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Reference Gopalji Temple of Sambalpur A Repository of Arts

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An overview

Art and Architecture of the Viṣṇuīte shrines of Sambalpur town are a class by themselves in so far as some of these differ in style from those of the coastal zone of Odisha which are built strictly according to canons of temple-making and iconography as enshrined in what is called *Śilpa-Śātra* as well as those of other temple-towns like Sonepur, Barpali and Patnagarh of Western region of Odisha. Ancient temples and sculptures (Viṣṇuīte) are non-existent, while those of medieval time (cir.1550-1850 A.D.) are numerous. That period was the reign-time of the Cauhāṇas who were followers and patrons of Viṣṇuism. Of late, in the last fifty years, a number of shrines, both gigantic and miniature, have been erected and, some of these are in the process of making.

Different manifestations of Lord Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa are found in the temples. Those are Jagannātha-Subhadrā-Balabhadra Trinity or, only Jagannātha called Dadhivāmana (of Kāmsāri paḍā) Patitapāvana (e.g. Dhiṅgrā Paḍā), Rāma-Lakṣmaṇa-Sītā of the Ramjee temple of Kamali Bazar and Raghunatha temple of Bhatra, Varāha mandira popularly known as Berihā guḍi of Jhāḍuā Paḍā, a miniature temple, containing Ananta Mahaprabhu, i.e., Anantasayi or Lord Visnu reclining on the serpent Ananta in a huge pond of Rani Matha of Bhatra and another gigantic temple called *Anantasayyā* at Kamali Bazār and, last but not the least, are the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temples or images which abound in Sambalpur town in different names, forms and shrines. There are a number of temples known by different names where Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa images are worshipped. One such is Gopālji where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are worshipped in a shrine and Jagannātha in another complex, is a landmark in the gamut of such temples. It is located in Kamali Bazār, so called in popular parlance, after the name of the then Deputy commissioner A.B. Cumberlege of Sambalpur (1864-66) who is said to have set up a weekly market (Bazār) above the Mahānadi's left bank. Two more Gopālji temples exist- one at Dhanupāli and the other at Khetrajpur.

I. Gopālji Temple

(a) Connotation of Nomenclature

The Gopālji temple of Kamali Bazār contains the metallised images of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in the sanctum cella. These two images (*Yugala-mūrtti*) are said to be the Cosmic Lover and the Beloved or the Superself and the Self or the Mundane and the Puissant Force. The latter stands

¹ "Vagisvari" Lane-R-3, J.M Colony Sambalpur (Odisha)

for the hub of power and the former the medium to channelize the power for creation, maintenance and dissolution of the world. It is said that without Him She does not exist, without Her He is unmanifested. Further the word *Gopāla* which literally means a cowherd or one who tends cattle was brought up in Vraja or Vṛndāvana. But the two words *go* (sense organs or *indriyas*) and (*pāla*), that is, controller of *indriyas*(sense organs) constitute the word. He is the regulator of sense-organs. The suffix *ji* is a honorific term used usually for deities and revered personages.

(b) Epigraphic References

The solitary allusion to Lord Hari (Viṣṇu) as Gopāla is found in an inscription inscribed on the Gopālji temple of Sonepur assignable to the first part 20th century A.D. The temple is contemporaneous to that of Sambalpur of about the latter half of the 17th century A.D.

Further both these temples at Sonepur and Sambalpur were built under the patronage of the same personage Vaṁsi Gopāla, of Sambalpur kingdom the renunciant-prince of *Nimbārka* order of Vaisnavism. He was the son of Rājā Madhukar Sāi of Sambalpur who ruled in the second half of 17th century A.D. In the inscription, which has been invisible because of coats of lime plaster, it is written

*Āsit –tena suramya mandiraṁ-idaṁ
sanmaṇḍamālakritam /
Nirmmayātram-supūjit-opi vidhane
Gopāla rupi Hari //*

(He, i.e. king Vīramitrodaya Singh) of Sonepur caused construction of this very charming temple where Lord Hari was worshipped, in due procedure, Lord Hari in the guise of Gopāla.)

In a niche on the northern side of the exterior wall of the Jagannātha temple in the compound of the Gopālji temple, there is an standing image, counting beads of a rosary, of Vaṁsi Gopāl. Below the image on the pedestal, there is an inscription containing the following words in Oḍiā characters and Hindi language as follows :

Madhukar Sāi ka beta Vaṁsigopāla Deva.

It indicates, first, that Vaṁsi Gopāla was the son of Madhukara Sāi, the king of Sambalpur Cauhāṇa dynasty. So the construction style of temple architecture and iconography of images may be assigned to mid-17th century A.D. the period of reign of Madhukara. Secondly it indicates that Hindi language was in vogue, may be among the elite or royal people, while Oḍiā script was used for writing.

It may be apposite to point out that the Stambheśvarī and the Narasimhanātha temple inscriptions, the former of 1268 and the latter of 1413 AD of Sonepur and Paikmal (Bargarh Districts) respectively are the first known two Oḍiā inscriptions of Western part of Odisha

engraved in Oḍiā script and language. It is really interesting to note that the inscription under reference has Oḍiā characters but Hindi language. It is only one of its kind in the entire gamut lithic epigraphy of Odisha.

(c) Structural Design of Gopalji Matha Complex

The Gopālji *Maṭha* (Monastery) of Kamali Bazār has a sprawling complex. It has been set up in Śamvat 1716 or 1659 A.D. It is divided into almost two equal halves by a partition wall running from north to south, with an entrance between the two. The eastern half is an open ground with a few dilapidated rooms which probably served the purpose of a Sanskrit school, and an *Aruṇa Stambha* (a pillar for Aruna, the charioteer of the sun-god), which is a feature of all Viṣṇuite shrines, at the farthest east.

The other half comprises the Gopālji shrine on its west, the Jagannātha temple in front of Gopālji Temple on the southern side, a cluster rooms on the northern side called *Māusi Mā maṇḍapa* which probably served or serves the purpose of temporary residence of gods of the two temples in times of repair, rejuvenation and lime work. The accommodation of the *Mahanta* (ecclesiastic head) of the *Matha*, a well by its southern side and a few rooms behind the Gopālji temple are also there in the complex.

The Gopālji temple proper has three parts, namely, a small, square-sized and four –pillared structure topped by a discus (*cakra*) and a banner in the front. Below the discus (*cakra*) is a water jar (*kalasa*). Discus (*cakra*) is the emblem of a Viṣṇuite temple. Below the pitcher there are three *āmalakas* in gradually increasing sizes from top to bottom. A *beki* (neck part) comes under the last and biggest *āmalaka*. The *beki* has three single inverted lotus flowers in gradually increased sizes from bottom to top. It is built in a peculiar style unknown in this part of Odishā. It has a small pillared structure of a square size locally called *vimāna* or palanquin. Some others have named it as *Mukhaśālā* or view-chamber wherefrom one may take a glimpse of the deity who is placed in a straight line in the sanctorum. It forms the entrance into the *Jagamohana* (audience-chamber). It is open on the other three sides-east, north and south. It has arches on these three sides. The structure is almost common to all temples of Sambalpur.

The porch is a long but less wide structure and finally, there is a sanctum sanctorum of a comparatively small size. The ceiling of the building comprising the porch and the sanctum has a *khākharā* type ceiling which is a little elevated in the middle and slopes downwards on both sides. The borders have parapets in three layers of gradually receding sizes, one behind the other. It is shaped as strings of petals of lotus. The sanctum cella is a small rectangular camera in which the deities sit on a raised platform. The spire of the sanctum is exactly the same as those described above. Pitchers (*kalasa*) and banner (*dhvaja*) are placed on the top. The style is unique and said to have been imported from Central India or Rajasthan.

(d) Sculptural Programme of the exterior wall of Jagamohana**(i) Image of Jalandhara-vadha (Natarāja)**

In the corpus of art forms of the temple, an exquisitely charming piece of art is an image on the right side of the exterior wall of the *jagamohana*. It is a ten-armed image with beatific smile on a charming countenance. It has a well- set pair of lips and a long and thin moustache raised at both of its ends. An aquiline nose which is fully rounded with prominent bumps and pleasantly suppressed humps add to a handsome face. The fang of a snake and a crescent on its head, matted hair is flowing dishevelled on both the sides of the head, heavy and round ear-studs (*kuṇḍalas*) adorn the elongated ears. Armlets and bracelets are put on all the hands. Chains of tinkling beads are on the waist and the two legs. The two eye-brows are chiselled as beautifully groomed bow-shaped and the almond-shaped open eyes enhance the charm to a great extent. The image has an extra eye, the third eye, which is symbolic of profound wisdom.

The ten hands of the image are so symmetrically set that in addition to the well-formed body and charming countenance, those make the body look as if it were in the flesh and blood of a human being-so alive. Moving clock-wise from right lowermost hand which is in *abhaya mudrā* (protection posture) to the lower left hand which holds a bow-the other hand hold a *paraśu* (battle-axe), an arrow (*śara* or *tīra*), a trident (*tri-śūla*), the tail of the snake who stays on its head, a bi-facial mini-drum(*dambaru*), an antelope, goad (*aṅkuśa*).

Further the image is adorned with a necklace on the throat and two on the chest. A snake is worn as the sacred thread (*yajño-pavita*). Two snakes have hung from both sides of his shoulder and meet, one with its fang shown to front and the other's fang has subsided towards the thigh of the figure. Interestingly, the figure has two comparatively small figures on both of its sides. On the left, there is the image of Brahmā, with four hands and four heads.

The other image on the right is the image of lord Viṣṇu who is well bedecked with various ornaments like crown, ear-studs, necklaces, bracelets, armlets, anklets, decorated lower garments. It holds a conch-shell in left lower hand and a discus in right lower hand while the two upper hands play on a pair cymbals.

The figures of Brahmā and Viṣṇu show that they are in joyous mood while performing music. The reason is not difficult to make out. Their joy is due to the ten-armed figure's dance on the body of a royal personage lying below. It wears a crown, ear-studs, pearl-necklaces, a well decorated piece of cloth covering from waist to thigh, two protective covers used during war on both of his hands which have joined in a folded manner made during salutation. Every inch of the figure expresses a royal demeanour.

Thus, the art historians have described the ten-handed figure as *Natarāja* or Śiva in cosmic dance which, in fact, may not be true in the present case. On searching for such a description, it came to the notice in the *Kārttika Mahāmtya* (Canto-14) of Mahādeva Dāsa in Oḍiā (Cuttack),

which is cited from the *Padma Purāṇa*, that the royal personage was the demon Jalandhara whom Siva in his *Naṭarāja* form killed.

The story goes that Lord Viṣṇu abused the chastity of Jalandhara's queen Vṛndāvati in the guise of Jalandhara. The latter became angry and attacked Kapilāsa the abode of Śiva where the gods are hiding themselves. The gods took refuge there and each of them handed over his weapon to Śiva to fight against the demon.

Śiva jumped over Jalandhar's body and started the cosmic dance till the death of the demon. So, the *Naṭarāja* image may be considered as his *Jalandhara vadha* image (*mūrtti*) like those of *Andhakāsura vadha*, *Tripurāsura vadha* etc. Since, the event is related to Viṣṇu and his consort Vrindā it may be said to have been appositely placed on the wall of the Gopālī temple.

(ii) Image of Hanumān

On the left side of the exterior wall of the *Jagamohana* in a niche is a fine and unique piece of image of the monkey-god (Hanumāna) who has a beautiful round face with a tiara on his forehead, matted hair on his head, two ear studs, a mace (*gadā*) held in right hand pressed to chest, and a hill in his raised left hand. Unlike other sculptural representations of the Lord elsewhere the image has four necklaces, two bracelets and two armlets which dangle below with tassels. He has a waist band tied with a band of tinkling beads. His loin cloth is tied by two pieces of cloth between his two thighs. He is in the pose of flying which may be related to the episode of bringing the Gandhamārdana hill with the life-saving herb (*sañjivanī*) to make Lakṣmaṇa who fell unconscious, hit by the weapon of Indrajeet, the son of Rāvana of Laṅkā (*Rāmāyaṇa*).

In all types of Viṣṇuite temples the placement of Hanumāna somewhere in front or a side or a corner is found.

(iii) Image of Flute-playing Kṛṣṇa

Another very finely sculpted image of Lord Kṛṣṇa is in a niche of the exterior wall of the *Jagamohana*. Lord Kṛṣṇa is under a *Kadamba* tree (*Neola marckia*) holding a flute in both of his hands. He has put on a tiara on his forehead and a sandal paste mark extending from between the eyebrows to the tiara, two huge ear studs (*kuṇḍalas*), his two lotus-petal shaped eyes sparkling. A prominent nose and two beautiful well-set lips enhance the charm of the image. He has worn two broad armlets from which come three strands with tassels at the ends on both the sides of his back.

The image has been ornamented with two garlands of *Kadamba* flowers extending from neck to fibulae. Kṛṣṇa in the garlands has a spiritual significance of its own. In the auspicious hymn of Hindu rituals, it is chanted

Atasī kusuma Śyama Padmākṣam Pitavāsasam /

Kadamba māliṅgaḥ Kṛṣṇa dhyātām nastih-durgatim //

(Kṛṣṇa who is of the complexion of *atasī* flower (linum usitissimum),(yellow-apparelled, lotus-eyed) who wears the garland of *kadamba* is the dispeller of adversities when one meditates on him.)

The image stands in *tribhaṅga* (three bends) pose slanted a little at neck which is tilted to one side, the second at waist and the third on legs twisted one above the other. In fact, the image is a superbly artistic creation from the chisel of the artisan. The Lord justifies his name Gopāla from the representations of two cows one on each side of the inverted-lotus pedestal on which He stands. The Lord has been portrayed in an attractive body-language which has a pleasing and smiling countenance that is capable of drawing the attention of any onlooker. He has a wide chest and slender waist line with well-proportioned features of the body.

(iv) Image of Mahiṣamardīnī

Mahiṣamardīnī is yet another pleasant and charming piece of art on the same wall. She has a crown on head, a discus in right upper hand and a conch-shell in left upper hand. In the two lower hands, she holds a trident which has struck the demon Mahiṣa which is portrayed as a king. His left leg has come out from the frontal part of a buffalo while right leg is raised up to the knee. The goddess's left leg is on the animal while her right leg in on the lion, the vehicle of goddess. Interestingly, the image is bedecked with two types of armlets on each of her four arms as worn by rural and tribal womenfolk of West Odishā (called *tāda* and *bāhāsutā*). One tassel has come from each of *tāda*. She puts on four bangles on each of her hands, with two *bandariās* (two heavy and rounded ornaments with small spike like projection on outside, usually made of silver) on both sides of the bangles. She wears four rings on four fingers on each of her hands. Her loin cloth is tied by a waist band which itself has four tassels. Importantly, the different features of the deity are proportionate to each other making an eye-pleasing integrated whole countenance radiating an extraordinary glaze. The neck is a bit slanted towards left, which is known as *jñāna mudrā* (posture of wisdom). The two breasts are rounded, moderate in size and well-shaped. The standing pose symbolises *alidha mudrā* (heroic pose).

(v) Image of Nṛsimha

On the exterior of the western wall of the sanctum sanctorum in a niche is another piece of Nṛsimha image tearing bowels of the demon Hiranyakasipu, who is placed on the lap of the god, with long nails of his two lower hands. He holds a discus in his right and a conch in his left upper hands. As in other jambas, there are the images of the demon's queen-consort on the right and the prince to his left side. The deity wears a crown. He has a ferocious-looking face in which the two open eyes have bulged out, the tongue has come out in full length and the denture is shown clearly. He has a long moustache. He has worn necklaces, well designed two armlets and

two huge bracelets. The demon is in full royal attire, lies on the lap of the lord. His queen on the right and son on the left pray to the lord in folded hands. It is interesting to note that the queen is covered in typically Sambalpuri fashion. Her face resembles that of a Sambalpuri lady, a little big eyes, flat nose, long and broad lips. More interestingly, she wears armllets which is called *bāhāsutās* and a few pieces of broad bangles, anklets resembling what is *painri* called in Sambalpur region, which are still in use, ear-ornaments passing behind the ear-lobes what is called *karnna-phula* (flower of the ear) adorn the ears of the deity. Still more interestingly, she wears a piece of cloth, which unlike the gorgeous and ornamental female wear of the images, is a simple piece of cloth called *kaptā* in Sambalpur regions, worn in characteristic simple rural Sambalpuri style.

(e) Sculptural Programme on the lintel and jambs of Jagamaohana

The lintel and the jambs of the audience chamber (*jagamohana*) are embellished with very charming miniature representations of divinities, faunal and floral patterns.

(i) The erotic couple

The lintel has two lines of figures. The first one of the upper line contains a couple in pre-coital stage as suggested by the deportment of the figures. The upper hand of the male embraces the neck of the female from behind her neck. The other hand is just below the left breast. The lady's left leg is on the right thigh of the male, while her left hand is pressing the bed on which they sit. Both of them have a round pillow behind them. The sitting position of both of them seems to be pre-coital. What is charming are the beautiful faces with beatific smile when their faces are close to each other without one's lips touching the other's.

(ii) Gaja-Lakṣmī

The image of a *Gaja-Lakṣmī* is carved in a niche below the erotic couple. Two elephants, one on each side of the goddess pour water on the head of the goddess. Two more elephants are below the lotus-seat of the goddess. She is four-armed.

(iii) Kṛṣṇa suppressing Kāliya serpent

The next panel contains the image of Lord Kṛṣṇa standing on the hoods of a serpent named Kāliya in *Purānic* lore whose tail encompasses the figure of the Lord from right to left. On the right side of the serpent the queen of Kāliya prays to the Lord in folded hands while on the left is the figure of a companion cow-herd boy. (*Gopāla*)

(iv) Gaṇeśa

To its left is a niche containing Gaṇeśa in a well depicted frame on top of which are two lions, facing in opposite directions. Below them are two parrots also facing in opposite directions. The vehicle mouse is below the seat of Lord. The Lord has an big protruded belly. He holds goad (*aṅkuśa*), noose (*paśa*) and a rosary (*akṣa mālā*) in right upper, left upper and right

lower hands respectively; while his left lower hand is in *abhaya mudrā* (the pose of granting protection from fear).

(v) Swan panel

To the left of the image of Gaṇeśa in a medallion of a 14-petalled lotus are the figures of two swans.

(vi) Nṛsimha image

In the last panel of the lintel is carved the image of Nṛsimha with a discus in right upper and a conch-shell in left upper hand. The lower two hands are in the posture of (*Vyākhyāna Mudrā*). To his left on a pillar a figure of lady prays the Lord.

(vii) Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in sexual union

Below the image of Nṛsimha on the left pillar of the jamb is a half medallion of a lotus under a decorated canopy and floral designs. On both sides stand the twin images of flute-playing Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in the pose of sexual union. The genital of Kṛṣṇa has entered into that of Rādhā. It is, in fact, a rare image in the gamut of Viṣṇuite images. The flute is held on the chest of Kṛṣṇa by his right hand and left hand of Rādhā ; Rādhā has lifted her leg upto her knee while Kṛṣṇa stands straight on his two legs. The lower half of the images are totally nude, while the upper garment (*Uttariya*) of Kṛṣṇa flows behind him. His left hand holds Rādhā in embrace and his lips kiss Rādhā on her forehead.

(viii) Panel of two lions

Below the panel are carved two lions facing opposite directions. Each of these has raised its front right leg.

(ix) Jagannāth

Below it in a square medallion of floral design is the representation of a two armed Jagannātha image holding discuss (*cakra*) in right and conch-shell (*Śaṅkha*) in left hand. It has a crown (*mukuta*) on its head. He has a garland on his body. A lady is doing fly-whisk service on its right side and, on left a man is beating a gong (*ghaṅṭā*)

(x) Vijaya, the sentinel

Below him in a panel is the image of Vijaya the sentinel deity of the Lord holding a discuss (*cakra*) in his right, a conch-shell (*Śaṅkha*) in his left upper hands and a mace (*gadā*) in his two lower hands.

(xi) The Animals

Two animals a lion and an elephant come one after another after Vijaya on the left side of the jamb.

(xii) Yamunā, the river goddess

The last figure on this side is that of Yamunā standing on a tortoise and carrying a pitcher (*kalasa*) in her right hand and a lotus in the left.

(xiii) Mahiṣamardinī

On the right jamb, below the Gaja-Lakṣmī is a medallion in half-lotus form and with some floral designs. There is the image of an eight-armed Mahiṣamardinī in a frame bordered in flowers. Her right uppermost hand holds a discus, the next hand below holds an arrow and the third hand holds a knife while the left side hands from top to below serially holds a conch-shell, a bow, the third hand an indistinct object while the lower most two hands of both sides pierce the demon Mahisa who is in half-human and half buffalo form. The goddess stands in a pose of wisdom (*jñāna mudrā*) while killing the demon. She has worn a fillet.

(xiv) Jaya, the sentinel

The medallion of Jaya which comes below next is in the same form as that of Vijaya described earlier.

(xv) Animals

Then there are the figures of a lion, a rhinoceros and an elephant each standing in a square niche.

(xvi) Gaṅgā, the river goddess

The lowermost-niche exhibits the image of Gaṅgā standing on a crocodile which is presented like a caparisoned elephant with upraised trunk and small legs.

(f) Entrance into the Main Sanctuary**(i) Anantaśayyā**

The stone entrance of the sanctum cella, like that of *Jagamohana* of artistic merit. The lintel contains an image of Lord Viṣṇu reclining on a seven-hooded serpent. The image of Lakṣmī (two armed) is shown massaging his right leg with both of her hands, while his left leg is on the lap of Lakṣmī. Sarasvati is playing with lute (*vinā*) in her two upper hands, holding a lotus in her lower right hand raised above and a book (*pustaka*) in her left lower hand. Brahmā, known of having four faces, has emerged from the navel of lord Viṣṇu by a cord of a lotus and sits a little above the Lord. Such figure is known as *Anantaśāyī* or *śeṣa śāyī* in *Purānic* mythology. People of Sambalpur call such images “*Ananta śājyyā*” (bed of Ananta) the gigantic snake, which literally means as having no end. Such figures are found in the lintels and sanctums of some temples as the presiding deity. Significantly a grand and majestic temple contains the image as the main deity in Sambalpur in a temple called *Anantaśayyā*. The Lord places his upper right hand below his head. He holds a lotus bud in his lower right hand, a conch-shell (*Śankha*) in his upper left hand and a mace (*gadā*) in his lower left hand. In fact it is an exquisite piece of art.

Moving clockwise from the lowermost one on the south, the image an old man who is counting beads of rosary in his hand, above it is the image of a nude ascetic. Next niche's object is indistinct. The next nine images are male figures standing in folded hands and finally comes a figure a of nude ascetic.

Each of the two sides of the jambs contains seven niches from top to bottom. On the jamb of the right side, there is a representation of Śiva with one devotee on each of his side, his hair dishevelled, Gangā flowing down from his matted hair. He is sitting on a couchant *Nandi* (bull). A female figure is praying.

Below it comes the images of the Tortoise incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu- the upper half of which is a human body and the lower half is the shell of a tortoise. The human part holds a discuss, a conch, a lotus and a mace in his upper right, upper left, lower left and lower right hands respectively. He also wears a garland.

(ii) Śiva

On the right jamb, on the top square niche is carved the image Lord Śiva with two devotees one on each side. Siva has sat on the bull vehicle. His matted hair flows dishevelled in six strands, three on each side of his face. On the left side of the image is a crescent (*ardhacandra*) and on the right flows the *Gangā* from the top of his matted hair downwards.

(iii) Tortoise incarnation (*Kacchapa avatāra*)

Below in another square niche is the representation of the Tortoise incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. The upper half is in human form and the lower half is that of a tortoise. He holds a conchshell and a discus (*chakra*), a mace (*gadā*) and a lotus (*padma*) in his upper left, upper right, lower right and lower left hands respectively.

(iv) Boar incarnation (*Varāhaavatāra*)

The next lower niche has the image of the Boar Incarnation with a human body and a boar's head. It holds discus in right upper hand. The goddess of Earth a female figure, in the pose of salutation with folded hands sits on his left elbow. Manu the law giver is rescued from the water by gripping in his right lower hand and a lotus in his lower left hand.

(v) Paraśurāma (The Lord of battle-axe) Incarnation

The incarnation of *Paraśurāma*, a two-armed image with battle axe (*paraśu*) in right upper hand, a bow in left upper hand and a garland on his neck is carved in the next niche.

(vi) Rāma (The Bow- holder Incarnation)

Below in a niche is the figure of Lord Rāma which holds an arrow on his right hand and a bow in his left hand.

(vii) Kalkī (Slayer of the Wicked) Incarnation

The Kalkī Incarnation of Viṣṇu is carved in the next lower niche. The Lord, in human form, rides on a horse with two swords, one held in each hand.

(viii) Fish-Incarnation

The last niche contains the first incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. The human male forms the upper part with two hands the left hand holds a pitcher (*kalasa*) which is covered by the palm of the right hand. The lower part is the body of a fish from whose mouth the human figure emerges.

(ix) Kṛṣṇa lifting a mount

On the left jamb, at the topmost niche is portrayed an image of a two armed dancing Kṛṣṇa with a flute in right hand. He has lifted a mount called (*Govardhana-giri*) in the left hand. It is described in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* that when people of *Vraja* (*Vṛndāban*) worshipped Kṛṣṇa instead of Indra the king of gods, the latter poured incessant downpour for a week. Kṛṣṇa saved all cowherd boys, people of *Vraja* and the cattle by keeping them under the mountain by raising it.

(x) Fish Incarnation

In the next lower niche is carved the Fish Incarnation (*Matsya Avatara*) of Lord Viṣṇu. His upper half is in human form with the attributes of a discus, a conch shell, a lotus and a mace in upper right, upper left, lower left and right lowers hands respectively. The lower half is the body of a fish. The incarnation is said to have restored the *Vedas* which were stolen by a demon according to Hindu mythology.

(xi) The Man-Lion God

In the next lower niche is carved the image of *Nṛsimha* (Man-Lion) incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. His upper right hand holds a discus and left hand a conch-shell while the two lower hands are in the pose of tearing the bowels of the demon Hiranyakasipu. A figure of a lady, probably the demon's queen is portrayed with folded hands in prayer to his right while a small figure in royal costume probably the demon's son Prahallada on the left side, also prays the lord with folded hands.

(xii) The Dwarf Incarnation

The Incarnation of *Vāmana* (Dwarf) is sculpted in the next lower niche. In his left hand he holds an umbrella and a water pitcher (*kamandalu*) in his right hand. On the right side of the image is a male figure in royal attire and crown with hands folded in salutation. It is evidently king Bali who reveres the Lord and accepts his begging of three-foot of land. It is described in the *Purānas*. The Lord is also known as *Trivikrama*.

(xiii) The plough-Man Incarnation

The next lower niche's image is that of *Balarāma* holding a plough in left hand and a mace in right hand.

(xiv) Jagannātha Image

In the next lower niche is found a two-armed standing figure of Lord Jagannāth (or *Buddha-avatāra*). Two male figures-one on the right performs fly-whisk service to the Lord while his other hand shakes a small metal bell (*ghanti*) and the other figure on the left beats a gong (*ghanta*).

(xv) A mermaid

The lowermost niche contains an image of a figure which has a lady's upper part and a fish's lower part of the body. It is a mermaid.

(g) Sculptures on Exterior walls of sanctum**(i) Kṛṣṇa image**

On the exterior of the northern wall of the sanctum sanctorum is a charming piece of image of Lord Kṛṣṇa under a *kadamba* tree with a flute in his two hands with fillet on his head, armlet, bracelets, royal costume worn with waist band and a long garland of *kadamba* flowers. The female companions are on each side of the Lord also stand on pedestals. Each pedestal contains the representation of a cow. This is the *Gopāla* form of the Lord.

(ii) Image of Mahiṣamardinī

Another unique depiction is a superbly chiselled image of Mahiṣamardinī on the same side. It is four-armed. Her upper right hand holds a discus and the left a conch, while the two lower hands with a trident pierce the demon whose front is depicted in a male human form with a buffalo standing close behind him. The goddess's vehicle lion has leaped on the demon. The image puts on a crown on head, two big sized ear-studs on both ears, a necklace, two armlets, bunch of bangles on both the hands. Two quivers adorn the backside one on each side of her shoulders. The end-part of a bow is visible on the right shoulder.

(iii) Dancing Gaṇeśa image

Probably, the most superb, artistically excellent in the corpus of Gaṇeśa images is that on the exterior southern wall of the temple. It is a six-armed dancing (*nṛtta*) image with a snake raising his hood on the head of the image. The image wears a garland of *rudrākṣa*. He holds a snake's tail in right upper hand, a bi-facial tiny drum (*dambaru*) is in his left upper hand, an goad (*aṅkuśa*) in right middle hand, a cake of sweetmeat (*modaka*) in left middle hand, the lowermost or third right hand holds a rosary (*akṣamālā*) and the same hand in the left is found holding a trident (*triśula*).

The eyes exhibit a state of bliss. He wears ear-studs of a particular design locally called *phāsiā*. His right tusk is well adorned with strings of beads while the left one is broken (*bhagna*). For this reason, he is called *Ekadanta* and *Bhagnadanta*. He is bedecked with two very heavy and beautiful necklaces, armlets, bracelets. He wears a dancer's loin cloth between waist and thigh tied by a waist band of jingling bells. A small mouse looks at the Lord. Its neck is bedecked with a bunch of necklaces with a bell. The image wears a snake, with its fang to the front, as the sacred-thread (*Yajñopavīta*). Indeed, this is an excellent artistic creation and probably rare in Sambalpur.

II. Māusī Mā Mandira

On the northern side of the Gopālji temple complex there is a row of a few cameras consisting of a few rooms, which is called Māusī Mā Maṇḍapa. The entrance faces to south. A long verandah with a row of the pillars runs from west to east, passing through the entrance. The entrance has also a *vimāna* with two parapets in its front on the ceiling and capped by a rudimentary *tri-ratha* structure of four vertical moulding in gradually receding from bottom to top. Then comes a *beki* which is capped by an *amalaka* with the *āyudha* of a discus. Two such miniature structures are placed on the roof to the west.

(i) Five images on the lintel of Jagamohana

The lintel of the entrance of the porch hall (*jagamohana*) contains five divinities on its lintel. From the left to right are a divinity mounted on an elephant (not identified), Brahmā, Gaṇeśa, Indra and Indrāni, an elephant and Sūrya. Brahmā, riding on a swan, has four faces. He holds the *Vedas* in his left lower hand, his two upper hands are in the pose of salutation. Probably two of his consorts are seen on the swan behind the figure of Brahmā.

A four-armed Gaṇeśa with his vehicle mouse comes in the next niche. The right upper hand holds a goad (*aṅkuśa*) while the left hand has a noose (*pāśa*). The right lower hand is in boon-giving pose.

On a caparisoned huge-sized elephant (*Airāvata*) are the images of Indra and Indrāni. The two upper hands of Indra are in the pose of salutation while the left lower hand holds a *vajra*. The right lower hand holds a goad (*aṅkuśa*). Indrani is sitting in front of Indra in the same pose of salutation. The elephant carries a flower, probably *Pārijāta* grown in the celestial garden (*Nandanavana*) of Indra evidently for worship of Lord Gopāla.

The fifth niche contains a figure of Sūrya (sun God). His upper two hands are also in the posture of salutation, while the objects of the other two lower hands are in distinct. He is carved as riding on a chariot whose five wheels of a side and two horses in racing manner drawing the chariot are exhibited. Below the wheel like chariot is Rāhu, a planet of Hindu mythology who is

the arch enemy of Sun-god. On the left side of the god is the figure of his consort Chhāya who is also in the pose of salutation, with both the hands folded. The god is in standing position.

(ii) Kṛṣṇa image

On the ceiling of the verandah, above the five images, facing downwards is an image of Lord Kṛṣṇa standing under a *kadamba* tree and playing with a flute in both of his hands. He is bedecked with a tiara, a pair of *makara kundala* (ear-stud) necklace, bracelets, armlets, anklet with garland of *kadamba* flowers, he is accompanied by a *gopī* on each of his side. The Lord's well-shaped pair of lips are very attractive. He stands in *tribhaṅga mudrā* (the posture of standing with three flexes of the body-one at the ankles, the other in the waist and the third at the neck).

In the lintel of the camera of the western end of the row is found a depiction of an Anantaśāyī Viṣṇu lying on the coils of a snake called *śeṣa* or Ananta with seven hoods. His hands, as usual is found elsewhere in the temple. The figure holds a *śankha* in his upper left hand while his right upper hand is supporting his crowned head. It is well-decorated with the usual ornaments-armlet, anklet and bracelets. His consort Lakṣmī massages his leg in her right hand while the other leg is in her lap. A umbilical cord goes up to a little above the reclining Lord, at the other end of which on a lotus sits the four-headed Brahma on the top, Sarasvati plays *vinā* on the side of his head. Wavy lines have been drawn on the stone slabs representing the Ocean of milk (*ksira samudra*) in which lies the snake-bed of *Ananta śeṣa*, the serpent.

(iii) Hari-Hara image

On the exterior northern wall of the Māusī Mā temple in a niche is carved a composite image of Hari-Hara. The right side of the image represents Viṣṇu with a discus in his upper hand and a conch in his lower hand. The left side's upper hand holds a small bi-facial drum (*dambaru*) and the lower hand holds a trident (*triśula*). The image wears a crown on his head, hair lies dishevelled on both sides of his head, two big ear-studs, and two necklaces one of which is of pearl. A tiger's skin's loin on the waist and a well decorated piece of cloth hangs from below his waist. His armlets are comparatively big and well decorated. Two armlets are on each hand and he wears a sacred thread (*Yajñopavita*). He sits in *Padmāsana* on a pedestal. Lakṣmī sits on his right thigh and Pārvati on the left. On the pedestal are the images of Garuda the bird-vehicle of Viṣṇu, on the right and Nandi, the bull-vehicle of Siva on the left.

(iv) Kalki Incarnation

On the next-niche towards east of Hari-Hara image, is the image of Kalki incarnation of Viṣṇu. He is depicted as riding a running horse. In his right upper hand he blows a conch, while the left upper hand holds the discus. Further a sword is seen in his right lower hand, while his left lower hand holds the reins of a horse.

III. Jagannātha Temple

The Jagannātha Temple in the Gopālji temple complex is a majestic temple with a tall tower with horizontal bends on the exterior wall of sanctum cella with an audience-chamber (*jagamohana*) to its east and a circumambulatory path around the sanctum sanctorum. The exterior walls of the sanctum and the interior walls of the *jagamohana* are full of images of *Purānic* descriptions.

(i) Three images on the lintel of jagamohana

On the lintel of the entrance of the *jagamohana* are the three images of Rāma, Nṛsimha and a four-armed female deity. Rāma is depicted with a bow in his left hand and a quiver (*tūnira*) in his right hand. In the middle, the image of Nṛsimha is in sitting posture (*mudrā*), holding a discus in right upper hand and a conch in left upper hand. The two lower hands are in pose of discourse (*vyākhyāna mudrā*).

To its left lies the figure of a Viṣṇu holding a discus in his upper right hand, a conch-shell in his upper left hand and an indistinct object in the left. The right lower hand is in boon-giving (*Varada mudrā*). He is found sitting in lotus-posture (*Padmāsana*).

(ii) Figures on Jambs of the Entrance of Jagamohana

On the two jambs of the door below the lintel are designs of flowering creepers. At the basement of which lies the image of Gaṅgā standing on her vehicle crocodile holding a pitcher (*kalasa*) in her right hand and a flower in the left. She wears tiara like crown on her head, armlets and bangles in her hands, anklets in her legs, ear studs and necklaces.

The left jamb has the image of Yamunā standing on her vehicle tortoise holding the same attributes as those of Gaṅgā.

(iii) Images on the interior walls of Jagamohana

On the northern interior wall of the *jagamohana* are depicted eight images, all about eight inches in size. Proceeding from west to east serially come the incarnations of Viṣṇu-Fish, Tortoise, Boar, Man-lion, Dwarf, Parśurama, Rāma and Kalki with their attributes.

On the southern interior wall of the *jagamohana* are the pictures of Indra (broken) riding on an elephant, Brahmā on his vehicle swan, Viṣṇu holding his usual attributes of with mace, lotus, conch and discus in his four hands. Probably He is sitting on his bird vehicle Garuḍa whose two legs are visible to the outside.

The next portrayal of the panel is a peculiar form of Siva, with five faces and eight hands. He is riding on a bull. His attributes in the other six hands, from lower right to lower left hand, when describing in a clockwise manner, are a scimitar, a trident, a small bi-facial drum (*dambaru*), a goad, an antelope and an object which is indistinct and palms of upper right and

left hands are joined in the form of salutation. The next panel depicts Indra with folded hands sitting on his vehicle elephant.

The next image of the panel is a deity sitting on a couchant human figure. It is evidently the image of Kubera, the Lord of wealth and the king of Yakṣa (a kind of demigods) as described in Indian mythology. He has been portrayed with two hands, His two palms are joined in the form of salutation.

On left interior wall there is a panel of six figures. The extreme left one is broken, only an elephant is visible. It appears that the broken images is that Indra whose vehicle is an elephant, known *Airāvata* in Hindu *Purānic* lore.

The next figure, i.e. second from the left, is the image of Brahmā whose three faces are exhibited to the onlooker. He has sat on a swan. He is depicted with four hands, palms and the upper two hands are joined together in a posture of salutation.

Five figures of divinities –out of six, Indra, Brahmā, Śiva, Indra again and Kuvera are in the poses of salutation. Viṣṇu is alone without the pose. It shows that all the five are in prayer to the greatest of the divinities, that is Lord Viṣṇu who has been regarded as the Supreme deity in a Viṣṇuite temple. The presence of an image of Viṣṇu amidst the gods make all of themselves subordinate to Viṣṇu.

On the right side of the exterior eastern wall of the *jagamohana* are depicted nine images from left to right in a panel are the incarnations of Viṣṇu-the Buddha, Kṛṣṇa playing flute in his right hand and lifting the Govardhana mount in his left hand. The next image is that of Nārāyaṇa with a discus (*cakra*) in his right upper and a conch (*śankha*) in left upper hand. The right lower hand exhibits posture of boon-giving (*Varada*) and the left lower is in the posture of protection from fear (*abhaya mudrā*). Then next one is the image of one with folded hands. The next image is that of Nṛsiṃha tearing the bowels of the demon Hiranya Kasipu. Thereafter comes the image of winged Garuda in folded hands.

The image of Lord Rāma holding bow in the left and arrow in the right is carved next. There is the image of an unidentified figure of a divinity while holds two indistinct objects in his two hands. The last item of the panel is the image of the four-handed Boar incarnation. He holds discus in his right upper hand and the elbow of the lower left hand is raised probably to lift the goddess of earth while right lower hand is hanging below.

On the left side of the exterior wall of *Jagamohana* is a panel of a scene from the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are sitting with their monkeys and a male figure behind them and four monkeys stand facing Rāma. On the other side four palanquin bearers are standing near with a palanquin.

(iv) Images on the lintel of the sanctum

The lintel of the entrance into the main sanctuary has a panel containing ten images. Four of them to the right and three on the left are the figures of monkey-god (Hanumān) and other monkey heroes. A figure on the left side is that of Jāmbavāna, the bear–adviser of Lord Rāma while the two middle figures are those of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa.

On the top of left side of the jamb is a small panel containing an image of Kṛṣṇa dancing on serpent Kāliya. He holds the snake’s tail which moves from right to left encompassing the figure of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The queen of the serpent is presented in the form of a half-human in the upper half of the body and half snake in the lower half. She prays to the Lord with folded hands.

The right jamb on its top contains a niche which houses the figure of either Rāma or Lakṣmaṇa. It seems that a bow is in the left hand and an arrow in the right hand. An inverted lotus is below the niche.

(v) Images on the exterior wall of the sanctum

On the northern wall of the Jagannātha temple of Gopālji *matha* there is an image of Prince Vamśi Gopāl Deva looking like a saint, holding a rosary in his right hand. He is portrayed in bare body with a simple lower garment and wears a *upavita* (sacred thread). One can see one line inscription is written in Oriya script and in Hindi language below the feet of king Vamśi Gopāl Deva.

The image of Nṛsimha with four arms killing demon Hiranya Kaśipu on his lap comes after the above on the left. He holds a discus (*cakra*) in his right upper hand while in his left upper hand he holds a conch (*śaṅkha*). The two lower hands are in a position of tearing bowels of the demon. On the right side of the God, a lady image is found (below His feet) while on the other side one can see an image of a young boy. Perhaps he is the son of demon Hiranya Kaśipu.

There is a composite image consisting of three incarnations – Rāma, Kṛṣṇa and Paraśurāma of Lord Viṣṇu. It is a rarely found image. It is a very charming piece in the gamut of sculptures of not only Gopālji temple but also of Sambalpur. The image has six hands standing on two feet in tri-bhanga pose. The upper hands represents Rāma with a bow in the left one and an arrow on the right. The middle two hands holds a flute which lies just below the chin. It is the manifestation of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The lower two hands are those of Lord Paraśurāma- in the left he holds a pitcher (*kamaṇḍalu*) and on the right a battle-axe (*paraśu*). The image stands on a pedestal incised with an eight-petalled lotus. It has an extraordinary facial expression, which exudes an uncomparable charm. The parts of the body are in symmetry. He wears a fillet on a head, two comparatively big ear-studs and a necklace. In fact, it is the figure of Lord Kṛṣṇa on which are Superimpose those of Rāma and Paraśurāma. In fact, the combination of the three figures are symbolic of the three qualities- *tamas, rajas and sattva* or *sat, chit and ānanda*.

Other Gopalji Temples

There are as many as three Gopālji temples in Sambalpur town, including the main temple at Kamali Bazār discussed above. The other two are located at Khetrājpur and Dhanupāli.

(a) Gopālji Temple of Khetrājpur

(i) Images of the main temple

A new temple was constructed in place of the old one which has a small square sanctum and a wide circumambulatory path. It is built in curvilinear style. Originally it had three parts namely a sanctuary, a porch and a dancing hall. Later on the last two were made one by removing the wall separating the two. The main temple at present contains the images of Jagannātha, Balabhadra and Subhadrā as well as an image of Kṛṣṇa made in eight metals and that of Rādha in brass. A sitting human figure with a wing on each side of shoulder and with folded hands is seen, as usual in Viṣṇuite temples, is placed on the top of a pillar. It is facing to the main sanctuary. It is the image of the bird-vehicle of Lord Viṣṇu named Garuda. In the complex lies an old dilapidated temple containing an attractive image of great artistic merit.

A four armed image of Viṣṇu with his four attributes of a conch-shell (*śaṅkha*), in left upper, a discus (*Cakra*) in right upper, mace (*Gadā*) in right lower and a lotus (*Padma*) in left lower hand is sitting on the shoulder of his vehicle Garuda. It is a wonderful image in a dilapidated temple under a banyan tree. It is the only surviving image of mediaeval time.

(b) Gopālaji Temple of Dhanupāli

The Gopālji temple of Dhanupāli locality of Sambalpur town is a very beautiful and elegant shrine. An inscription has been discovered by the author Dr.D.B. Mishra from the *jagamohana* wall which signifies the date or time period and builder of the temple-cum-*matha*.

There is a bi-lingual inscription on left side of the entrance of the main temple. The first four lines are in Sanskrit language Odia script and the next eight lines are in Hindi language and Devanāgiri script Text.

It consists of a sanctum sactorum, a *jagamohana* and a small *pidhāmundi* deula attached to it. One rectangular pillared *maṇḍapa* is also attached which seems to be a later addition. The rectangular pillared *maṇḍapa* has been used for prayer, bhajan, kirtan etc. At the end of the rectangular hall, there is a small *pidhā-mundi* structure miniature temple where Bajrangvali or monkey-God Hanumāna is enshrined. Then comes the Garuda *stambha*. All the structures are standing in the same alignment.

The main temple is *tri-ratha* in plan with curvilinear spire from bottom to top. The top portion of the main temple is designed by *beki*, *āmalaka śilā*, *kalasa*, *cakra* and *āyudha*.

There are a few images on different walls of the temple. Those are two Anantasāyi panels one on the right of the entrance of Gopālji sanctuary and the other pasted on the wall of a Śiva shrine in the temple complex.

Inside Śiva temple are found three images.

- (i) Ganeśa –Pārvati behind Śiva Linga
- (ii) Image of the sun god
- (iii) Image of Jaya-Vijaya on both sides of the temple

All the above images made in sand stone are rather crude, though these are of some artistic beauty which has been erased with passage of time. In the *Garbhagriha* there are the Jagannāth trinity and the Rāma trinity and the twin images of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā are being worshipped along with Gopālaji. Of course the stone image of Gopālaji, the presiding deity of the temple is a unique one. It is placed on a stone pedestal in which the lower parts of his legs are buried. Though a small image of about one and half feet height and coated with black colour without any work of chisel on the body of the image yet it is an attractive image.

There are other images like Goddess Durgā and Lord Śiva in the form of lingam are being worshipped in the Gopālaji temple adjacent to the Gopālaji shrine

Inscription on the entrance of the main temple

1. *Kha sāgara vasu candra ha(a)yane Śālivāne*
2. *Māgha māsi site pakṣe trayodaśyā Bhṛgodine*
3. *Śrī Gopālāvidhāna ca sitam karmuka patane*
4. *vaya rāmeṇa mahatā samstāpitam ca mandira sa*
5. *yaha Śrī Gopālajīka mandir*
6. *pūjya Śrī Bajaraṅgī Dāsajī*
7. *Śrī Sumaraṅ Dāsajī aur Śrī Ṣ(Ś)trghne*
8. *Dāsajī ke smṛti svarūpe*
9. *san 1949 tā 11/2 Māgha pā kṛtyod*
10. *-----nirmāṇa kārakara pratiṣṭhā kiyā*
11. *Evam Dhanupāli grāmame virajit purātan*
12. *Śrī Gopālji ko padhrāya Ta*

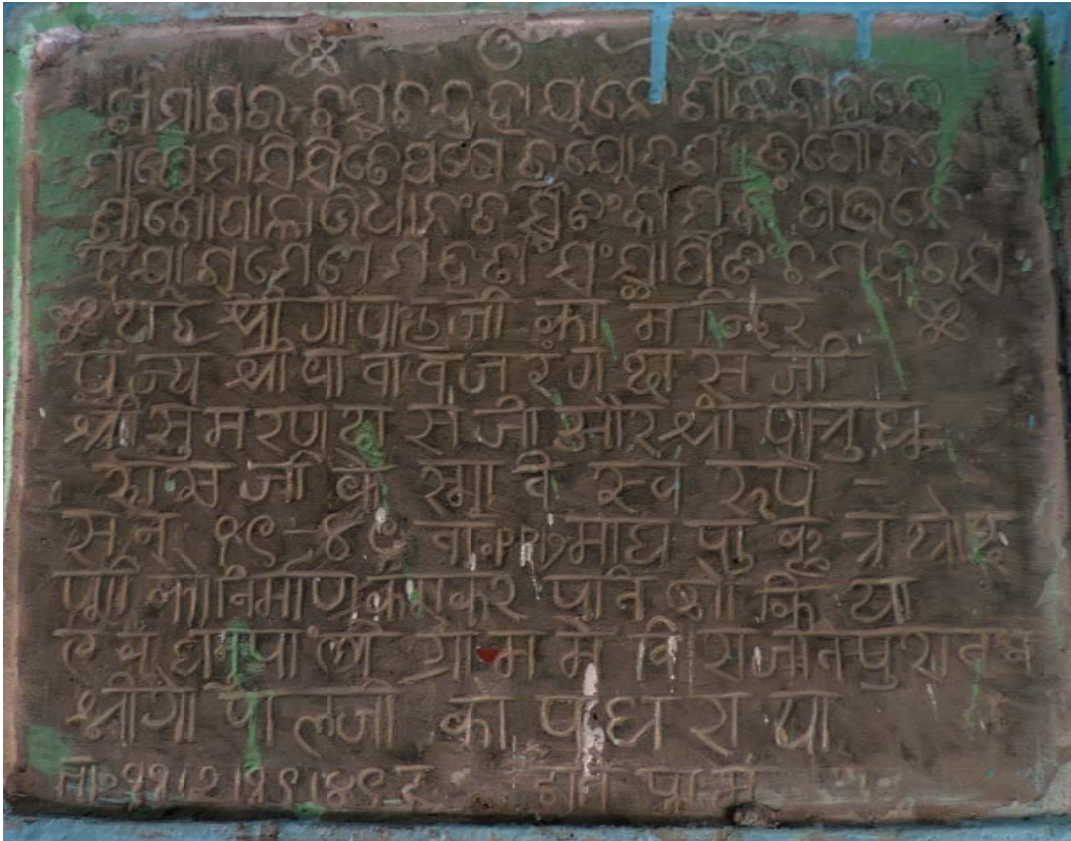
11/2/1949

The inscription is incised on a small piece of soap stone which is pasted on the wall of entrance of the main temple. It is bi-lingual- the first four lines are in Sanskrit language and Oriya script and the next eight lines are in Hindi language and *Devanāgarī* script.

The first two and the ninth line contain the date of construction of the temple and installation of the image. The mention of the year is in the first line, the lunar day is in the second and the English date is in line nine. Again the date is given after twelfth line at the end of the inscription. The first line reads as *Kha, Sāgara, Vasu, Candra Sālivāhana ayane*. It is the Hindu classical system of reckoning numbers by words these represent and making the numbers move from right to left (*ankānām Vāmato gati*) to fix the date. Here in the inscription *Kha* stands for Sky i.e. 1, *Sāgara* meaning Seas stands for 7, *Vasu-* a variety of demi-gods which are 8 in number and *Candra* (moon) for 1.

Thus, the number will be 1781. When it is made to move from right to left it will be 1871 of *Śalivahana* i.e. *Śaka* era. i.e $1871+78=1949$ A.D.

The month was *Māgha*, the lunar *tithi trayodaśī* of the bright fortnight and the day was Friday. It was 11 February of 1949 as written at the end. The temple was consecrated on the date in the memory of three Saints of a Rāmāite order- Bajarāṅgi Dāsa, Sumaran Dāsa and Śatṛghna Dāsa. The image of Gopālji was then shifted from a house of Dhanupāli where he has been worshipped to the present temple.



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Gopalji Temple (front) and Mausī Ma Mandapa (Right)



Jalandhara Vadha, Gopalji Temple



Krishna, Gopalji Temple



Mahisamardini Durga, Gopalji Temple



Nrusimha, Gopalji Temple



Dancing Ganesha, Gopalji Temple



Harihara Image, Mausli Ma Mandapa)



Kalki Image of Mausi Ma Mandapa



Krishna, jagannatha Temple



Five images Panel, lintel of Jagamohana, Mausi Ma Mandapa



Panel of incarnations of Lord Vishnu, Jagannatha Temple



Image of Vamsi Gopal,
Jagannatha Temple



Image of Sadhabhuja Gouranga,
Jagannatha Temple



Image of Mahisamardini Durga,
Jagannatha Temple



Image of Garudasina Vishnu,
Gopalji Matha, Khetrajpur



Jagannatha Temple (Goplaji Matha)



Gopalji Matha (Dhanupali)



Image of Gopalji,
Gopalji Matha, Dhanupali