madala" or "Karmangi Madala" and "Desh Panji Madala" maintained

and kept by deula-karna, Raja-Khanja Madala" of Tadhaukara throw some light on temple management in different ages.

Above topics related to the rights and responsibilities of Sevayats and orders of the kings (Raj Hukum Nama) etc which are the core components of temple administration.

In temple administration, advisory and policy decision, kind of work constitute the top range in the hierarchy of temple management. At this level Jagad Guru Shankaracharya, Mukti Mandap Pandit Sabha, Rajguru, Parichha, Minister in charge of temple administration, Gajapati of Puri, Baxi etc. are involved. They guide the sevayats and other temple personnel to solve their controversial ethical problems.

The second strata of temple management was directly concerned with execution of the decisions of the Advisory Council and implementation of "Record of Rights" and other official documents established earlier. In past the key personnel involved at this stage were Pattajoshi Mohapatra, Bhitarcha (Bhitarasthachha) Mohapatra, Rajguru incharge of temple management, Parichha, Temple Manager (during British period) Dewan during the period Ramchandra Dev IV who were accountable to authorities concerned.

As per 1955 "Sri Jagannath Temple Act and Subsequent amendments a committee under the chairmanship of Gajapati Maharaja, Chief Administrator, District Collector, representatives of different Nijogs, a group of employees are involved in temple administration.

Sevayats mostly constitute the third base level of temple management. Without them temple administration could not be thought of.

Sevayats may be classified under two categories.

(i) Angila (might be abbreviation of the word Angalagi) sevak who are indispensable in daily and festive rituals of deities. They are Sevakas by birth. As per the "Record of Rights", they have the claim over their sevas. They get "khei" or their share from "Kotha Bhoga" in return of their seva offered in the temple.

(ii) The second category of sevakas render their services as and when temple administration requires them.

Anant Barman Chodaganga Deba, a king of Ganga dynasty conquered Utkal in 1112/13 AD and subjugated land after pacifying internal disturbances in 1126 A.D. In 1135 A.D, he started construction work of the existing temple which was completed only in 1119 Sakabda (1197 AD) during the period of Ananga Bhima II. During the said period God Purusottam, is believed to be worshipped in Sri Narsimha temple located near Mukti Mandap of existing temple.

Ananga Bhima Deva III a matchless gem in the crown of eternal time installed and consecrated deities in the newly constructed temple. As a staunch devotee, he dedicated the entire empire in the name of Sripurusottam declaring him-self as His deputy (Rout or Rabut).

According to scholars, "Raja Ananga Bhim Deba of Ganga dynasty is said to have introduced" Chhatisanijoga or thirty six category of attendants in the temple of Sri Jagannatha. Prior to introduction of Chhatisanijoga, according to local tradition there were only nine sevakas viz. "Charu Hota, Patra Hota, Brahma, Acharya, Pratihari,

Puspalaka Daita, the washer man and the barber (1).

First 4 categories of traditional sevakas (Charu Hota etc.) remind us the ancient Purusa Mandap" on sea-beach where traditional Hindu Brahmins conducted vedic rituals including sacrifices (Jajna) etc. These designations are still associated by sacrificial ceremony chanting of hymns, organising sacrifices etc. are still a daily ritual in Sri Mandir Seva Niti. Role of Puspalaka can be felt in temple administrator. But what exact sevas these sevakas did offer in earlier days is not clear. At times their seva is said to be linked with flower i.e. collection of puspa (flower), decorating deities in floral ornaments during "Mailam" period particular in Badasingar (Badasringar) Besha". Some believed that the word Pasupalak (sevat in charge of rearing cattle etc to collect Ghee to enlighten the temple) subsequently were abbreviated as puspalak.

Rarely this sevak was also described in stone inscription as "Pasapalak" means the sevak who perform diceplay on different occasions like "Rukani marriage, Kumar Purnima on behalf of Mahaprabhu Sri Jagannath.

Temple Administration under native kings ran effectively upto 1568 A.D. Treachery and disloyalty of subordinates opened the gate of foreign (Afgan) subjugation of Orissa. Afgan ruler Suleman Karani and his able General Allahad Mian, popularly known as Kalapahar defeated Sri Mukunda Deba of Chalukya dynasty, the king of Orissa.

In 1568 A.D. Ramai Routray, the son of Janardan Bidyadhar (Army Chief) of deceased Mukunda Deba came from south and carved a small state comprising Puri, Cuttack, Ganjam,

Athagarh a major portion of Dhenkanal making Khurda (subsequently Barunaigarh in 1572 A.D.) as its capital.

He established "Bhoi Dynasty" by the help of General Mansingh, the first Moghul Governor of Orissa. Ramai Routray newly constructed the idols of deities by placing Brahma in their naval cavity (that he collected from Kujangagarh) and consecrated the idols reintroducing regular seva niti including offering Mahaprasada on 17.7.1575 i.e. after a gap of 8 years. He streamlined temple administration.

To reaffirm the "Record of Rights" of sevayats he started writing of "Madala Panji" by appointing one Gumasta "Bata Krushna Mohanty. To regularise the "Seva Niti" a voluminous guide book "Niladri Mahodya" was prepared by scholars on his inspiration.

Moghul general Mansingh conquered Orissa on 15.8.1590 completely defeating Afgan ruler Nasir Khan. He crowned Ram Chandra Deba I as Gajapati Maharaja and commander of 3500 horses. Raja Mansingh in consultation with leading sevayats and samants assigned the responsibilities of temple management to Ram Chandra Deba I from 1607 to 1750 A.D. Bigotry attitude of subsequent Moghul and other non-Hindu emperors crippled temple administration resulting in reduction in number of pilgrims affecting state economy to a greater extent. In the mean while marathas in north-east front emerged as a powerful group.

In 1743 A.D. pressure of Marathan compelled Nawab of Bengal Allivarli Khan to permit them to collect choutha (25%) tax from his subjects.

This continuous conflict ultimately led to a war. In this war "Orissa" came under the

control of Maratha rule of Mir Habbib. He was the first Naib Nazim who ruled the state on behalf of Raghuje Bhonsla, Supremo of Maratha powers staying in Nagpur. Marathas showed special interest to improve temple administration to increase the inflow of pilgrims who would pay tributes in cash and kind to the temple Authorities. Further effective temple management would enhance the image of Maratha rulers in Hindu community. Therefore some of the Marathan rulers had introduced special offerings (Puja) and dishes (Bhoga) to deities to get the blessings. To cite an example some landed properties were allotted to Daya Ram Das of Utterparsva Matha of Puri to offer the special dish "Mohan Bhoga" to deities to fulfil the prayer of Mother of Raghuje Bhonsla.

After the death of Raghuje Bhonsla in 1755 A.D. at Nagpore, Sheo Bhatta subduing the revolting native zamindars of Orissa, took over the reign of state administration. In 1760 A.D. an unforeseen event enhanced the scope of interference of Marathas in temple administration. Paralakhemundi Gajapati Jagannath Narayan Deba claiming himself as the true heir of Ganga dynasty (as his ancestors built up the existing temple) attacked Puri to recapture temple administration.

According to him Gajapati of Parala ruled over Puri for more than 3 years and one month. The defeat of Puri Gajapati Birakishore Deba I tempted him to take the help of Maratha forces. With their help Khurda Gajapati drove away Jagannath Narayan Deba. But poor economy of the state forced Puri Gajapati to mortgage four high revenue yielding praganas i.e. Sirai, Lembai, Rahang and Chabiskuda stretching from lake Chilika to river Daya to Marathas as Gajapati could not pay Rs.1 lakh

to meet the war expenses of Maratha Army as per the previous agreement. Hence Maratha rulers availed the upper hand in temple administration.

History of Orissa attests that Rajas of Bhoi dynasty nominated following 4 (four) Rajgurus' to associate and assist him in state administration.

1. Rajguru for state revenue management
2. Rajguru for internal peace and order
3. Rajguru exclusively for Sri Jagannath Temple Management
4. Rajguru to spread religious and ethical education

Probably influenced by that pattern initially (6) Marathas though appointed only one Parichha Bada Deula Parichha) subsequently enhanced and appointed 4 Parichhas, for (1) smooth conduct of Nitis (2) for internal management (3) to organise financial management of the temple (4) collection of external resources to meet the temple expenses.

The external resources include land revenue of different praganas, contribution of sevayats' i.e. approximately 40% of the collections (pindika) of pilgrims, sale proceeds of "Koltha Khanja" and proportionate amount of "Sulli Mahal" contribution i.e. 25% of the tax collected from pilgrims at Jobra and Atharnala check points. At times state had to pay some additional amount if above collections are inadequate to meet the expenses of the temple.(7)

Regarding settlement of claims and other judiciary matters Nagpore Bhonsla was the final authority to award Judgement in case any critical case relating to temple is referred to

him. At local level, Subedar and Naib Subedar were the authorities to finalise the all cases even of Parichhas.

During Maratha administration, the role of Khurda Gajapati was insignificant. In the mean while East India Company had emerged as a strong force in Indian Soil. On 3rd August 1803 Governor General Lord Wellesely waged a war against Marathas. On September 18, 1803 Colonel Harcourt defeated Marathas leading to a pact on 17th December 1803. The pact was signed between Jaswant Rao Ram Chandra (Ambassador on behalf of king of Berar) and another Wellesely on behalf of the company.

From 1803 A.D. to 1806 A.D. East India Company directly controlled temple administration. Governor General Lord Wellesely in his despatch ordered Lt. Colonel Combell, Commander southern forces to instruct his subordinates not to hurt the religious sentiments of natives along with maintaining the sanctity of the temple. In subsequent years due to internal rivalry between Gajapati Mukunda Deba and British Administration, company instructed temple Parichhas' not to use the name and "Gotra" of Gajapati in temple rituals. This enmity led to arrest of Gajapati Mukunda Deba II on 3.1.1805 and kept him in close confinement. Estate of Khurda was confiscated.

Direct Management of temple of idolaters was severely criticised by English people particularly by church. This led company to think to shun direct temple administration. On 10th June 1805, C. Grome, first collector of Puri submitted an exhaustive report on Sri Jagannath temple including the significance of Khurda Raja in temple management to Thomas Fortesch, Secretary to

Commissioner, Cuttack province basing on which company authorities promulgated the regulation IV of 1806. Subsequently as per an agreement Mukunda Deva II was released from confinement and he became the superintendent of the temple. He was to stay in Puri.

Regulation IV of 1806 sever direct management of the company over temple. One council consisting of three Pandits were constituted to look after the management of the temple. Subsequently regulation IV of 1809 was passed and as per section 11(1) of the regulation IV of 1809 the Superintendence of the temple was vested in the Raja of Khurda (Puri). Section 11(1) of regulation 1809 states as follows:-

"The conduct and management affairs and the control over the priests, officer and sevayats attached to the temple are hereby vested in all occasions shall be guided by the recorded rules and institutions of the temple or by the ancient and established usage".(8) But ultimately Raja of Puri was controlled by Company Administration. Company appointed three servants to assist the king." These servants were accountable to the British Government directly. (9) The revolt of Roudang Baxi Jagabandhu Vidyadhar on 29.3.1817 for claiming his entitlement over his old estate which was treacherously swallowed by Laxmi Narayan by the help of notorious Dewan Krushna Chandra in 1814 led Mukunda Deba II to be involved in the revolt. Ultimately Mukund Deba II was again arrested and kept in close confinement in Barunai fort on 11.5.1818.

After death of Mukunda Deba II, Ram Chandra Deba III (1817-1856 A.D.) and Birakishore Deba III (1856-1859 A.D) were

the superintendents of the temple. In 1818 A.D. Ekharaj Kharchamaharaj an area of 67250 'Manas' of land was given to Sri Mandir to meet the excess expenditure of the temple. Pilgrim tax was a major source of income of the temple. A sum of Rs.2,60,000 was realised from 2,25,000 pilgrims during the car festival of 1825 A.D. is one out of many such examples.

Section 2 of Act x of 1840 A.D. enactment abolished the pilgrim tax though reaffirmed the Raja of Puri as Superintendent of the temple. On 25th November 1843 'Satais Hazari Kharachamaharaj' was handed over to temple by British Govt. reducing earlier Government grant from Rs.53,000 to Rs.35,738. Another big chunk of land was given by British Government to meet the deficit of Rs.17,262/- to bridge up the expenses.

The complain lodged by missionaries to Governor General to reduce the grant to Rs.32231/- to temple was outrightly rejected by the Authority.

Administrative failure in 1853 A.D. in smooth management of "Dola Yatra" festival resulted in stamped death of 27 pilgrims for which sevayats, zamadar of the temple were fined and imprisoned. Gajapati Ram Chandra Deba III was also censored by British Administration.

After Nabakalebara ceremony of 1855, British Govt. gave some additional land to temple to improvise its functioning. During the reign of Birakishore Deva III a separate police staff was appointed by the Govt. to function under the Raja of Puri (10) to maintain discipline.

As per the 'Will' of heirless deceased Birakishore Deba III in 1859, his widow queen Suryamani Pattamahadei (born in 1818 A.D.

in Sonapur attempted to take over temple administration as adopted son Dibyasingha Deba was minor. Queen was successful in taking the reign of temple administration. But internal mismanagement, bankrupt, non-cooperation of sevayats' crippled temple administration. Hence Nabakalebara function of 1874 was limited to "Shree Angaphita" ceremony only.

In 1875, Dibyasingha Deba became adult and was the superintendent of the temple. In 1877 around 10 lakh devotees had assembled in Puri in rare "Gobinda Dwadashi" Snan Yatra to have darshan of the deities after taking holy bath in ocean. Where due to utter mismanagement, 8 persons (six in one gate and 2 in another gate) were stamped to death.

According to the then Commissioner John Beams, Raja Dibyasingha Deba III was warned repeatedly (at least six times) by Joseph Armstrong, Collector Puri to take precautionary measures to tackle this huge gathering, but without any effect. For this incident British Government withheld the title of "Maharaja" which was scheduled to be conferred on Raja by a special notification.

In the year 1978, Gajapati Dibyasingha Deba and his nine associates (servants) were arrested by the order of the then Magistrate of Puri for torture leading to death of one 'Siva Das', native of Damodarpur (near Chandanpur of Puri district). For this, Raja was sentenced and transported to Andaman by judge Dickens where according to John Beams, he died on 25.8.1887.

In this vacant period Rani Suryamani Pattamahadei tried to take over the temple administration as son of king Dibyasingha Deba, Jagannath Jenamani (subsequently known as Mukunda Deba III) was minor.

District Judge of Cuttack W. Warren granted the application of Suryamani Pattamahadei weighing the merit of petition in the light of the Act XL of 1858. Rani obtained a certificate to administer the temple on this legal ground.

Section 2 of Act x of 1840 was repeated by Act XIV that empowers British Government (i) and the hereditary right of Gajapati kings over temple administration (ii) to appoint a 'Receiver' to take up temple administration (iii) to constitute a powerful committee in which Gajapati of Puri would be just a nominal head to supervise temple administration. Insignificant role of Gajapati led to huge public resentment. Suryamani Pattamahadei sought legal intervention to get justice. She filed a petition in March 1887 in Calcutta High Court claiming the royal right over temple administration. Ultimately previous enactments and public pressure forced British Government to come to a negotiation table on temple issue. A compromise petition was filed in the Court of District Judge Mr. Druggon on 3.10.1888 which was signed by H.B. Ghose and L.B. Ghose on behalf of Govt. (Dist. Collector) and Utkal Gaurab Madhusudan Das and Patriot Ramshankar Ray on behalf of queen. Rani appointed Babu Hare Krushna Das, Sirastadar of Cuttack Judge Court as manager of the temple.

The regulation X of 1840 was repeated in 1891. In 1897, Mukunda Deba attained adulthood. Mukunda Deba could not effectively control temple administration. Hence resolution no 5109 of 5th December 1902 empowered Bengal Government to appoint managers to run temple administration. As per terms the managers selection should be approved and answerable to British Administration. Government was also authorised to audit temple accounts.

First temple manager Rajkishore Das (son of Nanda Kishore Das) followed by Balmukunda Kanungo subsequently Sakhi Chanda (Bihari by origin) did a lot to improve status and administration of the temple. Heirless Mukunda Deba adopted Ramchandra Deba (2nd son of Maharaj of Bamara) as his son in 1918. But subsequently unsuccessful, he wanted to repeal the adoption deed which was upheld by Patna High Court.

Ramachandra Deba IV during his superintendence wanted to appoint Dewans of his own choice instead of managers approved by British Government for temple administration. In pre-independence period the temple administration was almost collapsed. After independence, Government of Orissa, to curb the "misapplied and misappropriated" tendencies of temple administration passed the "Jagannath Temple (Administration) Act 1952. This Act authorised an officer (District Judge Cadre) Sri Laxman Panda, to prepare the Record of Rights of different sevayat communities by making an exhaustive survey and analysis.

Study of the said report and analysis of traditional conventions, Department of Home and law brought a legislation in state Assembly and passed "Orissa Act 11 of 1955 which became a law on 4th November 1955. As per the enactment the provision of running Temple Administration by the superintendent was discontinued. A committee under the chairmanship of Gajapati Puri was constituted where Collector Puri was an ex-officio member and vice-chairman. This enactment recorded Puri Gajapati as a bonafied temple servant in the "Record of Rights".

The seeds of earlier Legislations were incorporated in the said Act. This Act further

provides that "Sri Jagannatha Temple Managing Committee shall be a corporate body having a perpetual succession in which only Hindus are eligible to be the members of the said committee. Administrator of the temple shall be the secretary of the said committee. He is to be assisted by a group of paid employees or advisors."

But this law was challenged by Ramchandra Deba IV claiming that Lord Jagannatha happens to be his family deity and temple belongs to the Royal family. But Orissa High Court dismissed the petition of Gajapati in 1957. Thus Sri Jagannath Temple Act 1954 came into force on 27.10.1960. The statutory committee took over the charge of temple administration. But Gajapati Birakishore Deba IV, son of Ramchandra Deba IV appealed to the apex court that passed an 'Interim stay' over the previous order. Hence management of the temple again reverted to Gajapati from 1.11.1960. But after vacation of the stay on 1.12.1960, the statutory committee again took over the charge of the temple management. In course of time Raja of Puri became the hereditary head of the statutory committee.

In 2005, revision of previous enactment was made making provision for appointment of a senior IAS cadre officer as Chief Administrator for overall management of the temple. From 1971 devotee Raja Dibyasingha Deba IV is the Chairman of Sri Mandir statutory committee. To expedite the development of the temple, in 2005 Sri Suresh Chandra Mohapatra joined as Chief Administrator of the temple. A series of steps including orienting the sevayats, temple personnel and public to be aware of their role and responsibilities, to upgrade temple security arrangement system in the context of present

terrorist threat, deputing sevayats' batch to other prominent religious centres for better education and exposure which can be implemented here, conducting socio-economic survey of sevayat communities to improve their status etc are done under his initiative.

Hope, Blessings of Mahaprabhu Jagannatha and our sincerity in implementing these minor steps would give a big forward leap erasing rare ink images of temple administration of the past.

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