In the previous chapter, a reference has been made to the deification of trees in the three dimensions of Hinduism, i.e. classical, popular and tribal. The reasons for such deification is the fact that trees are the source of food, beverage, clothing, shelter and medicine, and thus have become shrines all over the world. When the idea of constructing temples for gods had not dawned upon man, trees were the only choice. In this chapter, it is to be discussed that in the present day world of massive concrete constructions also, trees continue to be the temples not only of tribal deities and spirits but also of the deities worshipped among the peasant (rural) communities and also of the Sanskritized (scriptural) gods.

The simple, congregational rituals of the tribals are best performed under trees. The tribals erect no temples, for their sacred groves bear the status of temples. Usually, when they set up their settlements by reclaiming forests, they set apart a portion of it for spirits and deities who were believed to reside there. These spirits were given periodical offerings and sacrifices. This must have contributed to growth of the traditional of sacred groves.

Even outside India sacred groves have served the purpose of tribal shrines. Frazer (1950) mentions in this regard that, sacred groves were common among the ancient Germans. At Upsala, the old religious capital of Sweden, there was a sacred grove in which every tree was regarded as divine. The heathen Slavs worshipped trees and groves. The Finnish Ugrian tribes of Europe, performed their heathen worship, for the most part under sacred groves, which were always enclosed with a fence. Among the tribes of the Volga, the central point of the grove was the sacred trees, besides which everything else was insignificant. Before it the worshippers assembled and the priest offered prayers. No wood could be hewn and no branch broken in the grove, women were generally prohibited to enter into it.
The sacred groves of the Indian tribes are situated outside the village settlement but inside the village boundaries. They are known by different names like Sarana, Jaher, Jhakor, Jhakra, Jaherthan etc. Like the temples of the Hindu castes, the sacred groves are also regulated by certain specific rules. The individual villagers cannot perform worship themselves in the groves. There are chief priests for the purpose who are known by different names like Pahan, Naeke, Disari, Perma, Dehuri and Kalo etc. As the image in a shrine is never to be harmed, the trees in the groves are not to be hurt. It is the common religious centre of the entire village.

Speaking of the Kharias, Sinha (1989) mentions about the sacred grove that, it is a piece of land, varying from two decimals to two acres. It may be barren, forested or a portion of a hill but usually, it is a grove of trees like Sal (Shorea robusta), Kusum (Barleria strigosa), Bargad (Ficus bengalensis), Mahua (Bassia latifolia), Jamun (Lyzycium cumini) Bahera Sinnal (Bombax malbaricum), Jitia (Ficus religiosa) and Karam (Nauclea parvifolia). Pieces of stones, measuring ten to fifty centimetres are placed under the trees to represent the deities. The Khatian or record of possession, that is the Government record shows that the land of the sacred grove is "Gairmajaura Aam, i.e. the land is meant for the use of the village community. If a tree of the sacred grove falls down, it can be taken away only with the permission of the chief priest of the village, who sacrifices two or three fowls in the sacred groves on behalf of the person who wants to take the tree. Whenever, all the trees of the sacred grove dry up or fall down the villagers give up that place and shift to a new place having trees.

The sacred grove, as found amongst the Kharias are described by Sinha as Jankor or Sarhul Sarna, Kadleta Sarna, Pat Sarna, Gumi Sarna, Kara Sarna, Mahadan Sarna, Hariari Sarna, Bhenra Sarna, Hati Bandha Sarna, and Budi Sarna. Out of all these Jankor or Sarhul Sarna is common, where the Jankor festival and at places the Kadleta festival are celebrated. Pat Sarna is one of the most important sacred centres which is situated inside a deep forest just at the foot of a hill. Jankor Sarna, also known as Sarhul Sarna, is another important sacred centre located outside the village settlement, usually in an open space and under a Sakhua tree. Chila Sarna is believed to be the abode of Chil spirit. It is usually located inside a deep forest situated at the outskirts of the village boundary. No
material representation is there except a Sakhua grove. Gumi Sarna is also a sacred centre situated outside the village settlement.

According to Sahay (Gupta, 1965) Baram, one of the main deities of the Hill Kharias is believed to reside in sacred grove known as Baram sal or Thakurani Sal consisting of one or more stones representing deities, ceremonially installed under a huge tree or trees. Baram is supposed to be a spirit of their native forest who is propitiated by the Dehuri, the village priest. This grove spirit is given a libation of water by the village priest during Pardi, the hunting festival, held in the month of Phalguna (February-March) and blessings are solicited to achieve success in hunting expedition. During the second part of the Phagu festival, known as Phagu Nawakhia, again, the village priest offers mango-blossoms to the stone symbol representing Baram, and then sacrifices a goat or sheep, if any, in the name of Baram. The sacred grove of Dudh and Dhelki Kharias is variously known as Jankor Jharkar or Sarna of the village. The sacred grove is believed to be inhabited by the presiding spirit of the settlement like Khut, Baghia etc. represented by sacred stones placed under Sal or Murun or Mahua trees. Jankor is associated with some important festivals of the Dudh and Dheli Kharias like the Jankar Puja (similar to the Oraon's Sarhul festival) held in the month of Phalguna when Kalo the village priest, besides burning incense, offers food in the name of grove spirits and prays to protect the bullocks, buffaloes, goats, men etc. in the jungle against tigers and bears. A worship is made to the Khunt pat by the Kalo in the Jankar also, during Kadleta festival held in September-October, when generally twelve fowls are sacrificed for the grove spirits after giving the same treatment as in Jankor puja.

Speaking of the Oraons, Roy (1972) mentions that "The Oraons erect no temples, except that in some villages, in imitation of Hindu practices, a small shed is created for Devi Mai or mother Goddess, who is apparently a deity borrowed from the Hindus, for the other principal deities of the Oraon pantheon, one or more sal groves, now dwindled down into one or more solitary trees, constitute their shrine. "The Oraon sacred grove is known as 'Sarna or Jaher'."
The Santal sacred grove is known as *Jaherthan*, where a number of spirits or *bongas* reside, who, as they believe, regulate the course of nature and so should be propitiated. Troisi (1978) lists the name of a number of *bongas*, who are worshipped in the *Jaherthan*. There are three Sarjum trees (*shorea robusta*) in a row. The two tall trees close together are believed to be the abode of *Maran Buru* and *Jahe Era*. The third one is the abode of *Moreko Turuiko*. The Santal believe that the stones placed under trees by which these spirits are represented, have been placed there by the spirits themselves. *Jahe Era* is known as the lady of the sacred grove, over which she presides. On the occasion of every festival, a fowl is offered to Her in order to obtain general welfare of the village with good crops and good health of the villagers and the cattles. The spirit *Gosae Era* is represented by a stone, placed at the foot of a Matkom tree (*basia latifolia*). She is propitiated by stones. *Pargana Bonga* is another spirit who is represented by a stone, under one of the Sarjum trees (*shorea robusta*). Wherever the villagers believe that any illness is caused by witches, the *Ojha* (village priest) propitiates this spirit. Sacrifices are made in the *Jaherthan* during the principal festivals like the *Sohrae* (harvest festival), the *Baha* (flower festival), the *Erok Sim* (the sowing festival), *Hariar Sim* (the sprouting festival) and the *Janthor* (first fruit festival). Women are kept away from participating at the sacred grove. A woman can neither witness the sacrifices nor can eat the flesh of any animal sacrificed in the sacred grove. The Santals look upon the spirits of the *Jaherthan* as their communal spirits, because they are worshipped by all.

Roy (1935) speaks about the Hill Bhuinyas that in the village of Kuria Pargana and the plain villages where the villagers are all settled agriculturists, the *Gai-Siri* is represented by a stone placed along with other stones in a permanent sacred grove called *Jahirra*. *Boram*, who is said to be the husband of *Gai-Siri* or *Thakurani* or *Mangala* is not specifically represented by any symbol in the *Pauri* or Hill Bhuinya villages, but in the *Jahe* or sacred grove of the *Kuria* Bhuinyas, a stone is placed to represent *Boram*.

Sahay (Gupta, 1965) mentions that the Munda also have a sacred grove located in the vicinity of the village and reputed to be a remnant of the primeval forest left in tact for the local gods when the cleaning was originally made. It is supposed to be inhabited by *Desauli*, the tutelary deity of the village, and his wife, *Jhar-Era*, or *Maburu*, who attend to
the wants of their votaries. Every village has its own Desauli and His authority does not extend beyond the boundary of the village to which his grove belongs. If a man of that village, cultivates in the land of another village, he must pay his offerings to the Desauli of both. These grove deities are appeased and sacrifices are made to them by the village priest on behalf of the whole village and they are protectors of the crops and are officially honoured in all the agricultural festivals. They are also propitiated in sickness.

Thus the tribal deities and spirits are worshipped in sacred groves only. Erected temples, if any, are meant for deities borrowed from the Hindu neighbours. But in the popular cult, temples and trees are entertained simultaneously. In Orissa, both in rural and urban areas sacred shrines include erected temples and trees both. Instances are very common, where on the road side of a city, the photo of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra, hung in a tree is worshipped, or a small temple is erected under a huge tree and a sanskritised god is placed in it. In the villages, just on the neighbourhood of urban areas, temples are certainly there, still, there are deities placed and worshipped under trees. But in certain villages, only trees constitute the shrine and not a single erected temple can be traced. Bhuinpur in the Begunia Police Station area in Khurda district is such a village. The population of the village is about three hundred which includes Brahmans, Karanas, farmers, barbers, milkmen, Saoras etc. People here are quite aware of the religious practices of Orissa. They celebrate the seasonal Oshas (religious fasts) and Bratas (religious vows) as mentioned in the oriya calendar and read Puranas (religious scripts) meant for each Osha/Brata. There is a "Bhagabata Tungi" where the palmleaf manuscript of Bhagabat and a Shalagrama (round small stone available from river Ganduki of Nepal and worshipped by Brahmans) are placed. A Brahman priest worships there twice a day, both in the morning and evening. In the evening he reads out the Bhagabata to an assembly of villagers. So it is well evident that they are well informed of the Hindu holy scriptures. But so far they have not built a single temple for any sanskritized god. It may be that their economic condition is not sound enough to support a temple and its cult. But the vital reason behind the absence of a temple in the village is their age old faith in three trees, who they believe, stand on three sides of the village and protect them. A Bata tree and a Kataranga tree have grown at the same place and the out growth is a very huge tree. The thick branches and shady leaves are supported by huge pillar like stems. As the villagers believe, the trees have already lived a life of more than three hundred years. Now, there is no
sign of decay, which foretells its long life in future. Pieces of red cloth are tied around it, *sindur* (vermilion) is applied and red bangles are hung at places. This tree is worshipped as the abode of a goddess named Baghei. She is worshipped in quite a simple way. The presence of a Brahman priest or the citing of *mantras* (hymns) through "Upchara Vidhi" (system of services) is not necessary. Villagers both men and women perform the worship themselves by lighting incense sticks and making dry food offerings. In return, they believe that she redresses their day-to-day grievances, protects them from the out break of epidemics and natural calamities and fulfils their vows. Whenever anybody's vow is fulfilled he/she offers the goddess "Jantala" (a kind of sweet meat) and arranges a feast in Her honour. During the Dasahara festival in the month of Aswina (September-October) no special *puja* (worship) is made, but only "Jantala" is offered and villagers together arrange a feast. During auspicious occasions like wedding or sacred thread ceremony, it is the goddess Baghei, whose blessing is first sought. Even people from nearby villages worship the deity and keep their vow. So the money required for the construction of a temple for her could have been easily raised, but the villagers believe in their forefather's version that an attempt was made in the past to build a temple for her, but the goddess expressed her wish to stay in the tree only, so that she could protect the village better.

There is another sacred tree which is worshipped as the receptacle of goddess Mangala. It is a Bata (*ficus bengelenis*) tree. It is also there for more than three hundred years. All the villagers worship the tree whenever they wish by lighting incense sticks and making dry snacks offerings. The marks of *Sindur* (Vermilion) and the hanging of red bangles, express the existence of the goddess in it. A small pavement is built under the tree where a small image of the goddess is placed. Villagers keep their vow at the goddess and celebrate its fulfilment. The Saoras of the village cannot themselves worships the two above mentioned trees. If they wish, they can give the offerings through another villager of Hindu caste. In this respect, the villagers seem to apply temple cult to their sacred trees. There is another tree, which can be worshipped directly by the Saoras. It is the abode of the tribal goddess Chemedi Dei. It is believed that earlier the goddess, was in an Aswatha tree (*ficus religiosa*) tree, but when it decayed, the goddess was represented by mere stones and the worship continued. Later on when a Tamarind tree grew at that place the goddess expressed her desire to be worshipped in that tree. Pieces of red and black cloth are tied around it and *sindur* (vermilion) is anointed.
The caste Hindus of the village also are entitled to worship this tree, even they keep their vow near this goddess. But usually the Saoras worship the tree. On ordinary days dry food offerings are made to the goddess but on auspicious occasions and whenever anybody’s vow is fulfilled, a hen is sacrificed. The other two trees don’t accept non vegetarian offering. It is a peculiar instance of differentiating trees as Aryan or Sanskritized and non-Aryan or Animistic which must have developed as per the perception of first devotees. The ethnic factor of the devotees must have influenced this phenomenon. Here the third tree represents a purely tribal shrine whereas the first two represent Aryan deities.

"Dingara" is another village situated at a distance of about 3 Kms. from Bhuinpur. The population is about 2000 and includes both the caste Hindus and tribal communities. There are a few temples for Jagannath, Mahadev, Jogamaya etc. in the village; besides there are certain trees where periodical worship is performed by the villagers. There are two trees grown quite close to each other, one is an Aswattha (ficus religiosa) and the other is a Bata (ficus bengalensis) tree. The villagers believe that about eighty years back, a virtuous man had performed the marriage between the two trees. These trees are usually worshipped on Saturdays. So it is believed that the trees are worshipped to lessen the adverse effects of planet Saturn. The worship is performed not by any priest but by the people themselves. There is a Bara (zizyphus jujuba) tree, which is worshipped as the representative of Lord Indra (god of rain), when there is no rain. This worship known as Girigobardhana Puja is performed by a Brahmin priest after Sun set only. There is another Aswattha (ficus religiosa) tree in the village, which is regarded as the abode of a spirit. Whenever any villager feels that his/her suffering is due to the wrath of the spirit residing in that tree, he/she tries to propitiate it by offering rice, sweet meats etc.

In case the deity, placed under a tree, is worshipped by devotees, even from outside the locality the chances of erecting a temple becomes fair. But the temple thus erected, does not result in uprooting the tree, rather the tree is preserved and worshipped with due awe and reverence. At places, a small temple gets erected, including a branch of the tree and at some others, the trees form the centre of the temple and there remains enough room for its growth. In the village Ogalapada about 21 Kms. from Bhubaneswar on the N.H. 5, there is the temple of Maa Bata Bhuashuni. This is a very small temple, the roof of which lies under
the branches of the tree. It is a mango tree, very huge in size. The temple is attached to the
trunk of the tree. In fact only a small part of the trunk is enclosed in the temple, the rest is left
as such, so as to enable the devotees to worship the tree. Inside the temple, image of the
goddess is placed and worshipped regularly by Brahman priest. Thus, temple cult seems to
have emerged out of tree cult. The fact that, the tree is not uprooted even after the
construction of the temple bears evidence to the fact that, the tree is the real abode or temple
of the goddesses/gods. Most of the Gramadevatis (village goddesses) are propitiated under
trees. These trees are regarded as sacred and divine.

Instances of trees in the status of temples can be traced also in the temple city
of Bhubaneswar. At a short distance from the capital hospital, the Vanadurga (Goddess)
temple is situated in Bhubaneswar. In the early sixties the construction of the temple was
started. Prior to that only a tree was worshipped by the nearby residents as the abode of
Vanadurga. It is an Amala (embelica nyrobalen) tree. Earlier, at the site, where the temple
stands at present, there was a grove of Amala trees. The nearby residents used to meet there
occasionally to perform melas (religious gatherings). But goddess Vanadurga was worshipped
in one particular tree on the road side. At that stage she was worshipped just like a
Gramadevati (village goddesses). No Brahman priest was appointed by the people. The
devotees themselves performed the worship either by putting stones or by placing earthen
horses under it. Later on when the construction of the Govt. Girls' High School started on
the site, adjacent to the grove, all the trees, were uprooted except the one which was
worshipped. A temple was constructed for the goddess, leaving sufficient space for the tree,
so that a pavement could be made around it, with the construction of the temple and its further
expansion, the sanctity of the tree in no way deteriorated. Its worship continued, rather it
became Sanskritized. Attempts were made to give it a human form by tying a piece of red
cloth around it and by hanging bangles on it etc. Early attempts at making non vegetarian
offering met with some obstacle or the other. "So it was accepted as the desire of the goddess
to take vegetarian offering only. Subsequently, the temple was extended to include the images
of Jagannatha and Shiva. To-day it is a big temple with the images of Jagannatha, Vanadurga
and Shiva and it is named after the original deity Vanadurga. The tree is also worshipped daily
by a Brahman priest along with the other images. The Brahman priest cleans the pavement
and lights incense sticks and devotees keep vows at the tree and after its fulfilment make
offerings to it. A face is hung from the trunk of the tree which was offered by a devotee after the fulfilment of his vow. The devotees who visit the temple worship the tree with the same devotion with which they worship the other images installed there.

The temple of Khanduali is situated in Saheed Nagar, Bhubaneswar. Goddess Khanduali, the main deity of the temple, is worshipped under a tree. Inside the main campus there is an erected temple for Mahadeva but the goddess is still worshipped under the tree. The tree is not huge in size, the statue of the goddess is a stone stump, believed to have emerged out of the earth itself. Hands and face made up of lac are added to it. A concrete platform is made around the tree and it is enclosed by a boundary with a gate, on both side of which two lions are seated. Thus, the tree itself is the temple of the goddess. Old residents of the place believe that, the tree had been worshipped there since a long time, when that entire place was a jungle. When nearby tribal people went out for hunting, they worshipped the goddess in the tree and on their return offered her the head of the hunted animal. Thus the goddess was in the status of a sylvan deity. Gradually, when the jungle was cleared the tribal hunters did not turn up, but other devotees continued to worship Her coming from even distance places. In course of time the goddess, became Sanskritized. At present a Brahman priest worships Her everyday as per the Vanadurga Mantra (hymn). Non vegetarian offering is not made to the deity as the temple of Mahadeva is there inside the premises. People keep vows at Her and celebrate the fulfilment as the blessings of the goddess. Her special worship is performed in the month of Chaitra (March-April). Thus even if it is a tree it is one of the numerous temples of Bhubaneswar.

The above mentioned trees refer to instances of temples of mother goddess only. This may raise a question whether trees have been regarded as temples of mother goddess only. It is true that the cult of mother goddess is primitive in origin and the trees were their earliest abodes. But they are not the only divinity to be sheltered under trees. In course of time, other sanskritized gods also accepted trees as their temples. Even at present such instances can be cited.

At about 10 Kms. from Berhampur in a village called Panchama, there is the temple Panchama Ganesha, where the image of Lord Ganesha is worshipped under an Asvatha (ficus religiosa) tree symbolically. Its age cannot be accurately ascertained. But there is a legend which associates this tree with Gajapati Purushottama Deba's Kanchi Kaveri
expedition. According to Subramanyam's account the Kanchi Kaveri expedition of Purushottama Deba took place in 1476 A.D. So it can be presumed that the god has been worshipped there for more than five hundred years. As per the legend, king Purushottama Deba, on his march towards Kanchi, in his second expedition had taken rest near this village. In the night he was directed in a dream to worship the lord nearby, so as to ensure success in his mission. Accordingly, the king sent his men to trace out the deity nearby. The king's men located the image of Ganesh being placed under two trees, one Banyan (ficus bengalensis) and the other Aswattha (ficus religiosa), which had grown in close proximity. Purushottama Deba offered his prayers and set up a village there with five families. So the village came to be known as Panchama and the lord was named accordingly. In course of time, the population of the village increased and the deity also became popular. The association of Purushottama Deba with this deity seems justified in a sense that, lord Ganesha was the tutelary deity of the king of Kanchi. So in order to defeat him, Purushottama Deba, on his way to Kanchi, must have sought the blessing of Panchama Ganesha. The role of lord Ganesha has been depicted in a colourful way in oriya literature. In his Kanchi Kaveri expedition "Sri Purushottama Das, a depicts that, on the eve of the war against Purushottama Deba, the king of Kanchi had prayed his tutelary god Ganapati to ensure his victory. On the other hand, Purushottama Deba was helped by Lord Jagannatha and Balabhadra. When the king of Kanchi was about to be defeated, he prayed Lord Ganapati to help him. Accordingly, lord Ganapati arrived on the battle field, but could not fight against the two brothers Lord Jagannatha and Balabhadra, when He recognised the two brothers. He advised the king of Kanchi to surrender. At the end of the war Purushottama Deba brought the image of Ganapati (Ganesh) from Kanchi and installed it in the temple of Lord Jagannath at Puri.

In Orissa, instances of mother goddess being worshipped under trees are plenty, but the image of sanskritized god, being installed under a tree is rarely seen. So Panchama Ganesha does not seem to bear the tradition of Orissa, rather it may have been influenced by South Indian tradition which acknowledges the worship of Lord Ganesha under sacred trees. Sri Chandrasekhara Saraswati, Jagatguru Sankaracharya of Kanchi Pitha (Srimandira,1985) mentions that it is a special feature of Tamilnadu to build numerous shrines for Lord Binayaka (Ganesha). But in all cases temples are not erected, rather, they are installed in open places like trees, road sides, river banks etc. These images are very popular. In case of Panchama Ganesha, this tradition is followed so ardently that in spite of the lapse of
hundreds of years, it is still worshipped in the tree only. At present the land enclosed by the
compound wall is quite big, where a separate temple could have been constructed, but, only
to keep up the sanctity of the tree, a small temple with a low roof has been constructed under
the tree. There is space to circumambulate the tree. The tree is also worshipped along with the
lord. The priests are "Raula" (florist) by caste. At present there are ten priests, who are ten
brothers. Thousand of devotees from even distant places visit the temple and keep their vows.
As the deity fulfils the vows of devotees, He is also known as Siddha Binayaka. Ganesha
Chaturthi (fourth day of the bright half of the month of Bhadraba (August-September) ) is the
greatest festival of the lord.

There is a legend, associating the construction of Lingaraj temple of
Bhubaneswar to the existence of a divine tree. The Kapila Samhita states that, previously,
there existed on this spot, where the Lingaraj temple stands to-day, a mango tree of
great-merit. As there was only one mango tree, the place was known as grove of one mango
tree or Ekamra Vana. It was a lofty tree decked with magnificent branches and gem like
leaves and bearing fruit, which bestowed the fourfold blessings of virtue, wealth, desirable
objects and salvation upon its devotees. In the Treta Yuga or second age, Siva wished to retire
from his over crowded abode at Benaras. So he sought the advice of Narada, at whose
suggestion, he took up this quiet secluded place of Ekamra Vana, for his abode (Mitra,
1963).

There are certain legendary trees in Orissa, which are sacred as abodes of
Sanskritized gods. These trees are associated with elite cult of Hinduism. The Bakula tree of
the Siddha Bakula monastery at Puri and the Kalpabata in the premises of the Jagannatha
temple, Puri are two such instances.

The monastery of Siddha Bakula (mimuspos elengi) is situated at Balisahi, near
the monastery of Radhakanta at a short distance from the Jagannatha temple, Puri. This
monastery is named after a Bakula tree, which bears usual sanctity and divinity. In the legend
mentioned on the walls of the monastery, this tree has been described to have come into
existence in a miraculous way, its survival for more than five hundred years seems to support
its miraculous birth. It was associated with the life of a great Vaishnavite named Sri Haridasa
Thakur who has been described in the Prema Bilasa and Chaitanya Bhagabata as a supreme
follower of Sri Chaitanya. The Prema Bilasa (quoted in Sri Adwitaprabhu O Namacharya Haridasa Thakur Mahima by Rabin Raha) mentions about the birth of Sri Haridasa Thakur that "Budhane haila janma brahmaner banse, yabanatwa prapti tar, jabananna doshe. Saisabe tahar mata pitar mrityu haila, yaban asiya tare nija grihe nila. Ambuar adhikari malay Kaji nam, tahar palita huan tar anna khan".

Meaning : He was born in Budhana in a Brahman family and lost his parents in his infancy. He was brought up by a Muslim, Malay Kaji, so he became a "Yabana" i.e. non-Hindu.

Prema Bilasa further mentions that, Brahma the son of saint Ruchika and Prahallada, the son of Hiranyakasipu, together took their birth in the person of Sri Haridasa Thakur. Being the incarnation of two sacred souls, Haridasa lived a life completely dedicated to Lord Krishna. He left the house of the Yabana, where he had taken shelter, at the age of five and moved from place to place giving vent to his divine discourses. He had to face many obstacles, which he overcame by virtue of his divine power. Prema Bilasa also mentions that Lord SriKrishna, himself, got incarnated as Lord Sri Chaitanya and Haridasa Thakur was born to chant his name through Kirtan (chorus religious songs). Lord Sri Chaitanya renounced his worldly life at the age of twentyfour, went to Puri and stayed at Sri Gaura Gambira (near the present monastery of Siddha Bakula). Many of his devotees came to Puri and stayed at many places, but Haridasa was very conscious of his low origin and did not want to stay at any crowded place. Because he was afraid that, his touch might impair the status of the devotees, visiting the Jagannatha temple. He preferred to stay in a secluded place (the present site of the monastery). Here he used to take the name of the Lord, and was satisfied to see the Nilachakra (wheel on the crown of the Jagannath Temple) everyday. After visiting Sri Jagannatha, Sri Chaitanya used to visit Sri Haridasa Thakur daily. But he felt remorse to see the plight of his devotee exposed directly to the changes of weather. Every day the deities of the Jagannatha temple have their teeth cleaned with "Kumbatua sticks" and then the sticks are given to the devotees. One day one of the sticks was lost, so the priest replaced it by a Bakula stick and cleaned the teeth of Lord Jagannath, after which it was given to Sri Chaitanya who was present there. Sri Chaitanya took the stick and planted at the place, where Sri Haridasa Thakur used to sit. This stick grew up into a huge and shady Bakula tree. In course of time,
this tree got associated with many divine acts. It is this tree, under whose shade Sri Haridasa Thakur chanted the name of the Lord three lakh times a day, throughout the rest of his life. Under this tree, Sri Rupagoswami, a devotee of Sri Chaitanya recited the dramas: 'Lalita Madhava' and 'Bidagdha Madhava' before the Lord and his followers. Sri Sanatana Goswami a devotee of Lord Sri Chaitanya was living at this place with Sri Haridasa, during his stay at Puri, when Sri Haridasa passed away, Sri Chaitanya carried his body and danced under this tree, chanting the Nama Kirtana. After the departure of Sri Haridasa his followers kept up the tradition of chanting Nama Kirtana under it. An incident occurred during the time of Goswami Sri Jagannath Dasa who was a disciple of Sri Haridasa, which further proved the divine existence of the tree. On the eve of the char festivals, for making wheels for the chariot, logs were necessary. So the then Gajapati King ordered his men to obtain the logs from the Bakula tree, whom the king's men approached, Sri Jaganntha Dasa became reluctant to allow them, but they insisted on obtaining the logs any how. So Jagannatha Dasa observed fast and prayed the tree the whole night to preserve itself. Next morning when the king's men came they found Jagannatha Dasa lying flat under the tree which had become quite hollow. Thereafter the king realised his mistake and prayed the tree to forgive him. As a result the tree again grew up and it continues to stand straight till to-day. Because of its miraculous birth and survival this tree is famous as the Siddha Bakula. In course of time the monastery grew up around the tree. Inside the campus, at present, there are the temples of Sri Nrusingha Deva and Sri Haridasa Bhajana Mandira. Inside the monastery the tree appears as a temple itself. The tree has been preserved by the State Govt. under the Orissa Monument protection Act.

Till to-day the tree stands as a witness to the divine tradition of "Nama Kirtana" (chanting of names). Everyday both in the morning and evening the Vaishnavites circumambulate the tree by singing the Nama Kirtana. Every day on the day of Pana Sankranti, the first day of Oriya New Year, (it is the first day of the Hindu solar month Baisakhi (April-May)), the birth day of the tree is celebrated because Sri Chaitanya had planted the tooth stick on this day. On this occasion, 108 pots of water is poured at its roots and large number of devotees assemble to offer their prayers. This tree is also believed to fulfil the vows of devotees. Devotees who want to keep a vow tie a "Dhil" (a small earthen cake, round in shape, on which the Nama is written) on its branch. A number of Dhils are seen hanging from the branches of the trees. When vow is fulfilled, the tree is worshipped with dry edible
offerings. Thus this tree is a *Kalpabrikshya* (wish fulfilling tree) whose divine existence bears testimony to the fact that the tree cult is still flourishing.

There are some legendary banyan (*ficus bengalanis*) trees in Orissa, which bear the status of a temple. At Lembala in Cuttack district, there is a huge banyan tree, under which the grave of Achyutananda Dasa (one of the Panchasakha) is situated. At Chhatia in Cuttack District, there is Chhatia Bata, the Ratna Bata is near Cuttack, the Udaya Bata is at Paradeep. The Gokarna Bata is there on the Gangi Hills in the village Sakhua Pada, near lalitgiri. But the most famous of all the Bata (Banyan) trees is the *Kalpabata* inside the premises of the Jagannatha temple at Puri. This tree is a legend by itself. Through out India, the instances of sacred trees, being worshipped inside the campus of temples are plenty. But, perhaps, none can resemble the *Kalpabata* of Puri. It is regarded not only as the abode of the Lord, but also, as the incarnation of the Lord himself. It stands as a temple within a temple. It is very difficult to trace out its origin. There are legends, supporting the antiquity of *Kalpabata*. It can be presumed that the *Kalpabata* was existing at the time of the great deluge. Because, the Brahma Purana in the twenty fourth chapter mentions that:

"Om namo byakta rupaya mahapralaya Karine
Mahadrasopabistaya nyagrodhaya namastute
Amaratwam sadakalpe Harichayatanu bata
Nyagrodhm harame papa Kalpabrikhya namastute."

Meaning : O, Kalpabrikhya, you were existing during the great deluge. I salute you. You Nyagrodha who gave shelter to Hari during the great deluge, remove my sins and accept my salutations".

Thus it is believed that, the *Kalpabata* had not sunk during the deluge, rather, it gave shelter to the Lord who was found flooding on the bata leaf as an infant. The Brahma Purana further mentions that:

"Praptaban tatpadam dibyam mahapralaya karanam
Purusheshmiti khyatam batarajam Sanatanam".

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Vyasadeva mentions in the Brahmapurana that the Kalpabrikhya had its origin from the body of Srikrishna. It is brightened with the brightness of Brahma. It is Vishnu incarnate. It is believed that Indra had taken away the Kalpabata of Shrikhetra (Puri), with the help of Airabata (the legendary elephant) and had planted it in the Heaven. It remained there for one Kalpa (age). In the Dwapara age, Lord Krishna brought it to Dwarika (His kingdom) and planted it there - when Lord Krishna passed away, the Pandavas brought the tree to Srikhetra and planted there. They took shelter under the shade of this tree in order to get relief from the sad demise of Srikrishna.

Das (1982) mentions that among the antiquities of the Nilachala the Kalpabata can be regarded as the oldest. Because, out of the other antiquities Nilamadhaba has disappeared, and the existence of Rohini Kunda cannot be clearly perceived. The writers in oriya literature, describe the Kalpabata, variously as Debanasana Bata, Akshaya Bata, Banchha Bata, Bansi Bata etc. and thereby attribute unchallenging sanctity to it.

Inside the premises of the temple of Lord Jagannath, at Puri the Kalpabata stands to the west of the seat of Satyanarayana. If it had been an ordinary Banyan tree, then, during the course of its unusually long life, a grove of Banyan trees would have grown there. Das (1982) mentions that, perhaps, the modified stem (Sid) of the tree are cut, in order to check its spread. But the priests of the temple refuse to accept this theory, as they have never witnessed the cutting of its branches. It has a huge structure; To the west of the Kalpabata, there is another banyan tree, which is its outgrowth. As the tree is regarded as Purushottama Himself, it is associated with some important rituals of Lord Jagannatha. On His return from the Car festival, when Lord Jagannatha enters the Kurmabedha, He is placed facing the Kalpabata, and the Pati Mahapatra facing towards south, worships the lord. Again, when the Lord crosses seven steps towards the Garuda Pillar, prayer is offered towards the south, which is known as Kalpabandapana. It is also known as Dakhinamukha bandapana.

Devotees look upon the Kalpabata as a wish fulfilling tree. So it is a tradition that, if one circumambulates the tree clockwise by keeping his wish in mind, then it gets fulfilled. Married women, who aspire for male child, keep their vow in the following manner.
Early in the morning, they take bath in the Markandeya pond and visit the temple in wet clothes. They see Lord Jagannath from the Garuda pillar express their vow and then walk upto Bata Mangala and Bata Ganesha and then sit under the Kalpabata, chanting mantras. At that time, they keep on stretching one end of the cloth, worn by them. So long as a fruit falls on it from the tree. If any fruit falls, they feel assured of the fulfilment of their vow.

The Kalpabata can be regarded as a temple within a temple, because, it shelters a number of small shrines under its thick and shady branches. The deities placed, in the small shrines are identified by it. These are Bata Krishna, Bata Jagannatha, Bata Ganesha, Bata Mangala, Bata Markandeya, Bateswara Mahadeva, Bata Balamukunda and Bata Narayana.

The temple of Bata Krishna is there just at the root of the Kalpabata. The image of the Lord, placed in it is one foot in height and it is in sleeping posture, with its head towards the south. It is placed on a very small platform of the shape of a Banyan (ficus bengalenis) leaf. This is, perhaps, to depict the legend that the Lord had taken shelter on the leaf of the kalpabata during the deluge.

The existence of the Kalpabata enhances the divinity of the Jagannath temple. One, who sits under its shade, get inspired of devotion to the Lord. Dash 91982) mentions that to the Vaishnavites, it is the Swargadwara (gate way to heaven) of the Brahmanda and to the Yogis (Sages), it is the scalp of the body. It is believed that, one who visits this tree, obtains the virtue of performing Rajasuya and Aswamedha sacrifice. This tree shows man the path towards salvation.