

The Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha Temple, Puri: A Study in Retrospect

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Abstract :

The Ratnasimhasana, or the Jewel Throne, located in the Garbhagriha (sanctum sanctorum) of the Lord Jagannatha Temple in Puri, Odisha, serves as the divine abode for the triad deities – Lord Jagannatha, Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra, and Sudarshana. This paper undertakes a retrospective study of the Ratnasimhasana, tracing its historical evolution, architectural significance, ritualistic centrality, and cultural resonance. Drawing upon scriptural references, historical chronicles such as the Madala Panji, epigraphic records, and scholarly interpretations, this study aims to elucidate how the Ratnasimhasana transcends its material existence to become a dynamic symbol embodying the spiritual, political, and architectural history of Odisha. It argues that the throne is not merely a static pedestal but a living entity, mirroring the resilience, continuity, and unique identity of the Jagannatha cult over centuries.

Keywords: Ratnasimhasana, Lord Jagannatha Temple, Puri, Garbhagriha, Daru Brahma, Odishan History, Temple Architecture, Rituals, Gajapati Kings, Cultural Heritage.

Introduction

The raised platform, on which the wooden images of Lord Jagannatha, Balabhadra, Subhadra and the emblem of Sudarshana are installed in the garbhagriha of Lord Jagannatha temple of Puri, is called Ratnasimhasana. This raised platform of Lord Jagannatha is also known as Ratnavedi¹. The exact geographical location of the spot of Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha temple of Puri is at latitude 19° 18^m 17^s North and longitude 85° 51^m 39^s East². Besides the Chaturdha murtis, other images are also installed on the Ratnasimhasana. They are Madhava (a small image of Jagannatha), Sridevi (a golden image of Lakshmi) and Bhudevi (a silver image of Saraswati). The entire throne is adorned with seven deities including Jagannatha Trinity. Hence the spot of Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha is also called as Sapta Barna Pitha. Apart from the above seven deities, the images of Sri Shankaracharya and his disciple Sri Padmapada Acharya were also installed on the Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha for worship. In the last decade of the 18th century AD, their

images were removed from the Ratnasimhasana by Divyasimha Deva-II (1793-1798 AD) the Raja of Puri.³ There is a lot of controversy among the scholars with regard to the exact construction period of the Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha. Most probably, the present Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha temple is the modified form of the earlier throne, which was built during region of the Ganga period of Orissa. Due to inscriptions being incised on the bottom part of the Ratnasimhasana, it has more historical importance. From the cultural point of view, the Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha temple of Puri is considered by Hindu pilgrims as an important sacred place of Eastern India. A modest attempt has been made in this paper to trace the historicity of the Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha.

Main Features of the Ratnasimhasana

It is said that various precious stones and jewels have been buried inside the throne of Lord Jagannatha of Puri. On the basis of legends, a few scholars say that there are one lakh of Salagrama silas (stones) deposited inside the Ratnavedi.⁴ We

have no authentic historical evidence regarding the exact amount of silas buried inside the simhasana of Lords. Most probably, some Salagrama silas might have been buried inside the Ratnasimhasana and this traditional belief cannot be completely denied. Pandit Sadashiva Rathasharma opines that Sila of Lord Vishnu i.e. Vishnu sila is buried inside the Ratnasimhasana, so it should not be touched by foot.⁵ Pandit Surya Narayana Das refers to that Vairabhi Chakra is depicted under the Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha temple and both Sri Jagannatha as well as His simhasana are installed on this Chakra.⁶ That is why, Puri is also considered as one of the Vairavi pithas of India.

It is also believed that precious jewels are buried inside the simhasana of Lord Jagannatha. Regarding the Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha, Sarvesvar Das says that there is no jewel buried inside the simhasana of Lord Jagannatha and it is not justifiable to say the throne as Ratnasimhasana. Due to installation of Triratna on it, this throne has been traditionally considered as Ratnasimhasana.⁷ According to Sri Das this 'Triatna' is derived from the Buddhist conception of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. He also opines that Lord Jagannatha is considered as Buddha; Devi Subhadra is conceived as Dharma and Balabhadra as Sangha respectively. But, the triratna concept of Buddhism, as said by Sarbesvara Das is not reasonable and it can not be accepted here. According to Silpasastras, generally when the images of Hindu Gods and Goddesses are installed on the throne of a new temple, the temple is ordinarily consecrated. Before that a few amount of jewels (gold, silver, etc.) must have been buried inside as well as under the new simhasana of Lords. The king or builder as well as devotees used to donate jewels during the construction work of the thrones of presiding deities of new temples. This traditional system has also been adopted in the construction of new temples at present. That is why, during the construction work of the simhasana of Lord Purusottama (Jagannatha), some amount of jewels must have been buried inside it and this traditional belief can not be completely rejected by scholars. Hence the simhasana of Lord Jagannatha of Puri is said as Ratnasimhasana.

The raised platform or the Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha is made of black chlorite like a blooming lotus. By observing the Ratnavedi of Lord Jagannatha, Prof. R.D.Banerjee opined that "the bizarre arabesque of the decadent Hoyasala type, which appears in the temple of Hazara Ramasvami at Hampi or Vijayanagara is found on it."⁸ This type of design appears to Prof. Banerjee that a part, at any rate of this jewelled throne (Ratnavedi) consisted of a carved stone altar, which was also presented along with the metal portion to the Lord Jagannatha.⁹ It is difficult to accept the opinion of Prof. Banerjee, because one can thoroughly see the front side of the Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha that is carved with scroll works, jali works, bordered line designs, small tankus, kalasa motifs, flower medallions, simha vidalas, male and female figures etc. Other three sides as well as the upper portion of the simhasana of Lord Jagannatha are devoid of decorative ornamentation. These types of designs are also found depicted on the most of the temple walls of Orissa. The designs carved in the Ratnasimhasana are certainly executed by the artists of Kalinga School under the guidance of the native ruler and it is not the Hayasala type, which as said by Prof Banerjee. Because this type of carvings really belongs to the Kalingan School of art. There is an inscription of king Virakishore Deva (1737-1793 AD) incised on the bottom part of the Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha.¹⁰ The exact place of the inscriptions on the simhasana is completely covered with assorted colours, which had been given during the time of repair works in different periods. So the inscription of the Ratnasimhasana is not clearly visible at present. Near the inscription of Ratnasimhasana two figure have been carved one is male figure adorned with royal dress and another figure (female) is standing behind the male figure. Back side heads of both the male and female figures are decorated with six-foil arch and kalasa motif flanked by inverted parrots at the apex. The first male figure is the re-builder of the simhasana i.e. Raja Virakishore Deva and the second figure is his Thakuramaa (grand mother). The Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha measures approximately 16 feet in length 13 feet in width and 4 feet high respectively.¹¹ This simhasana also contains three well polished separate rounded stones or Chakas

for the installation of intages of Lord Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra. In the garbhagriha of Bada Deula, there is a narrow gap of 3 feet left (between the western wall and Ratnasimhasana) for pilgrims to perform the circumambulatory prayer.

Cultural Importance of the Ratnasimhasana

The spot of Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha has been considered by pilgrims as the holiest place of Puri since very early times. On the basis of Sanskrit texts, the raised platform on which Lord Jagannatha is installed, that place is called "Antarvedi", which is very rare sacred place in the world. So the Ratnavedi or Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha temple is revered by devotees as equal in sanctity to the image itself. Some scholars say that Pancha devatas are being worshipped on the Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha temple of Puri. They are viz. Vishnu in the form of Jagannatha, Trilochana in the form of Balabhadra, Yogamaya in the form of Devi Subhadra, 'Ganadevata' in the form of Madhava and rising Sun in the form of Sudarsana Chakra respectively.¹² At certain specified hours of the day, the devotees are allowed inside the inner sanctum for a closure view of the Ratnasimhasana as well as the installed seven deities including Jagannatha 'trinity'.

References to the place of Ratnasimhasana in Earlier (Legendary) Works

The antiquity of the place of Ratnasimhasana of Puri Srimandira goes to remote past like its presiding deity Lord Purusottama (Jagannatha). To know about the antiquity of the place of Ratnasimhasana of Lords, we have to depend upon the records of some earlier texts (works). A few early legendary works merely give us scanty information with regard to the antiquity of the Ratnasimhasana of Lords. There is a reference to the site of the Vedi found mentioned in the Mahabharata Vanaparva. This epic records that the place of Vedi (Yajnavedi) located near the sea in Kalinga.¹³ It also elaborately mentions that Pancha Pandava (Yudhistira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva) at the time of their concerned exile for one year visited "Yajnavedi" on their way to Tirtha yatra. They reached at the kshetra of Purusottama in the evening, stayed one night here and worshipped Lord Vishnu for their favourable journey.¹⁴ Some earlier scholars like

M.M.Ganguly and Pandit Sadashiva Ratha Sharma have referred to that the word 'Vedi' mentioned in the Mahabharata Vanaparva can be identified with the raised platform of the main temple upon which the image of Lord Jagannatha is enshrined.¹⁵ It is difficult to agree with the view of above scholars regarding the word Vedi that is the exact place of present Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha. Some scholars opine that the Pancha Pandava visited Mahavedi not 'Ratnavedi' of Lord Jagannatha.¹⁶ In this connection Bichitrnanda Mohanty has also pointed out that the seat or throne, which installed in the garbhagriha of the Gundicha temple is called Mahavedi.¹⁷ It is also known from the Puranic evidences that the Mahavedi and Ratnavedi are not the same. That is why; we can not completely accept the word Vedi, which is identified by Prof Banerjee and Pandit Rathasharma with the present Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha. My point of view, the word Vedi or Yajnavedi mentioned in the Vanaparva of the Mahabharata can be identified with the Mahavedi i.e. Adapamandapa where thousands of horse sacrifices (asvamedha yajnas) were performed by Maharaja Indradyumna. This Mahavedi is possibly the Gundicha temple of Puri.

There is another reference found mentioned in the Utkala Khanda of the Skanda Purana regarding the ancient seat of Lord Nila Madhava. It records that at first the Savara Chief Visvavasu worshipped Lord Nila Madhava on a jewelled seat (Ratnavedi) at the centre of Nilagiri and it is located nearby the eastern part of the Rohinikunda.¹⁸ This Purana also mentions that Lord Nila Madhava image is made of Nilakantamani (precious stone) and He displays sankha, chakra, gada and padma in his four hands. The height of Nila- Madhava image is ekasita anguli and it was installed on the golden lotus seat.¹⁹ This statement of the Skanda Purana may partially help us to determine the exact place of the ancient seat of Lord Nila Madhava in some extent. It is generally presumed that the ancient seat of Lord Nila Madhava was located on that spot wherein the present Lord Jagannatha is being worshipped. This traditional belief cannot be completely rejected by scholars.

Historicity of the Ratnasimhasana

Due to the legendary accounts recorded in the Mahabharata Vanaparva and Utkala Khanda of the Skanda Purana, we cannot rightly ascertain the

historicity of the Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha. To determine its historicity of the Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha temple of Puri, we have to depend on some authentic sources. There is no authentic historical evidence with regard to the Ratnasimhasana, which was built before the Ganga rule in Utkala territory. On the basis of the Kenduli Copper plate grant of Narasimha Deva-IV, Prof. Dillip Kumar Ganguly refers to that the temple of Lord Purusottama was built on the ruins of an old and dilapidated edifice by the King Ananta Varman Chodaganga Deva in the 12th century AD.²⁰ It can be rightly justified to say that the simhasana of Lord Purusottama was possibly built in that old temple, which was erected by Yayati I (922-955 AD), the Somavamsi ruler of Orissa.²¹ But we have no reliable historical evidence regarding the shape and size of the Ratnasimhasana of the earlier dilapidated temple of Lord Purusottama. Most probably, the earlier simhasana of the old temple was a small one on which the a single deity i.e. Lord Purusottama was being worshipped in the form of Lord Paramesvara. Possibly, when the images of 'trinity' deities such as Lord Purusottama, Balabhadra and Subhadra were needed for worship by devotees, then the old dilapidated small temple as well as its simhasana was possibly broken by later Somavamsi ruler. The main objective of the erection of the present great temple of Lord Jagannatha was to spread Vaisnavism as a popular religion in the whole country of Bharatavarsha. When Chodaganga Deva occupied the Utkala territory, at that time he was fully influenced by Ramanuja, the greatest Vaishnava of his age. Thereafter, Chodaganga Deva became a great exponent of Vaishnavism i.e. "Parama Vaisnava" and he introduced changes in the rituals and observances of orthodox Hindu systems of worship. The earliest reference to the construction of the present great temple of Lord Purusottama (Jagannatha) is found mentioned in the Dasagoba Copper Plate Inscription of Rajraj-III issued in the Saka year 1120 i.e. corresponding to 1198 AD.²² It makes us to believe that Gangesvara i.e. King Chodaganga Deva initiated the construction work of the present great temple of Lord Purusottama (Jagannatha), which had been neglected by earlier rulers. Unfortunately, he could not complete the whole construction work

of the present Jagannatha temple and some parts of the work of great temple were left incomplete before his death. So Chodaganga Deva would have never started the construction work of the simhasana of the Lords in the garbhagriha of great temple. The construction work of the new great temple was also carried on by his successors and lastly Anangabhimha Deva finished it.²³ The construction work of the incomplete portions of the great temple was completed by his orders under the supervision of Paramahansa Bajpayee, at the expense of rupees about thirty to forty lakhs.²⁴ The Dasagoba copper plate inscription distinctly states that the temple was caused to be completed and not restored by Anangabhimha Deva in the Saka year 1119 i.e. corresponding to 1197 AD.²⁵ Katarajavamsavali also records that Anangabhimha Deva constructed the incomplete portions of the new great temple of Lord Purusottama in Sakavda 1119 i.e. corresponding to 1197 AD.²⁶ It can be rightly said that King Anangabhimha Deva-II (1190-1198 AD) had completed the construction work of the lofty temple during his short ruling time. The date 1197AD is the terminus ante quem for the completion of whole work of the present temple of Lord Jagannatha of Puri.

Satya Narayana Rajguru has referred to in his book Sri Purusottama O Sri Mandira that though King Chodaganga Deva could not complete the whole construction work of the present Jagannatha temple but still the images of Lords might have installed in the sanctum of Jagannatha temple.²⁷ Rajguru's viewed point to are untenable, because the inscriptions of Narasimha temple record that the construction work of the present Jagannatha temple was also continued by the successors of Chodaganga Deva. During the construction period of the new great temple, Lords were being worshipped in the Narasimha temple till the completion of the whole work. In this connection Prof. Karuna Sagar Behera has also drawn the notice of the scholars to the inscriptions belonging to the time of Kamarnava and Rajaraj (both are 501% of Chodaganga Deva) inscribed in the Narasimha temple near Muktimandapa.²⁸ It would suggest that the construction work of the new temple of Lord Purusottama was in progress and at that time 'Trinity' deities viz Lord Purusottama, Balabhadra and Subhadra were being worshipped

in the Narasimha temple. Most probably, the Ratnasimhasana of Lords was not built at that time. The present Ratnasimhasana of Lord Purusottama (Jagannatha) was possibly built during the completion period of the whole work of the great temple. Although there is no authentic historical record regarding the approximate date of the construction period as well as the name of the real builder who initially built the present simhasana of Lord Jagannatha as yet. But on the basis of the Dasagaoba Copper plate grant, Katarajavamsavali and my experimental study, it is presumed that the present Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha was originally built by Anangabhimha Deva II during the completion work of the incomplete portions of the great temple in the last decade of the 12th century AD. The proposed time (period) for the construction of the Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha of Puri may not be exact in future by finding further authentic historical evidences and proper investigations. Due to the sudden death of Anangabhimha Deva II, the newly constructed great temple could not be consecrated.

Thereafter, Rajaraj III (1198-1211 AD), the son of Anangabhimha Deva II came to power, who was not an important ruler like his father and grandfather. Though his successors have bestowed high praises on him, but have recorded no definite achievement to his credit. During his reign, the Muslim invaders raided Orissa for the first time in 1205 AD. On account of his constant involvement in war activities against the Muslim invaders and Chalukyas in the south western borders, king Rajaraj III must not have found suitable time to look after the expensive work of the consecration of the great temple. As a result of which, the newly constructed great temple of Lord Purusottama also could not be consecrated by him. According to the Nagari Copper Plate Charter dated Saka year 1152 i.e. corresponding to 1230 AD, after one hundred years of the initiation of the construction work of the present great temple, King Anangabhimha Deva-III (1211 to 1238 AD) the Ganga ruler consecrated the great temple of Lord Purusottama at Puri.²⁹ Madalapanji also records that Anangabhimha Deva installed images of presiding deities on the Ratnasimhasana and offered 84 Madha phuli bhoga to them (Lords).³⁰ So we can definitely say that king Anangabhimha

Deva-III had installed the daru images of Lord Purusottama (Jagannatha), Balabhadra, Subhadra and the emblem of Sudarsana on the Ratnasimhasana of the newly constructed great temple of Lord Purusottama. Before the consecration of the great temple, the construction work of the Ratnasimhasana of Lords was possibly completed by Anangabhimha Deva II in 1197 AD.

The Ratnasimhasana, which was initially built by king Anangabhimha Deva-II, was damaged by Muslim invaders in later period. During the several attacks of Muslim invaders on the Jagannatha temple, the Ratnasimhasana had been one of the targets of invaders due to the deposit of jewels inside it. The great onslaught was recorded during the reign of Banudeva III (1352-1378 AD), the Ganga king when ruled in Orissa. Then the Sultan Feroze Shah Tughluq of Delhi attacked the Jagannatha temple of Puri in 1360-61 AD.³¹ Here Arjun Joshi has referred to that the daru images of Lords of Puri temple (Srimandira) were taken to some island in Chilka lake before Sultan Feroze Shah Tughluq found to defile them.³² At that time the Muslim invaders had displaced three sacred Chakras of Lords from the simhasana. The Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha temple might have broken by Sultan Feroze Shah Tughluq of Delhi for the collection of jewels.

Some earlier scholars remark that the present Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha temple of Puri was brought from Kanchi region by Gajapati Purusottama Deva. Pandita Gopabandhu Das has mentioned that Gajapati Purusottama Deva (1468-1497 AD) brought the image of Sakhi-Gopala (now installed in the Sakhi Gopala temple of Satyabadi in Puri district) along with the Manikasimhasana from Kanchi to Puri and he also installed that simhasana in the temple of Lord Jagannatha.³³ Prof Rakhal Das Banerjee has also pointed out that Gajapati Purusottama Deva had brought a jewelled throne (Manikasimhasana) from Wijayanagar after his final victory over Salva-Narasimha Deva, the king of that kingdom. This throne was presented to the Lord Jagannatha temple of Puri and appears to be the same as the stone altar on which the wooden images of Lord Janannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra stand at present.³⁴ It can not be believed the views of Pandit Gopabandhu Das and Professor

R.D.Banerjee regarding the present Ratnasimhasana was brought from Vijayanagara(Kanchi) by Gajapati Purusottama Deva. Because there is no such authentic historical evidence in this regard in Orissa as yet. On the other hand, the simhasana of Lord Jagannatha temple of Puri in the name of Ratnasimhasanā was already in existence much before Gajapati Purusottama Deva of Puri. Madalapanji, the temple chronicle of Lord Jagannatha and Kanchi Kaveri written by Oriya scholars also completely remain silent regarding the present Ratnasimhasana was brought from Kanchi region by Purusottam Deva, which as said by above scholars. Although Chaitanya Charitamrita of Kaviraja Krishnadas and Kanchi Kaveri written by Bengali scholars refer to that a Manikasimhasana (jewelled throne) was brought from Kanchi region to Puri by Gajapati Purusottama Deva and thereafter it was given to the Lord Jagannatha temple of Puri.³⁵ But from the historical - point of view, this information is completely legendary and untrustworthy. That is why; we should not depend upon these two sources with reference to the present Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha of Puri. In this connection some scholars remark that the present Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha temple of Puri was not brought from Kanchi region by Gajapati Purusottama Deva.³⁶ The size and designs of the present Ratnasimhasana indicate that the throne was built by the architects of the Kalinga School. Gajapati Purusottama Deva could have never brought this huge simhasana from the distance place like Kanchi of South India. Most probably, the present Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha temple of Puri was originally built by the Ganga ruler in the 12th century A.D. The earlier throne of the great temple was comparatively a small one, which has been remodelled in later period by native rulers as in the present (existing) form.

In later period, the Muslim invaders of different parts of India attacked the Jagannatha temple of Puri and also disfigured the installed Lords. Because of that reason the images of Jagannatha 'Trinity' were being hidden in different parts of the Utkala territory. It is known that three images of Jagannatha 'Trinity' installed on the three separate rounded stones or Chakas (pithas), which were also considered as Ratnavedi or Bijē Chakas of

Lords in medieval period.³⁷ The Muslim invaders regularly attacked the Jagannatha temple and displaced the Chakas of Lords from the spot of Ratnasimhasana. Sometimes the images of Lords were not being installed on the Ratnasimhasana and at that time three separate Chakas of Lords were only worshipped in the garbhagriha as "Chaka Devatas". The Chakas of Lords have been using on the Ratnasimhasana from the time of emergence of the Jagannatha 'Trinity'.

One of the main reasons behind the breaking of the Ratnasimhasana and displacement of its installed Chakas by Muslim invaders was to collect jewels, which buried inside it. In the subsequent period, the Muslim invaders also attacked the Jagannatha temple and disfigured the images of Lords and displaced Chakas from the simhasana to the outside of the temple. For the safety of sacred Chakas as well as its installed Lords, native rulers placed both the Bijē-Chakas and Lords to the different parts of the Utkala territory. On account of this reason, separate rounded stones or Bijē-Chakas of Lords of Puri Jagannatha temple are noticed in the different parts of Orissa. Hantuada Chakipitha of Banapur of Khurda district was the ancient Anturvedi of Lord Jagannatha, because the Chakas of Lords of Puri Jagannatha temple were placed to that place. Separate rounded stones or Chakas of Lords of Puri Jagannatha temple were also placed to Indupur (Havili village) of Kendrapara district. The present three black chlorite Chakas of Indupur Baladevjew temple were initially used for the installation of Lord Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra of Puri Jagannatha temple. I had also gone to Indupur Baladevjew temple to see the Chakas of Lords. It is also known from the local tradition of Indupur that for the sake of sanctity, these three Chakas of Lords were originally brought from Puri during the repeated attacks of Muslim invaders to Lord Jagannatha temple. Thereafter, a separate temple constructed at Indupur for worship of the Chakas as well as its installed deities i.e. Jagannatha 'Trinity'. These three separate Chakas were also being worshipped earlier but in later period the images of Jagannatha, Balabhadra & Subhadra were installed on them later on. All the three Chakas of Indupur Baladevjew temple are incised with some inscriptions, which were written in Oriya

language. Most of the words of inscriptions are not clearly legible. The Chaka of Devi Subhadra of Indupur Baladevjew temple is inscribed with the name of Sri Pratapa Gajapati. The inscription which incised on the Subhadra Chaka of Indupur has been dated by S.N.Rajguru as 1519 AD.³⁸ All the three Chakas, located at Indupur Baladevjew temple, possibly belong to the period of Gajapati Prataparudra Deva(1497-1538AD) of Puri. Due to the attacks of Muslim invaders, these Chakas were shifted from Puri to Indupur of Kendrapara district through the native ruler with the help of some devotees. There is no historical record regarding the exact date of the placement of Chakas from the great temple of Puri to Indupur. On the basis of local tradition, some seniors like Narahari Pati, Kasinatha Pati and Nila Madhava Pati of Hauili village (of Indupur) opine that these Chakas of Lords were brought from Puri to Indupur by devotees before the attack on Jagannatha temple by Kalapahada. A Brahmin Pati family of Puri had also come to Indupur to perform the daily rituals of the sacred Chakas of Lords. Sukadev Sahu, a popular writer of the history of Indupur has referred to that the present black-chlorite Chakas of Lords (of Baladevjew temple of Indupur) were used in the earlier (original) temple, which located on the right side bank of the river Birupa.³⁹ Before the attack of Kalapahada, these three sacred Chakas were being installed in the earlier temple. The original (earlier) Baladevjew temple of Indupur is completely destroyed by the attack of Kalapahada. After the destruction of the earlier temple, these Chakas were brought from that ruined site to the present Baladevjew temple of Hauili village (Indupur). The present Baladevjew temple of Indupur was built not earlier than 350 years. It is also known from the local tradition of Indupur that these three Chakas of Lords were brought here before the attack of Kalapahada to the Jagannatha temple of Puri. The Chakas of Lords at Baladevjew temple of Indupur were possibly brought from Puri in the first half of the 16th century AD.

Madalapanji records that during the reign of King Mukunda Deva (1568 AD), Orissa was occupied by two different armies of Sultan Sulaiman Karani of Bengal. One of which led by Sultan himself and another by his son Bayazid with his general Kalapahada who marched towards Puri and

attacked the Jagannatha temple. Then Kalapahada destroyed the part of the great temple of Jagannatha upto the part amalakasila and defaced the images of Lords.⁴⁰ It is very difficult to ascertain the truth of the statement regarding the destruction of the Jagannatha temple. Because there is no archaeological evidence to prove that the temple was rebuilt at any time. Most probably, Kalapahada had attacked the Jagannatha temple and disfigured the images of Jagannatha 'Trinity'. Lastly the disfigured images of Lords were taken away from Puri to Bengal and he burnt them on the bank of river Ganges.⁴¹ A portion of Jagannatha's murti was successfully rescued from the bank of river Ganga by an Oriya Vaishnava named Bisar Mohanty who got hold of it, hid it in his drum and took it to Kujanga in Orissa where it remained under the custody of local king nearly twenty years.⁴² It can be said that Kalapahada was unable to destroy Jagannatha murti completely during his attack on Jagannatha temple. Before leaving the Jagannatha temple of Puri, Kalapahada plundered the stores for jewels.⁴³ At that time; he (Kalapahada) would have possibly broken the Ratnasimhasana of Lords for the collection of jewels. Thereafter, Ramachandra Deva(1568-1607 AD), the ruler of Bhoi dynasty of Khurda went to the state of Kujanga and brought the portion of the log (Brahma pradartha), which had not been consumed by fire. He made new images fashioned following the rites of Vanayaga and added to it the remaining portion of the old log, which rescued by Bisar Mohanty.⁴⁴ King Ramachandra Deva of Khurda, thereupon, consecrated the images and reinstalled them on the Ratnasimhasana of the great temple. For this renewal of Lords (Jagannatha Trinity) king Ramachandra Deva was called by contemporary Brahamanas and saints as 'Second Indradumnya'.⁴⁵ Most probably, king Rama Chandra Deva would have repaired the simhasana of Lords before re-consecration of the Jagannatha temple. From that period, the king of Khurda was called as Thakuraraja in the whole of India. After Kalapahada, some other Muslim invaders also attacked the Jagannatha temple of Puri in different periods. They are Kasodasa Maru in 1610 AD, Mutabat Khan in 1646 AD, Ekram Khan in 1698 AD, Suzauddin in 1713 AD and lastly Taki Khan in 1733 AD.⁴⁶ Due to negligence of native rulers

and constant attacks by Muslim invaders in different periods, the Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha temple was in dilapidated condition. So the simhasana of Lords required complete renovation.

The dilapidated Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha temple of Puri was subsequently rebuilt by King Virakishore Deva of Khurda. As per the inscription on the bottom part of Ratnasimhasana, it is clearly known that the present Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha had been completely remodelled by King Virakishore Deva (1737-1793AD) at the instance of his Thakuramaa (grandmother), the queen of Gopinatha Deva.⁴⁷ King Virakishore Deva of Khurda had possibly rebuilt the present Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha temple in circa 1760 AD.

At that time the Maratha chief was liberal towards the Lord Jagannatha temple of Puri, by which the renovation work of the Ratnasimhasana could be made possible by King Virakishore Deva. Thereafter, blocks of stone and chunks of plaster had fallen on the simhasana of Lords in several times.

The Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha temple was also modified by king Dibyasimha Deva-II (1793-1798 AD), the Bhoi dynasty ruler of Khurda. At the time of repairing, King Divyasimha Deva-II installed the stonewall of the Ratnasimhasana of Lords in the garbhagriha.⁴⁸ On the 9th July 1875 AD, three large blocks of stone from the lower ceiling (garbhamuda) had fallen on the Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha. Hence, the Lords were brought out of the simhasana and were installed in the anasara pindi.⁴⁹ At that time, the Ratnasimhasana of Lords was repaired by king Divyasimha Deva-III (1858-1879 AD) of Khurda. On the 14th December, 1903 AD a huge stone slab of the garvamuda of the temple had also fallen on the Ratnasimhasana and its repair work was carried out by the Rajas of Orissa and Puri.⁵⁰ After the independence of India, the Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha temple had also been modified through the Endowment Trust Board under the Government of Orissa. Thereafter, Archaeological Survey of India, Bhubaneswar Circle undertook the repairing work of the Ratnasimhasana. By the recommendation of the IX Expert Committee, Sri P.C. Mishra, the

collector of Puri, persuaded the learned 'Pandas' to allow A.S.I. to check thoroughly inside the garbhagriha, which was forbidden. In July 1991, during Rathayatra days, then the A.S.I. team had taken up cleaning work of the inner side of the temple. At that time the Ratnasimhasana was cleaned, repainted with assorted colours and thick soot deposits in the ground floor of the garbhagriha were also removed by dry wash. Unfortunately, on 13th August 1992, 2 pieces of corbel-stones inside the garbhagriha collapsed from the south-west corner and it fell down on the floor of the sanctum. It also partly damaged the Ratnasimhasana of Lords.⁵¹ To undertake the repairing work, removal of deities from Ratnavedi was felt very much essential. The deities were shifted and placed inside the jagamohana. By the joint venture of the Central and State Governments, the total repairing work of the garbhagriha of Jagannatha temple was completed by A.S.I. before Ratha Yatra of 1993. Subsequently, the Archaeological Survey of India; Puri Circle undertakes all types of repairing works of the Ratnasimhasana as well as the temple of Lord Jagannatha. Recently, A.S.I. Puri Circle has cleaned and repainted the Ratnasimhasana with assorted colours.

Conclusion

Thus it is known from the above discussion that the antiquity as well as historicity of the Ratnasimhasana of Puri (Srimandira) is mysterious like its presiding deity (Lord Jagannatha). Although a few references are found in the Mahabharata Vanaparva regarding the Vedita but it can not be rightly accepted as the exact place of the present Ratnasimhasana (Ratnavedi) of Lord Jagannatha. The statement of the Utkala Khanda of the Skanda Purana with regard to the ancient seat of Lord Nila Madhava can be presumed the place (spot) where the present Lord Jagannatha is being enshrined. The raised platform or the Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha is variously inferred by scholars as Ratnavedi, Vairavi Chakrapitha, Saptavarnapitha, Anatarvedi etc. The present Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha temple of Puri was possibly built by King Anangabhimha Deva II in the last decade of the 12th century AD. It is not possible to accept the views of some earlier scholars those who accept that the present Ratnasimhasana of Lord

Jagannatha temple of Puri was brought from Vijayanagara (Kanchi) by Gajapati Purusottama Deva in the last quarter of the 15th century AD. The designs carved in the Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha were certainly executed by the Kalinga School of artists. In spite of repeated attacks by Muslim invaders in different periods, the Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha temple of Puri was not destroyed by them. The dilapidated Ratnasimhasana of Lords was remodelled by the native rulers in different periods. Though the early history of the Ratnasimhasana of Lord Jagannatha of Puri is shrouded in mystery still its site is universally accepted as a holy place of India through the ages.

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