Sarala Dasa, composed the Mahabharata, the Chandipurana, the Vilanka Ramayan in the language of the people breaking the tradition of writing religious texts in Sanskrit. He was the pioneer to have deviated from the set pattern of writing puranas. Still more important was his version of the legendary origin of Jagannatha wherein he gave primacy to the Sabaras (hunters) or the non-Brahminic priests of the Lord. His radical attempt to shape the Oriya language and literature inspired the later generations. In the 16th century, five saint-poets, popularly known as the Panchasakhas, who came from obscure backgrounds followed the tradition created by Sarala Dasa and contributed to the growth and efflorescence of Oriya literature. They challenged the legitimacy of the prevailing social order and even suffered on that account at the hands of the dominant vested interests.

The Panchasakhas represented a movement of protest against all authoritarian interference and imposition. They could not accept everything as genuine and sincere that succeeded in securing the king's approval and patronage. They refused to be swayed by the stream of Gaudiya Vaishnavism even if such refusal lost them the protection of the
king and his courtiers. They had to face the authority's anger, many trials and much humiliations. Despite all obstacles on their path they raised their voice against caste hierarchy and discrimination against the Sudras, low status of women, against all exploitative institutions including the King's authority, Brahminical ritual and priest-hood and the sanctified hegemony of Sanskrit language. Their protest was also against all authoritarian Shastras and even against all authoritarian gurubada. They were well versed in Shastras and took great pains to translate important Shastras to bring their essential contents within the reach of the common men. They were themselves the gurus, but did not approve of the dogmatic pretensions of the gurus. They sang the glory of Lord Jagannatha and the great values. He symbolised, but they were all against any institution that tended to become static and insensitive.

The Panchasakhas ascertained the right and dignity of mankind. They struggled hard and endeavoured to establish

1. A.B. Mohanty (ed.), Madalapanji, Prachi, 1971, pp.54-55; also vide:

"Achyuta Ananta Gheni Jasobanta
Balarama Jaçannatha;
E panchasakhae nritya karigale
Gauranga Chandra Sangata".

Achyutananda Dasa, Sunya Sambita, Ch.1.
justice and equality in a caste-ridden medieval society. Four of these saint-poets were non-Brahmins and, of course, all of them identified themselves to be Sudras, the exploited class of society; they worked for their spiritual liberation. Their movement, however, should not be characterized as a non-Brahmin movement against the Brahmins as a class. But it was launched against Brahminism, a concept which signified claim of a privileged position by a narrow group based on prescriptive rights and upholding a society based on exploitation, domination and discrimination. It is also noteworthy that Jagannatha Dasa, the author of "Oriya Bhagabata" being a Brahmin joined this movement. The common tenor of their assertion was that one could be high or low according to his quality or merit, but never on the basis of birth or social origin.

BALARAMA DASA:

Of the Panchasakhas who flourished in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, the eldest and the most radical was Balarama Dasa. He was born in 1473 A.D., at Puri. It is said that his father Somanatha Mohapara was one of the ministers of the Gajapati kings and his mother was Manamaya.

2. C.R. Das, Achyutananda, Panchasakha Dharma, Visva Varati, Santiniketan, 1951, p.8
Gopinatha Mohapatra was a minister of Kapilendradev and according to Pundit Binayak Mishra, Gopinatha Mohapatra was an ancestor of Somanatha Mohapatra.\textsuperscript{3} On the other hand, according to Nagendranath Vasu, Somanatha was a minister of the Bauri (Untouchable) caste. The Bauris who are now living in Mayurbhanj district believe that their ancestors bearing the title of Mohapatra used to be ministers at the Gajapati courts. They were deprived of this position from the period of Pratapruaddev.\textsuperscript{4} This may be a personal reason which led to Balarama Dasa to go for Sanyas and raise voice against this discrimination.

However, poet Balarama Dasa lived in Puri and he had already completed his "Jagamohan Ramayan" in Oriya before the coming of Sri Chaitanya to Orissa. According to Jagamohan Ramayan that he was uneducated from his birth and he completed this epic at the age of thirty, (i.e. in 1503 A.D.).\textsuperscript{5} He himself also acknowledged in his Ramayan that he

\textsuperscript{3} B. Mishra, \textit{Prachina Utkal}, Orissa Sahitya Academy, Bhubaneswar.

\textsuperscript{4} N. Vasu, \textit{Archaeological Survey of Mayurbhanja}, Vol.1, Calcutta, 1911.

\textsuperscript{5} "Janamaru Murkha muje alapa bayasa, Grantha kala belaku bayasa tirisa." Ramayana (Uttara Khanda).
was born in a Sudra family at the command of God. Thus he sang,

"I Balarama Dasa was during the time of
the incarnation of Rama,
and I saw everything holding
a light in my hand.
My Lord instructed me to come to this world
and appear in this Kali era
as a saint of the Sudras." 6

From the Brahmanda Bhugol and the Vedantasara Gupta Gita of Balarama Dasa it is known that he was a contemporary of the king Prataprudrdev (1497-1540 A.D.). In the 17th anka (i.e. 1509-10 A.D.) of Gajapati Prataprudrdev, it is mentioned that, Vedantasara Gupta Gita was written by Balarama Dasa. Thus he writes,

"There is a king Gajapati Prataprudra
in the line of Solar dynasty

6. "Muhin Balarama Dasa Ramayana abatare thili,
Dihudi dharina mun samasta dekhili.
Mote aj-na dele martya puraku jibu,
Kalijuge Sudramuni hoina janamibu."
- Ramayana (Lanka Khanda).
during his seventeenth regnal year,

in the lunar fortnight of the month of Makar." 7

He championed the cause of the Sudras at the Muktimandap, challenged the orthodox Brahminns and proved that the Sudras were in no way inferior to them in jnan or knowledge.

Once there was a debate in Muktimandap between Balabhadra Rajguru and Purandar on a metaphysical problem. The debate became fierce and nobody could give a proper answer. Balarama Dasa who was present there, dressed as a Brahmin, stood up and solved the issue. But his real identity was soon revealed and he was taken to task by the Pundits for participation in the debate. The Brahmins rebuked him in harsh language and said that he, being a Sudra, had no right to listen to and participate in Vedanta discussion. The writings of Balarama Dasa clearly reflect on discrimination of Sudras by the Brahmins and their deprivation of knowledge in the 16th century Orissa. Thus he writes in his Vedantasara Gupta Gita,

"The Brahmins disputed after

listening to my answer,


Prataprudra je nrupati
Tahar saptadasa anke,
Makara mase sukla pakshe."

- Vedantasara Gupta Gita.
rebuked me in harsh language
that you are son of a Sudra,
And speaking of Vedanta?
You are useless, the lowly man
And speaking of Vedanta?" ⑧

The king imprisoned Balarama Dasa following the appeal of the priests. But he finally passed the test by performing a miracle. Next morning he put his hands on the head of Haridasa, an illiterate 'dumb' who with his blessings recited the Vedanta instantly to the great astonishment of the king and the priests. ⑨ Balarama Dasa was then freed. The incident suggests the extent to which Balarama Dasa had worked to spread education among the masses. A result of his contribution in this respect was that Haridasa who was taken by the Brahmins and the ruling elite virtually as a dumb could now discuss the high Vedanta philosophy.

Balarama Dasa's keenness to make the knowledge accessible to all is further illustrated from another incident.

⑧ "Ta suni bipre kale kali,
bahuta dele mote gali
Tu Somanatha Sudra Suta,
Tu kahu Vedanta Charita?
Tu chhara mudha, hina jana,
Tu kahu Vedanta Vidhana."
- Vedantasara Gupta Gita of Balarama Dasa.

⑨ Ibid., p.12.
Once he tried to listen to the Brahavidya discussion by the pundits in the premises of the Jagannatha temple. He was caught and again rebuked by the orthodox Brahmins. They said he being a Sudramuni (saint of the Sudra community) had no right to listen to Brahavidya. They also referred to him as a dog which had ventured to eat fine rice. Balarama Dasa has described this sorrowful incident in his Gita Abakasha. Thus he wrote,

"Seeing me the Brahmins rebuked
and told me, "you lowly man"
listened to the knowledge of the 'Brahman'?
What the God told earlier to Aditya
that you listened to
being a saint of Sudras?
That you ate the fine fried rice
'being a dog?
Catch hold of him,
We will inform to the king." 10

Balarama was taken to the king and the latter also

10. "Brahman mane dekhina kaleka katala,
Boile Brahavidya sunilu tu chhara.
Bhagabana jaha purbe Adityanu kohi,
Se Gita sunilu tu Sudramuni hoi.
Swana hoi charu anna bhunjilu pamara,
Thakuranku janaibe bege yaku dhara."

Balarama Dasa, Gita Avakasha.
reprimanded him by sayings that it was not within his rights to have entered into the assembly of scholars. Balarama, however, was undeterred. In a bold and open challenging tone he declared before the king that "all have the right to acquire knowledge and that only the Brahmins cannot monopolise it." That was taken as an act of insubordination and was too much to be tolerated by the king. Balarama was again thrown into prison and it was ordered that to prove his claim, he should now make an untouchable to recite the sacred Gita. Balarama spent the night alone praying to Lord Jagannatha so that he may get out of the sad situation. In the morning when the king was in the temple to have the test played through, Balarama submitted before him that as no Untouchable would be allowed to enter into the temple, he was ready to recite the Gita in the form of Oriya Chhandas as he had composed them the night before. He did as he said and surprised the whole assembly including the king. The poet established that, with the grace of God, any ignoramus was competent enough to speak and express what the right knowledge of God really was. The incident indicates simultaneous smashing of two myths. One, that only Brahmins were able to interpret the scriptures and the second, that the

11. "Brahmana Manankara Vidya ehi eka je nuhain; Bhagataku agcchar aba achhi kahir."

Ibid.
scriptures could be only in the Sanskrit language. Projecting himself as an untouchable he interpreted the Gita, and at the same time, he rendered the holy scripture into the language of the people. The king and pundits were surprised and Balarama was freed.

The devotional and poetic part of Balarama's personality is best revealed in his book "Bhava-Samudra" (Sea of Emotion). Once there was a car festival in Puri and bhakta Balarama Dasa was madly rushing over to climb up the car and to have a *darshan* of Lord Jagannatha. But it was not simply that he was not allowed *darshan*; he was, instead, beaten and thrown off in the presence of the king and the vast crowd that had gathered for the festival. In desperation Balarama then retired to the solitudes of the Puri sea-beach and poured out his heart in shame, anger and defiance. He made three cars of sand at the sea-beach and worshipped them. On the other hand, to everyone's surprise, the three original cars of Lord Jagannatha, Lord Balabhadra, and Goddess Subhadra mysteriously stopped. Nobody could know the reason. The king Prataprudradev then saw in a dream that night that the God had shifted to the sand car of the bhakta Balarama Dasa, and that the original car would move only if the King invited to Balarama Dasa. Further, the Lord told the King, "I will go wherever my devotee does go and it will be ever
In his Bhava-Samudra, the poet's heart-deep love and unbound devotion to Lord Jagannatha is very much revealing. Thus he sang in his Bhava Samudra,

"My Lord, you drove me out of the Nandighosha car,
who will pull the ropes of your car?
My lord, you will make a move
taking me with you
or else, you will be there.
My Lord, I have held you up in my heart,
How could you make a move?
My Lord, you are the only shelter
of this slave Balarama." 13

But the sublime, all-forgiving, self-forgetting love

12. "Bhakta mora jiba jane,
Muhi nischay jibi tena."


13. "Hari ho, Nandighosha rathu delu ghaudi,
Ke otariba to ratha daudi.
Natha tu mote nele sina jibu,
nohile sehi thare rahi thibu.
Hari ho, dharichhi chitte tu jibu kemante?
Dasa Balarama bharasi tote."

Bhava Samudra, Canto.XII.
and devotion of a pious soul comes out at innumerable places like this:

"You made me a prisoner
at the hands of the king,
But I have made you prisoner,
in the secrecy of my heart
Tell me, my Lord, that you are my prisoner
And that gives me blessed happiness." 14

Desperately the poet has appealed to Lord Jagannatha and wants to know to whom should he tell of his worries if "He" will not look into it. In his same work Bhava-Samudra he says,

Oh Hari, I stayed at Kshetra (Puri) as your refugee,
I got the result of your shelter,
Oh Hari, you betrayed me,
Balia Dasa does not believe that you made me a prisoner at the hands of the king,
Oh Hari, I believed you so strongly,

14. "Hari ho, tu mote bandhailu rajara hate,
Mu tote bandhili mo mana gupte
Natha tu bandha helu tiki kaha,
ebe santosha hoila mo deha.
Hari ho, ehi debatanku mu seba kali,
Balia Dasa tote bandhaili."

Bhava Samudra, Canto.182.
And I got the punishment now
why did you do like this?
You did not tolerate me once
if I committed a mistake?"15

Besides his magnum opus Ramayana, Balarama Dasa has left behind a very large number of smaller works like Bhava-Samudra, Mriguni Stuti (the Hind's prayer) and the Luxmi Puran which are socially significant and noteworthy with many respects. Almost all of them are still popular, but the most universally read and enjoyed of his small pieces are the Mriguni Stuti and Luxmi Purana. The poet has tried to establish through the Mriguni Stuti that a devotee can save his life from danger if he could really pray to God with devotion. The deer's prayer propagates the bhakti and Vishnu cults through the sad predicament of a deer being

15. "Hari ho, tote asre kari kshetre rahili,
   Tote asre kari phala paili.
   Hari tu biswsa ghataka helu,
   Mote tu kshetraru chhadina delu.
   Hari ho, Nrupati hate bandhailu mote.
   Balia Dasa na jai parate."

Ibid., Canto:94.

"Hari ho, tote anta kari dharina thili,
   Ete dine ebe sasti paili
Hari tu ede karmma kimpa kalu,
   dosha mo thile bare na sahili.
Hari ho, kshama na karina ganjilu mote,
   Balarama Dasa kikala tote."

Ibid., Canto:95.
caught between a hunter in front and forest fire behind. She is saved from this situation through prayers to the Lord who sent clouds to quench the fire and a snake to bite the hunter.

Luxmi Purana is a unique literary product, propagating the superiority of the quiet and unostentatious life of a woman to the noisy activities of a man. Even today, after five centuries of its creation this book provides one of the finest, most highly edifying and intensely entertaining folk-plays in Orissa. Moreover, it is socially remarkable, and a crusade against untouchability and caste hierarchy. It preaches the triumph of love and devotion. The Purana describes the visit of Goddess Luxmi to the house of Sriya, a Chandal woman, who worships Her with bhakti and inner purity. Balarama Dasa has expressed humility of a devotee through Sriya. Thus he writes in his Luxmi Puran,

"I salute mother, thou art the wife of God Vishnu,
I am a lowly woman of lower caste,
do not know how to worship,
And I stay in the slum of Chandals,
Kindly accept my devoted prayer,
The chief queen of Vishnu was moving on the road,
She could not tolerate the humility
of Sriya and appeared in front of her."16

This poet has tried to bring out social reform through Goddess Luxmi, who is the most popular deity in the agrarian society of Orissa. Thus he begins his story. Goddess Luxmi visited the house of her devotees irrespective of their castes and granted them boon for their prosperity. But it was not tolerated by Lord Jagannatha and Baladeva, who were the upholders of the caste hierarchy. Consequently Lord Jagannatha divorced Goddess Luxmi at the instance of Lord Baladeva, and she lived alone at the sea-beach of Puri.

Lord Jagannatha and Baladeva became pauper at the departure of Luxmi, the Goddess of wealth. They did not get alms, although they wandered from door to door with begging bowl. They spent days after days without food and in the end they unknowingly reached the house of Goddess Luxmi and asked for some food. Goddess Luxmi came to know this and she sent a message through her maid that it was the house of a Chandal woman and food will be served if they were ready to accept. Lord Jagannatha and Baladeva gave their consent to take food

16. "Namaste namaste mata Harira gharanJ.·
Muhin chhara hina jati na janai puni.
Chandai sahire ghora puni Chandaluni,
Kinehita bhakati mora gha na kamalini.
Dande dande jaathile Vishnu patarani,
Sahi na parile Chandalumira daini."

Balarama Dasa, Luxmi Puran, p.7.
from this Chandal house. Thereupon food was immediately served. Lord Jagannatha, however, could guess from the taste of the food that it was cooked by Goddess Luxmi and everything was disclosed very soon. Lord Jagannatha and Baladeva requested Goddess Luxmi to forget all things of past and to come back to the temple. Goddess Luxmi agreed to come to the temple if her principles of social equality were to be accepted by Lord Jagannatha and Baladeva. Goddess Luxmi wanted that the people of all denominations, from Chandal to Brahmin, had to take food together in the premises of temple. Even the Brahmans would snatch away food from the hands of Hadi (Untouchables) and they would wrap unwashed hands on the heads of each other. Lord Jagannatha and Baladeva accepted the ideology of Goddess Luxmi and permitted Her to visit the houses of her devotees, Chandal or Brahmin. In the end, victory came to the Untouchables and the women class through Luxmi. Poet Balarama Dasa endeavoured to reconstruct society with the principles of "equality" not only between man and man but also between man and woman and symbolised women as the corner-stone of social
denominations.

17. "Chandalu Brahmana jae khia khoi hebe, Samaste khaina hasta jale na dhoibe, Hadi hastaru brahman chhadai khaibe, Khai sari se hastaku munde pochhuthibe, Heu heu boli ajna dele Mahabahu, Juge juge Luxmi ago tumbha jasa rahu."

change what he really wanted to preach through Goddess Luxmi. Installing dignity to womanhood and simultaneously fighting against caste, untouchability and the custom of divorce and bringing a reform was the aim behind the story.

REFORM THROUGH RAMAYANA:

The "Jagamohan Ramayana" of Balarama Dasa is one of the three most important epics in Orissa the other two being Sarala's Mahabharata and Jagannatha Das's Bhaqavata. What makes it unique is its portrayal of character, making the heroes and heroines of the epic much more human and natural. Above all it is purely Oriya composition. Though Jagamohan Ramayan is the title in the colophon, the work subsequently acquired the name Dandi Ramayana, as it became a popular work and the contents were being recited or sung by the danda or road-side (i.e. before the crowded public). Sanskrit Ramayana was read out by the Pundits in a high mandap (altar) of the temple or of a village where the king, zamindars, and Brahmins of high class came to listen to the sacred text. When poet Balarama Dasa wrote the Ramayana in Oriya and as it became popular and began to be sung and recited outside the humble house in the danda (common street between two rows of houses) the high priests of Sanskrit and opponents of the literature ridiculed it as Dandi Ramayana. Balarama Dasa's contribution to the regional patriotic
feelings of the Oriyas has been truly assessed by B.C. Mazumdar, the editor-compiler of the "Typical Selection from Oriya Literature" (Calcutta University, 1921). In his notes,

"Balarama Dasa, as a national poet, has sung for the people and by making Orissa a miniature world by itself has taught his countrymen to love the land of their birth; the kailasa of the far north has been located in Orissa and the Kapilasa hill of Dhenkanal has been made the Kailasa mountain; even the hilly tracts of Orissa have been made to bear the foot-prints of Rama and the forest tribes of the country have been arrayed as the camp-followers of Rama; in the Kishkindhya Kanda, for instance, the rude tribes of Bamra and Bonai states have been mentioned among the soldiers recruited by Rama."18

Balarama Dasa condemned the priests responsible for degrading religion to mere means of making a livelihood. In his Ramayana he exposed the greedy and exploitative attitude of the priests. When Rama, Laxman and Sita had been to Gaya to offer Pinda, the priests also did not spare them from collecting dakshina.19 Sugriva, Hanuman and Bibhishan were the ideals of the poet because of their honesty, sincerity and helpful attitude. When the city of Ayodhya was reconstructed, Rama himself invited these three persons to

19. M. Mansingh, History of Oriya Literature, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 1963, p.95
the ceremony celebrating the inauguration of the city. The poet said through Rama that the persons who help selflessly at the time of danger, their foot-prints are more important than the greatest religious activity like Yajna.\textsuperscript{20} The poet did not surrender to the views of superiority of Brahmins, on the basis of merely their birth in the Brahmin families, and if they were ignorant of true dharma, i.e. social equality. He believed only those were the real Brahmins who knew Vedas, religion, and were engaged in right deeds and recognised the self of others. Those who lived only in the shrines and exploited people in the name of religion were not, according to Balarama, the true Brahmins.\textsuperscript{21}

The poet did not find any distinction between a Brahmin and a Chandal and to him all were human-beings of the same blood and flesh. To prove this he went on describing the close friendship between Purushottam Rama and Guhaka, a tribal chief of the forest. Both of them were so close that Rama delivered the message of killing Ravana first to Guhaka. Secondly, the poet also made Rama to eat the berries already tested by a Sabari (hunter woman) while he was in exile in the forest.\textsuperscript{22}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p.54.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p.55.
\end{flushright}
The poet's description of the incident of the meditation of the Sudramuni Sambuka in his Ramayana symbolises his deep concern to the development of status of the Sudras. To him, Sambuka, attained nirvan, being killed by Rama, on the day of Sukla Panchami of the month of Bhadraw. This day has been regarded as the Rishi-Panchami and according to a popular belief, who worship the Sudra saints on this day get fortune and prosperity. It is not only a sympathetic consideration of the poet towards the Sudra community but also his insistence towards building an egalitarian social order.

Balarama Dasa protested against the tradition of begging mercy and sympathy of the king. To him, ideal of the people or the subjects is not to beg before the king, rather they should beg before the God. His message to his audience was for assertion of their right before the king, not to seek his mercy. In a measure thus he upheld a revolutionary idea of bringing out equality between the king and the people of his kingdom. As a social reformer he condemned the oppressive features of Brahminical religion and was critical of the classes who exploited the people subsisted on their toil without giving them anything in return. The

24. Ibid., p. 58.
class of Brahmin Pundits, well-versed in Puranas, dharmasastras, smrutis and unsympathetic towards social problems was one of these classes. Besides there was another class of fraud sanyasis who only grew beard, weared beads, used tilak on forehead, ashes on body and remained social parasites.25

In his Ramayana, Balarama Dasa preached that there was no difference between the rich and poor, strong and weak, ignorant and knowledgeable in the eyes of Lord Jagannatha. The Lord treats equally everybody, be he a Brahmin or from an ordinary insect.26

When Balarama repeatedly asserted that he was "son of Lord Jagannatha", it was not that he told about himself. He identified himself with the entire humanity and meant that the whole mankind irrespective of caste, creed and colour were the children of Lord Jagannatha. To him, an ordinary man lost his caste when he became a bhakta. All bhaktas identified themselves as Dasas or servants to God. In "Bhava Samudra" he described that a person of higher varna could not ordinarily be compared with a Chandal if the

25. Ibid., pp.60-61.

26. "Tu se Narayana sarana rakhanta, 
    Kitu brahma sabu hin ekai dekhanta.
    Dhani nirdhani abala bala nahin,
    Tohara age swami japa mantra kahin."

Ramayana.
latter worshipped Vishnu. Balarama also attacked rituals. He did not believe in fast or meditation. He also did not worship any God other than Lord Jagannatha, who symbolised the monotheistic ideals of his religious life. Thus he sang in his Bhava Samudra,

That neither I did fast
    nor I did meditate,
Neither I worshipped the idols
    nor the image of any deity,
My Lord, I have no existence without you
    then whom should I tell my worries." 28

He was a believer in jnan and bhakti. The philosophy of knowledge-cum-devotion was the weapon wielded by him to influence both the masses and the high classes. At the same time, Jagannatha Dasa emerged and also made most significant contribution to the growth of Oriya literature.

27. "Jaha tahin Sri Basudevara Katha nahin
Brahmana hoile hen tahaku puja kahin.
Chandal hoina jebe Vishnu puja kari,
Kehuni hi jati taku nuihai na sari.
Vishnu bhakti lokara jatire kisa karya,
Jati bolibaku taku bada laja."
Bhava Samudra.

28. "Na kali brata mun na kali tapa,
Na sebili au Debata rupa.
Natha mun toha binu ane nahin,
Kahaku bedana kahibi jain."
Bhava Samudra.
JAGANNATHA DASA:

Jagannatha Dasa, the second of the celebrated Panchasakhas, is popularly remembered for his unique contribution to the Oriya literature through his Bhagavata. The "Oriya Bhagavata" like Balarama's creations helped in breaking down the pride and traditional outlook of the orthodox Brahmin Pundits. Jagannatha Dasa himself was a Brahmin and an erudite scholar in Sanskrit. He was many years junior to Balarama Dasa and almost of the same age as Chaitanya himself. He had already completed his Oriya Bhagavata before the coming of Chaitanya to Orissa in 1510 A.D. Chaitanya first met him under the so-called Kalpa-bata (eternal banyan tree) within the precincts of Jagannatha temple, reciting there his recently composed Bhagavata to illiterate folk from the rural areas. Chaitanya, like a common folk, was charmed to listen to the episodes of Krishna's life described in such soft, sonorous, rhythmic and melifluous couplets. These are outstanding characteristics of Jagannatha's popular Oriya Bhagavata. The saint intuitively saw in the poet a spiritual kinship that developed into warm, lifelong friendship between them. He was deeply impressed by the work of Jagannatha Dasa and his intellectual discourses on metaphysical matters. Therefore, Sri Chaitanya called
him "atibadi" or the "Very Great". Chaitanya was very calm and replied, "The sand, stone, wood and trees of this land are equal to Gods. Comparatively the dignity of man is so high that it is beyond imagination and therefore it is correct to address Jagannatha Dasa "atibada". He further advised, "Be small like grasses and tolerate all like trees. Be pleased in respect and don't be sorry at disregard. Then you will be a pure Vaishnav. And remember, the devotion is destroyed in discrimination."30

"Atibadi" Jagannatha Dasa was born in 1487 A.D. at Kapileswarpur Sasana, Puri during the reign of the Gajapati Kapilendra-dev. His father was Bhagawan Dasa a "Purana

29. "Sri Atibada Swaminkara; Kirti badhila desantara Sarbe janile tanka katha; Prema bhaktire samaratha. Sri Chaitana ajna dele; Raja 'atibada' boile. Atibada bolina bani; Rajye samaste Mukhe bhani."

Dibakara Dasa; Jagannatha Charitamruta, Ch.XIII.

30. "Truna prayeka nicha heba, Taru praya sarba sahiba, Manyare ananda hoiba, Amanye dukha na kariba Tebe Vaishnava siddhi hoi Bhedare bhakti nasha jai."

Jagannatha Charitamrita, p.42.
Panda" by profession and his mother was Padmavati. Padma-
vati was a pious lady with deep religious instinct and it is
said that because of her keen interest in listening to
glories of Krishna that Jagannatha Dasa made up his mind to
render the Sanskrit Bhagavata into Oriya. She could not
understand the Sanskrit Bhagavata. So the noble son, to
fulfill his mother’s pious desire, started writing the Oriya
Bhagavata chapter by chapter, which grew into a scriptural
composition in course of time. Jagannatha Dasa had acquired
enough knowledge in his early age in philosophy, Vedas,
Vedantas, and in Oriya and Sanskrit literatures. According
to Dibakara Dasa, the author of the Jagannatha Charitamrita
(17th century) Jagannatha Dasa composed Oriya Bhagavata at
the age of eighteen only, which was outstanding and most
loved by all.

'Balarama Dasa had already established himself as a
revolutionary poet, a bhakta and a sadhaka as well. He had

31. "Nama Kapileswarapura, Sasane madhey tanka ghara
Puranapanda Bhagawana, Swapatni Padmavati nama.
Bhadra je Suklastami dina; madhyahna Kale hele janma
Pita atyanta harashare; Janama legna sthira kale.
Pandita jane kari mata; Nama deleka Jagannatha."

32. "E mana sadhile bisesha; hollia astadasha barsha
Bata Ganeshanka agrata; Rachile bhasha Bhaçavata."
Ibid., p.13.
already maintained a distinct character of Utkaliya school of Vaishnavism, quite different from the Gaudiya school. When the Gaudiya Vaishnavas took exception to the fact of Jagannatha not being technically a Vaishnava the latter wanted to be initiated into it, even though Chaitanya had argued with his followers that a person like Jagannatha Dasa was in spirit a true Vaishnav whether technically he had embraced it or not. However, poet Jagannatha Dasa was initiated into Utkaliya school of Vaishnavism, by Balarama Dasa at the instance of Chaitanya himself. The very act of initiation of Jagannatha Dasa by Balarama Dasa, who was considered to be a Sudramuni by the Brahmins, was certainly a revolutionary step, taken by Chaitanya and Jagannatha Dasa as well. It shows their egalitarian attitude and perception of social equality. Poet Jagannatha did not give importance to Varna in the worship of Radha and Krishna. To him, any person irrespective of his or her caste or sex, Brahmin, Sudra or a woman, could be taken as a guru, if he/she worshiped Radha and Krishna with twelve lettered mantras.

33. "Emanta kahi Sri Chaitanya; Se Balaramanku raina. Ajna deleka hoi harsha; Dasanku dia upadesha. Chaitanya sakshya kari tahin; Guru santosha bhava bahi, Sri Matta Balarama Dasa; Diksha bihileka bisheshe." 
Ibid., Ch.II, p.31.

34. "Warnare nahin kichhi karya, Brahmana, Sudra, Stiriheja Radha Krishna prema rase, Dwadasakshar mantra ghose, Se diksha debare garistha, guru Vaishnav gane srestha." 
Ibid., Ch.II, p.21.
Jagannatha Dasa was a great believer in bhakti and he particularly emphasised a harmonious and balanced relationship among jnan, bhakti and yoga. Jagannatha's immense popularity among the masses cannot ordinarily be estimated. His Oriya rendering of the original Sanskrit Bhagavata recited in his own sweet voice had incomparable impact on the people. In fact this was an event of great significant in the history and development of Oriya literature. The prakrit language got a great thrust and dynamism from such renderings of a major work of Sanskrit. With this came a mass upsurge for regional literature, along with Jagannatha's growing eminence as a poet, scholar and thinker. There were naturally some envious people who tried to run down his achievements and even point him as a man of low morals. He had created enemies among the Puranapandas by his recitations as they had lost the dakshina which they used to receive from the devotee-listeners. As for himself, even though hundred gathered at his recitations of the Oriya Bhagavata, he never even asked for a penny. There were others too who considered his prakrit rendering of Bhagavata, a great source material of classical Sanskrit learning, as an assault on that tradition and an affront to scholarship. Needless to mention Sanskrit Pundits had rather a poor opinion of regional literatures and languages. Sarala Dasa and Balarama Dasa, the authors of Oriya Mahabharata and
Ramayana, had encountered such wrath from the classicists. Jagannatha Dasa, however, became the focal point of envy, resentment and anger due to the added reason of the envy of the followers of Chaitanya. There are legends which describe how even king Prataprudrdev was misled into believing in some of these rumours circulated by his envious enemies concerning his morals. The Pundits, however, were deadly jealous of Jagannatha and lodged a complaint against him on a charge of abducting women. The Pundits alleged that Jagannatha Dasa was a magician and by virtue of his mantras he was attracting a large number of women than men. The time would come when all women would be running after him leaving their own husbands.35 This complaint against Jagannatha Dasa led to his imprisonment by King Prataprudrdev. It is a fact that a large number of his women devotees caused trouble for him. Finally he was released when he proved that he had half the body of a woman. Jagannatha made it possible through the Yogic practice of Kaya-sadhana,

35. "Enutì na parìle sahì, Se rajya Raja age kahi.
Bolanti suna nrupa rana; To punya kshetrara bidhan.
Brahmana jagannatha Dasa; Aneka Stiri kala nasa.
Chhapa tilaka mala dhari; kapate hoi brahmachari.
kakhare pustaka gotie; Dhari bulai sarba thae.
Jena dekhai nari brunda; Ke kahu tahara ananda.
Tahir basina kare gita; halai munda tara hasta.
Artha kahai nana mate; Stirinki mohiba nimante.
Taha sunanti jete nari; Na pai ta tharu uburi.
Taku Karanti jete Seva; Patinki na karibe abā."

Jagannatha Charitamrita, p.113.
which was also another characteristics of the Panchasakhas.

Jagannatha Charitamrita of Dibakara Das (17th century) and Dardhyata Bhaktirasamrita of Rama Dasa (17th century) give varying versions of these legends. Some of these also attribute extrasensory and almost super-natural, spiritual powers to Jagannatha. Once an affluent merchant from Kasi presented a piece of very valuable sandalwood to King Pratap-prudradev who in turn handed it over to Jagannatha to prepare paste and anoint Lord Jagannatha. Jagannatha made the paste but applied it to the walls of his own monastery. When news of this reached the king he was naturally furious and wanted an explanation for this preposterous behaviour. Jagannatha’s cool reply was that he had applied sandal paste on the Lord with perfect devotion. At this the king wanted the sevaka to verify and report to him. And to their utter dismay and surprise they found that the Lord had actually been anointed with this special aromatic sandal paste. At this the king realised his own mistake and the greatness of poet Jagannatha and he promptly apologised to him.

Jagannatha Dasa did not travel to various places of pilgrimage in India like other religious personalities and saints. He considered it adequate to stay at Srikshetra all his life. And instead of putting over-riding emphasis on knowledge or ritual observations he put a high premium on right-living, right action, simplicity of life-style and on
devotion or bhakti. Sadhana remained important but not merely as a system of formulae, incantations, or celebrations. It was transmuted into quieter channels of submission to the divine and the path of right-living.

From several episodes in the Oriya Bhagavata one can get vivid and realistic pictures of contemporaneous Oriya society, its value-systems, organisational structure, its royal courts and their splendour, social mores and taboos, hopes and aspirations, religious faith, and ethical attitudes. It is eminently clear from the Oriya Bhagavata that to its poet Krishna was only another name for Lord Jagannatha, and SriKshetra, the seat of the Lord of the Universe, was the focal point of Orissa's social life and culture. It is the Jagannatha consciousness that fully permeates the Oriya Bhagavata. In fact, the religion of the Bhagavata is the religion of Jagannatha, unique for its cultural synthesis, universal brotherhood, assertion of the uniqueness of man in the entire creation and the equality of all before the Lord.36

Jagannatha Dasa composed a new poetic language which

36. "Sakala dehe Narayana; Basanti anadi karna.
Sakala dehe Narahari; Basanti atmarupa dhari."

Bhagavata.
was balanced, elastic, effective and creative. Its general aroma of sanctity, its soft fluency, its quiet dignity and the sublime air of high moral and spiritual life it breathes, go straight into the hearts of hearers and readers. He thus sang his Bhagavata in his mellifluous voice:

Born on this earth
even the Gods die.
In every thing embodied Narayana resides
as the cause without beginning.
In all embodied beings
Narahari inheres as the atman.
The fire consumes every thing
Unconcerned with the good and the bad.
Wealth acquired is for religious deeds,
and through that you attain to the Lord.
With humble words like nectar.
You should please men's minds.
This human body is a rare gift
meant only to aspire for salvation.
Wherever a crowd gathers,
there is bound to be a quarrel.
In food there should be no choosiness
Whatever, wherever is available.
With the soul's well being everything is achieved,
and you cross the ocean of Samsar.
The savings acquired through pain
are of no avail for happiness.

*Karma is your own guru*

What else do you enquire O Uddhava?

What can the powerful do to one
Whom the Lord protects.
The mind is the giver of pleasure and pain
the author of sin and guilt.

He who has the power to punish
also sometimes forgives.

All the places of pilgrimage are at your feet.

Why then should I go to Badrika?

The good and bad of a Being

You know only at the time of death.

Son and off-springs, wives and servants
they are only flashes of lightening.

God is the eternal, the one without blemish

He is above attributes, the true and the eternal.
The sky totally vacant,
be detached like it.

In whom desirelessness is born
he saves his own soul.

Ever engrossed in material pursuits
they don't notice the erosion of life.
The soul, like the sky
extends everywhere without bonds;
dwells within the body
and yet remains fully detached
like the sky reflected in a jar of water.
See all these rivers, rivulets
they flow on and join the sea.
Mingling with saline water
they forget their name and identity.
Likewise the Cowherd maidens
have merged their life and mind in me.
They forget the body, the Samsar
and were delivered over
from birth and death."37

Poet Jagannatha not only rendered emphasis on spiritual
liberation of man irrespective of caste, he also contributed
to the cultural and spiritual upliftment of the women, by
accepting them as disciples.38 The poet also looked upon

37. Translated by Sitakanta Mohapatra, Jagannatha Dasa,
Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 1982, pp.37-59.

38. "Uttamapure jete Nari; Dasanku anile hakari.
Basanti mandala akare; Dasanku basai Madhyare.
Suni pabitra heu ambhe; Bahana kaha kina Tumbhe
Ta suni jagannatha Dasa; Gayana karanti abhyasa.
Srikrushna Gopinkara bhava; Je Brahma Sivanku durlava
Pada padake sudha jhare; Asesha janma papa hare.
Taha sunina Naribrunda; Labhanti param ananda.
Taha dekhina khala jane, Sahi na paru thanti mane."

Jagannatha Charitamrita, p.112.
Buddha as another incarnation of Lord Jagannatha. In Orissa Krishna was also worshiped as Madhava and Gopinatha. In Jagannatha Dasa's Bhagavata these two names are also used very frequently.

Apart from Chaitanya, Jagannatha had close relations with Balarama, Achyuta, Jasovanta and Sishu Ananta, all of whom contributed to the growth of Oriya literature, religion and philosophy. They had their disciples and followers. Sishu Ananta mentions that Jagannatha had around three thousand and six hundred Sishyas of whom twelve were quite prominent. Quite a few of these also became important figures in Oriya literature in their own rights. Dibakara Dasa, the biographer of Jagannatha Dasa was one of his prominent disciples. Jagannatha breathed his last in the sixteenth year of life. The day is said to be the 7th day in the bright fortnight of the month of Magha in 1550 A.D. Thus ended a life of dedication that had ushered in significant religious, literary and linguistic transformations in Orissa.

POPULARITY OF BHAGAVATA:

It is reasonably certain that Jagannatha Dasa's translation of the great classic into Oriya was one of the earliest translations in a regional language. Jagannatha was
born in 1487 A.D. and according to Jagannatha Charitamrita of Dibakara Dasa (17th century) he composed Oriya Bhagavata at the age of eighteen only. Upon this calculation we may ascertain that he composed Oriya Bhagavata in 1504 or 1505 A.D. The Bengali translation of Sanatana Goswami is believed to be in the 17th century and the translation of the tenth skandha by Suradas and incorporated in his Sursagar is also around the middle of sixteenth century. Jagannatha's eleven volumes or skandhas in Oriya contain 329 chapters whereas the original Sanskrit Bhagavata contains the 322 chapters. The additional seven chapters are in the 10th and 11th volumes, six in the former and one in the latter.

The poet has also sometimes felt it necessary to give the theme more of a local context, social credibility and pictorial quality. At other times he seems to have driven by his religious fervour to emphasise and expand those portions dealing with the leela or activities of Lord Krishna. It should, however, be remembered that these expansions or dilations of the theme rarely detract from the poetic quality of the original or make them little more than verbose transcreations of it. In fact, the most important of the Oriya work is its essential originality of language and idiom, of mellowed philosophical attitude to life fused with passion and intensity of poetic fervour. It is, indeed, a unique poetic creation. Basically a translation, it
looks and reads more like an original than perhaps any work of similar dimension. With philosophical backdrop, it never degenerates into arid, obscure or abstruse, philosophical debates and discussions. On the other hand, the most difficult philosophical propositions are delineated through simple stories narrated in the traditional manner of storytelling. A work which certainly had at least a partial motivation of religious or spiritual purpose never degenerates into any listing of litanies or observances of rituals or ceremonies. This explains why the Oriya Bhagavata remains the most intimate expression of the Oriya soul as well as the culture and social ethics of the Oriya speaking people. Among the masses of Orissa, line from this book are most quoted, suiting them to various situations. The spirit of liberal humanism, tolerance, sacrifice and humility, so characteristic of Oriya social life, is, indeed, the gift of this epic.

Besides the Bhagavata, Jagannatha also composed a number of minor philosophical and devotional treatises in the language of the people. Arthakoili, Gajastuti, Darubrahma Gita, Gundicha Vijay Dutibandha, Radhamanjari, Sola Chaupadi Manasiksha and Dhruba Charita are a few to mention to his credit. These works, however, do not come near the Bhagavata's level of excellence in combining the religion of bhakti with great poetic excellence. They are rather pale
reflections of this great classic whose appeal remains universal and timeless.

ACHYUTANANDA DASA:

Achyutananda Dasa was also one of the distinguished figures of the Panchasakha movement. He was born in 1489 A.D. at the village Tilakana, on the river bank of Mahanadi in Cuttack district. 39 From the "Janma Bibarana" of Achyutananda Dasa we come to know that he was born in a Sudra family and he had a house in the village Nemala. 40 The poet, therefore, is believed to have been born in the village Tilakana and have set up his math at Nemal, one mile away from Tilakana. His father was Dinabandhu Khuntia and mother was Padmavati. It is known from his own description that he was a contemporary of the king Prataprudradev. His grand father Gopinath Mohanty was one of the private secretaries (chhamukaran) of the king. His father Dinabandhu was conferred on the title Khuntia by the king and he lived in

39. "Tilakanare mu janam labhili kehi no chinhile more; Agani ta boli mata dakuchanti anna na milai ghare."

_Sunya Samhita_, Ch.18.

40. "Achyutananda Dasa nama mohar Nemal grammere ghara, Sudrakule Muhin janam labhichhi ajna gheni Prabhunkar."

_Janmabibarana._

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Puri for his livelihood. However the poet’s grand-father was a Mohanty (karana), father was a Khuntia and he identified himself to be a Sudra.

Achyutananda Dasa was not simply a devotee, a meditator and a saint, but a critic of the contemporary society and using his foresight he also predicted what the future would turn out to be. He composed a lot of prophecies, called

41. "Mora Pitamaha se Gopinatha
    Mohanty tahanka ate padhita
    Srikshetre Chhamukarana se thile
    Chhamu ajnare se dina katile.
    Tahanka putra mora pita honti,
    Srikshetre Khuntia kama Karanti.
    Pratap nrupati santosh honte,
    Khuntia pada dile mora tata.
    Tahun Dinabandhu Khuntia hele,
    Nilachalare je sebe khatele."

Achyutananda’s Varnatika, pp.50-58.

42. a) "Nahin mohar Bipra varne asha
    Kshatriya Vaishyre nahin bharasa.
    Sana hele mana saru nurai,
    Tahun Achyuta je Sudra bolai
    Sudra Varnare Seba prapta hoye,
    Ahankar nahin Sudrara dehe."

Varna Samhita, p.93.

b) "Sudra kulare mu hoibi jata,
    Nama hoiba mo dina Achyuta."

Harivamsa (Patal Khanda).

c) "Sudra Madhey ganana mujita atai,
    Diksha goti paiachhi Gopakulé thai."

Harivamsa (7th Khanda).
Malikas which reflected his extraordinary vision of future. The contemporary social condition is reflected in his writings although he has written about future. A general note which runs through all these malikas appears to be rather striking. It is this, that in the times to come, (i) the Brahmins will deteriorate to the level of Sudras; (ii) there shall be no castes, all being equal in status; and (iii) after many castrastrophies there shall be a revival of spirituality under the guidance of a new prophet.

Of all the five comrades, Achyutananda, the youngest was the most active social reformer. His contribution to the upliftment of different neglected and deprived communities of Orissa shall long be cherished. He was the patron-saint of millions of Kaivartas (the fishermen), Gopalas (the cow-herds) and Kamaras (the blacksmiths). He actually lived among them and for the first time in their social history imparted to them the mantras and sastras. To explain the esoteric truth in their own terms he wrote in Oriya, the "Kaivarta Gita" for the benefit of the fishermen, the "Gopalanka Ogal" (riddles for the cow-herds) for the cow-herds and socially uplifted the blacksmiths. This sort of social sensitiveness in an author was remarkable in that time and we have not really many instances of it, at least in Oriya literature.
The Harivamsa of Achyutananda, like Mahabharata of Sarala Dasa and the Ramayana of Balarama Dasa, is an original work, retaining only the framework of the Sanskrit model. This book describes the life-story of Krishna, the Lord of the Gopal class, probably to bolster up the social status and social consciousness of the milkmen communities in Orissa, of whom Achyutananda still remains the patron-saint. This book is placed next to the Bhagavata of Jagannatha Dasa among the Oriya masses as a sacred book. Pious rural folk arrange the full recitation of all its seven volumes as fulfilment of vows to Gods and Goddesses, after their prayers have been granted.

In Kaivarta Gita, Achyutananda has narrated the life-story of Dasaraja, the mythical king of Kaivartas through the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna. To bring pride and honour in the broken heart of the Kaivartas, he narrated that Dasaraja was born to the ear of Krishna and Krishna himself had offered him a boat and a horse for his livelihood through trade.43 The poet clearly has got everything described by Lord Krishna to elevate status of the fishermen

43. "Mohara Karna mularu jata je hoilu,
    Tenukari more ardha anga bolailu.
Karnamulu jata tora jati Kaivarta,
    E Aswaku nia ebe chadhai boita.
E boita gheni jaa banija karibu,
    E Aswa gotiki nei bahana karibu."

Kaivarta Gita.
in society. In his *Gopalka Oqala*, the poet has described the heroic activities of Krishna at Gopa in a lyrical form which has been a source of entertainment and consolation for the Gopal communities.\(^4\) 

Achyutananda witnessed the socio-political instability and peacelessness condition during his life-time (16th century) which led him to write the prophecies. His writings corroborate to the major Muslim invasions of Orissa during the period of Gajapati Prataprudradev (in 1510 A.D.) and Mukundadev (in 1568 A.D.). In 1510 A.D. Hussain Saha, Sultan of Bengal attacked the temple of Lord Jagannatha, Puri and destroyed some idols. But the idol of Lord Jagannatha was safely protected. In 1568 A.D. Kalapahada, (a Brahmin converted to Islam) a commandor of Sulaiman Karrani of Bengal attacked the Jagannatha temple of Puri. He burnt the idol of Lord Jagannatha at the sea-beach of Puri which not only frightened, but terrorised the people of Orissa and made the contemporary saint-poets like Achyutananda Dasa to warn the people through their devotional songs. Thus he sang in his *Varan Charita Gita*,

"From the King Prataprudra to Mukundadev, 
the people will enjoy half of their happiness."

\(^{44}\) *Gopalka Oqala*, Orissa Jagannatha Company, Cuttack.
The world will be stormed from the period of Mukundadev

Oh brother, you will not get a scare of peace,

Since then till the three successive reigns,

The Kali will appear and the happiness

will evaporate from the world."45

The poet also presents the deplorable condition of the people caused due to famine and flood during the period of Mukundadev. Thus he sings in his bhajan,

The king Mukundadeva,

Look at his fifth regnal year,

Oh devotees,

the alms will not be given to the beggars.

The seeds will be washed away

and many fields will remain uncultivated,

Oh devotees,

45. "Pratap nrupati tharu Mukunda rajan,
Adhesukha labhibaku pranie bhajana.
Mukunda thabaru Pruthvi je gola hoi,
Kinchipare sukhabhoga rahibaka bhai.
Sebana thabaru tini rajuti e mahi,
Kali upuchai sukha na rahiba mahi."

Some will not open their seed-packets."46

Achyutananda travelled over many parts of Orissa for the propagation of his faith and outlook. Because of his profound experience of the wretched plight of the poor and the exploitation of the subjects by the State machinery, he criticised authoritarianism. His writings exemplify protest against injustice and exploitation. He compared the subjects with dead bodies and the king with vultures. According to him it was a curse for the subjects to undergo this suffering. Again he postulated that the king would snatch away the properties of the subjects and the subjects would flee away to the forest. He also desired not to live to see the sorrowful condition of the people.47 The writings of

46. "Mukunda rajan lakshya,
Pancha-anka tharu anai dekha.
   He bhaktajana,
Magigale na miliba bhika
   Kara haba gaja dhoi
Kara kheta buna hoiba nahin,
   He bhaktajana,
Kara olia phitiba nahin.


47. "Paraja murdar hebe Rajae saguna
   Bharathara Sapya eje hoichhi ghuruna
   Anyayeman hoiba biparita jata,
   Raja Chhininebe sabu parajara bitta.
   Bikala hoina bane pasibe se jai,
   Podu mohar peta ki karibi rahi."

Achyutananda were based on his social experiences and he had an outlook created by his own experience. Thus, the anti-feudal feeling has been clearly expressed in his writings.

Achyutananda also travelled outside of Orissa to a number of pilgrim centres like Gaya, Ayodhya, Mathura, Mayapuri, Kasi, Brindaban, Magadh, Mithila, Dwaraka, Dhanuskotri, Madurai and Kamaksha. He came into contact with some fraudulent sanyasis and criticising them he said that nobody could be a meditator only because they had beards and long hair. According to him determination, meditation, honesty and truthfulness were the essential characteristics of a sanyasi. He also protested against the exploitative nature of priest-hood and vehemently challenged the validity of the authority of Brahmins and the philosophical basis of taking of cows in donation by them. He also asked a number of metaphysical questions relating to cow, the mother Goddess and wanted to know from the priests whether they were Brahmins or Sudras? How did they emerge? Which God were they worshipping everyday and whether dharma is a result of Karma.
or Karma is a result of dharma?48 The King and Brahmins of the Jagannatha temple, Puri, were, in fact, surprised and had to perforce acknowledge his greatness.

The poet had also not forgotten to present the contemporary social picture even at the time of his discussion of pinda (body) and brahma (world) philosophy. He had predicted revolution and change. He believed that first there would be a hole in the west and the four commanders would be killed. The Nayakas of the fort would be flogged.

48. "Dana ghen a tumbe jebana gai,
Kete akshara ta padare thai?
Singa nasa karna lalata kie?
Langude basai kebana dien?
Kete aksharare loma nirman?
Kete akshar khunta pagha jana?
Keun aksharare gabaku bandha?
Keun aksharare batsaku chhanda?
Chhabisa boli sayale prakash
Ethu atha bhala karina ghosha?
Atha Karachhi tini nirmana,
Tiniru ekatra karina jana.
Chhabish akshar debaare mata,
Kahun janamila keun devata?
Swaraga martya patala tini bata
Kahin Lagiachhi keun kabata?
Kebana prakare kilichhi kie
Joda die taku kebana dien?
Suna he Brahmane ete byabastha,
Achyut Daaku lagichhi byatha,
Ahe puchhe Achyuta,
Bipra ki Sudra kaha he tadanta,
Kahun aila kahun tumba stithi?
Kebana devata pujuchha niti?
Kathai puchhiba na kata tama,
Karamaru dharma ki dharmaru karama."

and the people would be frightened and run away. According to him the forts were constructed as a result of torture and exploitation of the toiling masses, they would seize forts by killing the Nayakas (the fort commanders). There would then be a large crowd in eighteen drains, and it would be a fighting between archers and gunmen.\textsuperscript{49} The poet imagined a revolution, and he believed there would be end of exploitation and sufferings of the people, if the sufferers unitedly fight against it.

The complete treatise of "Baran Charita Gita" is a conversation between Achyutananda and his disciple Ramachandra Das. From an analysis of this Gita it is learnt that there was a difference between Achyutananda and Sri Chaitanya. Chaitanya was a protagonist of the Nadiya Kirtan but Achyutananda started the Rahas Kirtan in Jhankar. Chaitanya propagated the Krishna Lila of the Sarat Rasa of Autumn, whereas Achyuta introduced the Basanta Rasa of the spring. Chaitanya discussed the association of Krishna with the Gopis, but Achyuta wrote of the heroic deeds of Krishna. in

\textsuperscript{49} "Prathame padiba pachhima thana, 
Chari paika je khaibe hana.
Gadara Nayake Khaibe chabuk,
Palaibe jane bhaya apara.
Jana aratare Janama gada,
Athar nalare padiba bhida.
Banua dhanuki jujha lagithiba
Sunaina deba triveni dhara."

Tane Bhaja Rama Nama, R.K. Chaini (ed), \textit{op.cit.}

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1989. association with the Gopalas (young milkmen of Gopa). In spite of these differences Achyutananda had a profound respect for Sri Chaitanya and was one of his distinguished associates.

Achyutananda believed in jnan, bhakti and yoga. According to him, the pundits do not understand the hidden meaning of the Gita and brahmajnan. They understand it explicitly by using the word meaning only. To him, bhakti is essential to understand the inner meaning of the Gita.

Giving emphasis on realisation of self the poet thus sang in his Sunya Samhita,

"Fast, pilgrimage, reading Puranas and Sastras
All are futile without knowing thy self,
As rainlessness harms to product
Unknowing the self harms to knowledge.
Anxiety is destroyed
with kind and forgiveness
And if heart remains
at the feet of Lord Krishna


51. Sunya Samhita, p.17.
from life to life."52

Achyutananda was critical of the rituals and pilgrimage, idol worship, caste and authority of the Vedas. In his Charikhani or Sabdabrahma Samhita he has bitterly criticised against the traditional social structure and has aimed for a new social order. He sang that fasting pilgrimage and rituals were nothing, but the ways of inflicting pain to one's body in different manner. Thus he sang,

"Fasting, rituals and pilgrimage
nothing but accepting physical pains,
Vedas and Puranas are woven round it
And if there is punya (religious merit)
Why then people die at all?"53

52. "Atmaku na Chinhī tirtha brata hin nisphala,
Purana Sastrara bakya padhība biphala
Anabrusti hele jehne krushi nasa jai,
Atma na chinhile jnan dhyana kshaya hoi.
Daya kshama thiletī janjala nasa heba,
Janme janme Sri Krishna Charane Chitta thiba."
Sunya Samhita, p.19.

53. "Brata upasana tirtha gaman;
Sārīra kadartha nana bidhi man.
Veda purana eha ghenī mandī;
punya para jebe mrutyu na khandi."
The poet protested against the idol-worship and criticised different rituals around. To him, these material arrangements are performed before the deity only for the self-consumption and nothing else. Thus he sings,

"Again we will tell about ourselves,  
your tale bears many shapes.  
World is endless and there is nothing without your existence.  
They make idols, images or pictures of wood, stone, eight metals and soil.  
This mind installs the idol and worships by chanting his name.  
prasad, flowers, sandal, scents and many presentations are only performed before the deity, then they eat it just giving water as a final offer.  
They take so much care of the deity, and by His blessing they are redeemed.  
This living God does not understand the self
and unknowingly worship the lifeless idol."\(^{54}\)

Achyutananda has been bitterly critical of the superiority of the Brahmins in the caste system. He compares the Brahmins and goats and tries to establish significance of the goat's life as eater of grasses and the meaninglessness of Brahmins as the eater of meats. Thus he satires in his Charikhani,

"Brahmins are polluted

just touching a dead body,

But they eat meat of goats

after they are killed!

This animal is so great because

he reads Vedas and mantras

And that animal is so minor

\(^{54}\) "Abara mana kahiba swarupa;
Tohari katha tote bahurupa.
Ashesh brahmanda jeteka jahin;
Tohe na thapile thiba se kahin.
Kastha pashana astaloi mati;
Pituli lekhan chitra prakati.
Ehi mana rupa kari thapai;
E puni ta nama dhari japai.
Puspa naibedya gandha chandan;
Upana bidhi upahara mana.
Kebala chhamure badhai nei;
Apane bhunjai pani chhadai.
Ete sampada Chanku karai;
Taha bara dele puni tarai.
Sajiba debata ape na bujhai;
Ajana pane ajiba pujai."

because he eats grasses." 55

Achyutananda has not accepted the Vedas to be infallible. He has emphasized on the freedom of thought of the individual and established superiority of knowledge earned by one's own feeling, experience and reason. Thus he sings,

"It is not the Vedas are "the beginning",
And it can not be compared.
Again whatever the epics we read
are nothing but the poetic works." 56

Significance of human life is not justified on the basis of birth, but by virtue of karma or the noble deeds, Achyutananda believed in. He sang in his Charikhani,

"The noble deeds are eternal
and lasts for ever,
The man believes in karma

55. "Chhagala chhedo bhojanaku nitya;
    Brahman mada chhunile patita.
    Veda mantra padhi e mada yede;
    Duba truna bhakshi se mada tede."

Trutiya Khani, Cantos:2-21.

56. "Veda adi hoi tahinkie nahin;
    Tahinki ana patantara kahin.
    Abara jeteka grantha padhiba;
    Kabi krutya boli taha chhadiba."

reaches in the highest of glory." 57

Giving emphasis on realisation of one's own self and self of others, the poet advocated for an egalitarian social order. He believed that Hari (i.e. God) exists everywhere and in everything starting from lifeless matters and insects to the body of human-being of all castes and classes. 58 In another context, the poet also predicted there would be equality of all with the instructions of God Nirakara and there would be no discrimination between the Brahmins and Chandals, which certainly symbolises social equality as the poet advocated for. Thus he sang in this context,

"There will be no varna (caste),
from Untouchable to Brahmin
and from the preceptor to disciples;
This is the instruction of the Nirakara
that there will be no discrimination
and all-being will be one." 59

57. "Kala karama chira kala thai;
kareni loka kahun kahun jai."
Dwitiya Khani, Canto:87.

58. "Sthabar jangama kita patangadi kari,
Chhaya brahma rupe Puri achhanti je Hari."
Sunya Samhita, Ch.IV, p.44.

59. "Chandalu Brahman Guru Sishya Puna
barana na thiba tahin,
Bikara na thiba ekakar heba
Nirakara ajna ehi."
Ibid., Ch.XXIII, p.121.
Achyutananda accepted disciples from all castes. Among his disciples Ramadasa was a potter, another Rama was a blacksmith while Nanda and Naran were also blacksmiths.\(^{60}\) There were twelve prominent disciples who came from Gopal communities.\(^{61}\) Dwijabar Sharma of Anantapur Sasan near Panchakroshi and Dasa Mahapatra of Prachi river bank were devotees of Achyutananda Dasa. His another group of one hundred forty followers lived in the village of Kasi Muktiswar grama. There were also one hundred ten devotee-followers at Chitranga tota.\(^{62}\) Ganesh Pati, the Ganaka (astrologer), Kanhu and his son Parikshtia, Saranga, Upananda and three hundred followers from Jajanagar (Jajpur) including Bandhu Mohanty of Jajpur were Sri krishna devotees in the time of Achyutananda.\(^{63}\)

Achyutananda never believed in sacredness of rituals. To him, there was no need of asana, suddhi and anganyasa (decoration of boy by use of sandal etc.), in performance of worship. Recitation of the name of void (Sunya) with deep love and devotion was the method of worship he preached.

\(^{60}\) Gurubhakti Gita, Pt.II, Prachi, Bhubaneswar, 1970 (Preface).

\(^{61}\) Sunya Samhita, Ch.II, p.23.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., pp.102-3.

\(^{63}\) Ibid., p.105.
King Prataprudra was pleased to see the method of Sunya worship of Achyutananda and granted him a place at Banki Muhan, for his math. 64

DASAS JASOVANTA AND ANANTA:

Of the remaining Dasas of the Panchasakha group, Dasas Jasovanta and Ananta have the glory of contributing to Tantra and Yoga as well as the miracles of bhakti. Jasovanta Das is now remembered only through his ballad of "Govinda Chandra" sung by Natha cult medicant singers. This is a story from Bengal, of a prince of that name who renounced royal comforts for an ascetic life, strongly enough on the advice and persistent pursuasion of his own mother Mukta Dei. The Prince's Yogic guide was Hadipa, an Untouchable saint. All this fitted very well into the ascetic and cosmopolitan aspirations of the "five comrades" and was therefore taken up by one of them for popularisation among the masses. It must be said to the credit of Jasovanta Dasa that his literary venture has been quite successful. The story casts a spell of mystic melancholy over ladies in rural areas.

64. Ibid., p.60.
Jasovanta was born in the Adhanga village near the Jagatsinghpur sub-division of Cuttack district. It is known from the "Udaya Kahani" of Achyutananda that Jagannatha Dasa and Jasovanta Dasa were born in the same year. If we were to believe Udaya Kahani, Jasovanta Dasa was born in 1487 A.D. His father was Jagu Mallick and mother, Rekha Devi.65 Jasovanta became indifferent towards the world while he was twelve years of age. He was determined to be a sanyasi. Since his early age Jasovanta used to travel over many parts of India and lastly returned to Puri. Before his return to Puri, Sri Chaitanya had already arrived in Orissa.

Jasovanta Dasa composed many devotional songs among which Premabhakti Brahma-gita, Govinda Chandra Gita, Siva Svaroday, Chaurashi Ajna, and Rasa etc. were important. He has deciphered a number of methods of yoga in his "Siva Svaroday". His language was very simple and intelligible to all. He also propagated the knowledge-cum-devotion ideology among the people and discussed the philosophy, ethics and principles of nirakara, anakara and omakr Brahma. The relation between the soul and the great soul (Paramatma) was also investigated by him. The philosophical aspects of the

Universe, Sun, Moon, Stars, Wind and the Sky have been described by him, and he says that there are eight flutes of the Nityaloka, i.e. God of Gods. He loved Orissa, to him "Neelachal Purushottam Kshetra" was a rare place in the Universe, and the shrines like Gopa, Mathura, Vrindaban, Dwaraka and Kashi were prevalent here.66

The picture of the contemporary society, family and the eternal love between the mother and son are to be found in his book "Govindachandra Gita". It deals with the tradition of social behaviour in human society. Mother Mukta Devi taught her son, the prince Govinda Chandra, as the requirement of social behaviour, at the time of his departure to practise the ascetic order. Sacrifice was given a higher position than enjoyment. Another important thing the treatise preaches that the gurus should be accepted irrespective of caste, creed and colour, if he were to possess real knowledge. The prince Govinda Chandra had worshiped his guru Hadipa, who was a sweeper by caste.67 The poet also

66. "Dekha e nitya Nilachala; Sakala tirthankar ala. Gopa Mathura Vrindabana; Dwaraka adi jete sthana. Sakala ehi sthane pai; Abar kashi madhya hoi. Kotie kshetra ye kshetrae; Mahima kahile na sare."


propagates the necessity of determination to control one's desire. Apart from this, Jasovanta Dasa also protested against the existing norms of socio-economic domination and discrimination. According to him meditation and devotion to God can never be monopolised by a particular caste or community, it is open to all mankind.

He believed in Premabhakti propagated to worship the God with the Gopibhava. In his Premabhakti Brahmaqita he has made Sri Krishna to speak to his devotees that He comes to closer to them who worship Him with premabhakti. Thus he writes,

Gopi is my own body,
Those who worship her with me
Sit in the eternal abode.
There is no better devotion
than love-based devotion,
And I am always closer to the
love-based devotion."68

ANANTA DASA:

Sishu Ananta Dasa was another distinguished member of

68. "Gopi mohara nija dehi; Je taku bhagati karai,
Mote mishai stuti kare; Ante basai Golakare.
Prema bhaktiru bhakti nahn; Prema nikate thai muhin."

Jasovanta Dasa, Premabhakti Brahmaqita, Ch.III, p.20.

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the Panchasakha movement. He was born in 1486 A.D., in the Balipatna village, near Bhubaneswar of Puri district. His father was Kapila Mohanty and mother Gouri Devi. 69

He was a contemporary of King Prataprudradev and was an associate of Sri Chaitanya. He composed number of treatises, namely, the Garuda-Keshav Sambad, Thikabahar, Agatbhabishya Malika Arthatareni, Chumbak Malika, Bhaktijuktidayak Gita, Anakar SabaD, Dibi Dibi Dhola, Pinda Brahmanda Gita and 'Hetu Uday Bhagavat'. The "Hetu Uday Bhagavata" was the most important work in which he described the implications of the gurumohima (significance of the religious guides), Panchamana (five stages of the mind) and Pachis Prakriti (twenty-five natures of human-being) and also defined the philosophy of the creation of the Universe: Chauda Brahmanda (Fourteen Worlds), Gayatri Tattva, Pinda Brahmanda Tattava and Abdhut Charita etc. His predictions regarding the future of society was simple and was understood in vernacular by the common men.

PROPAGATED PREMA BHAKTI:

Ananta Dasa, like his other comrades, was also one of the exponents of the bhakti cult. He asked his devotees to

submit their mind and soul to the God as a wife submits herself to her husband. 70 This was the way of bhakti and the method to achieve the consciousness of the supreme God, Vishnu. Apart from this he propagaed that God has no colour and He is avarna. 71 According to him everything depends on mana (mind or motive) and God is inside one's heart and not in the temple. The control of mind is real meditation. The poet did not recognise the worship of God by the priests. He personified the system of worship which is mental and is in the realm of thought. 72

THE PANCHASAKHA IDEOLOGY:

Religious philosophy of the saints of medieval Orissa is also distinguished in many respects. The Panchasakhas

70. "Manaku stiri besa kari
Hoiba nabina Kisori

* * *
Tahinre manaku nibesi
Dekhibe jyotirmay rasi,
Jyoti antara divyarupa
Dekhiba nila je Swarupa."

Hetu Udaya Bhagabata.

71. "Arekha avarna atai, Avarna barna se nuhain".

Ibid.

72. "Manara kalpanaati kala, Bedhi rahichhi bindu sthala,
Manati ape apa hoi, Mana bahare dian (deity) kahin."

Ibid.
were in search of the theory of creation of the Universe. Not only the Panchasakhas of medieval Gritsa, but also the rishis of Vedic period were in quest of the knowledge of the creation of the world. What was created first in the Great Void? Achyutananda speaks of it, "All these forms are only creations of the one formless and all manifestations of form will ultimately realise themselves in the formless. Thus one, ought to be able to look at the two as one. Only by looking at the seemingly opposites with an attitude of equanimity, one can realise the whole range of truth." 73

They were in quest of the metaphysical matters such as Pinda and brahmanda, the individual microcosm and the universal macrocosm. Balarama Dasa in his Amarakosha Gita, 74 Jagannatha Dasa in his Arthakoili, Achyutananda in his Kaivarta Gita, 75 have attributed that whatever we see in

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73. Achyutananda, Chhayalispatal (4th patal).

74. "Jaha dekhuchu e brahmande, Samasta achhi ehi pinde. Brahmande jeteka bhiana, Pindare achhai samana."

Amarkosha Gita, Ch.II.

75. "Se aksha ra goti kahin misai je nahin, Saburi sarire thai nama je bhanai. Ahuri kathae partha drustainara suna, Tohari dehare chhai achhitiki puna."

Kaivarta Gita, Ch.III.
this world also exists in one's body.

God is omnipresent and He exists in everybody said Balarama,76 Jagannatha,77 and Achyutananda78 as well. They compare water of pot with soul and pot with the body or Pinda. When the pot breaks down or the body dies, the water-like soul evaporates with the Sunya, i.e. the great soul.

The panchasakhas made a happy synthesis between Saguna and Nirguna schools of bhakti by rising upto a height from which one could see both of these and also see beyond. Achyutananda has compared Saguna and Nirguna with two wings

76. "Sahasre ghata eka kari,  
Sakala ghate jala Puri.  
Chahinle sarba ghate basi,  
Eka hoile parakashi.  
Ghata bhangile jala gala,  
Se jala Sunye lina hela,  
E rupe sakala sarire,  
Puri achhanti Nirakare."

Amarkosha Gita, Ch.VI.

77. "Sakala ghate Narayana,  
Anadi parama karana."

Bhaqavata, Vol.II, Ch.I.

78. "Moho tahin dekha tumbhe rahiachha  
tumbha tahin para muhin,  
Tumbha mo hisaba karina basile  
bidyahin antiba nahin."

Bhaba Nabar (6th Boli).
of a bird and two eyes of a person and to him it is not possible to meditate perfectly with the loss of one school's thought. The panchasakhas also had gone beyond the areas of mere Bhakti or mere Jnana and could look at both as one. To speak by using their metaphor, "As bird must have both its wing to be able to fly, the Sadhaka must have jnana and bhakti in his schedule if he has to make any real advance in his sadhana."  

The Panchasakhas did neither believe in idol worship, nor in fasting, pilgrimage and celebrating the sacred days. According to Balarama the people worship the idols, because

79. "Suna ahe Gopasuta bhagatira katha,
   a) Saguna-Nirguna dui jebana byabastha.
      Dui je denare pakshi udikari jai,
      Dui je chakshure sehi samsare khelai.
      Eka je na thile kana dui gale andha,
      Enu kari Nirguna-Saguna sehu bhed.
      Jantra mantle tantra rase ehu chari guna,
      Saguna jahaku bale ehu katha suna.
      Chhaya abada jyoti je ehtu samadhi,
      E chari Nirguna boli parileti sadhi."

 Achyutananda, Gurubhakti Gita, Vol.II, Prachi, p.44.

b) "Nirguna Saguna e rasa; ethire bharichhi piyusha.
   Saguna Kariba dishiba; Nirgune mana nibeshiba."

Ibid., Vol.III, p.156.

80. "Jnana bhedile bhakti pai, Bhakti bhedile jnan pai.
    Pakshi jesane dui mata; Dui denare ude seta.
    Jnana bhakti eka dena; Saguna bhakti eka jana.
    Nirguna sagunadi mata; Bhakata manaka e bitta.
    Madhurye eishrarya je acchi; Eishvarya mudhryu misichhi."

they do not know that Basudeva (God) is imageless. The poet wonders how the people worship the God who does not even speak a word. The traditions of idol worship, pilgrimage, fasting, sacrifice, rituals and even existence of Gods and Goddesses are superfluous, he believed it strongly. The poet wondered how the people did not understand the reality although they saw and listened to it that all the religious externalities were meaningless and means of exploitation. According to Achyutananda the innocent people are befooled to worship spirit and Gods. They do not know that all the mantras, japas, fasting, pilgrimages and meditations are not for the welfare of society. They advised the people not to believe in idol worship or in fasting,

81. "Sila Sala Chandi Mangala Siva,
Brata tirtha tithi kariba bhava,
Ehi rasare matile nirate,
Iswaranku na chinhile jagate.
Na jananti Arupa bolina Basudeva,
Pratima pitula kari karuthanti-bhava
Dekhu dekhu sunuthanti na bujhanti jana,
Puja kala debata ta na kahe bachana.
Rupa, tirtha, brata, Puja homa karma michha
Deba Debi a maya patal sabu tuchha."

Chhatis Gupta Gita, Vol.VII

82. "Kama asfite mudha nara, Pujanti bhuta preta sura.
Jete e tirtha brata tapa, Kriya sambhav mantra japa.
E sarba dharma nuhen kichhi, Samsara hite veda gachhi."

Brahmasankuli (Pratham Kalpa).
pilgrimage or rituals etc. because they wanted to protect the people from the clutches of priesthood and brahminism as well. They wanted to keep direct relations between the God and the devotees through bhakti and therefore, there was no need of intermediary priestly class, the Panchasakhas believed.

The Panchasakhas' philosophy cannot be categorised and sided with a particular sect or religious community. They were above any sectarian zealotry. They did not as such condemn any particular way of sadhana in favour of their own way; but they were against all narrow and rigid adherence to any particular way. Their attitude behind all what they spoke and wrote was one of an all accepting inner-honesty and purity. They accepted the noble principles of many contemporary religious strands but never fell into any of the sectarian lines. The panchasakhas were Vaishnavas, yet they were much more than those who close themselves into a sect called Vaishnava. They spoke and wrote about the necessity of Kayasadhana, but they were not only Kayasadhakas. They were Buddhists in much of their avowals, yet not Buddhists as far as to be Buddhists meant following a particular sect and nothing else. They sang of and adored the supreme Brahma, yet were much more than the doctrinaire adwaitins. They made a synthesis between Nirguna and Saguna and between jnana and bhakti. They were bhaktas and jnanis.
at the same time, because the real bhakta and real jnani does combine the two in the process of his becoming. They proclaimed that to remain engrossed with the transitory worldly living was to live buried in maya, but they were not mayabadins. They were on the side of life, its enhancement and in its excellence in the full spiritual liberation of the term. They were inextricably attached with the human problems, and they were true bhaktas, sadhakas, and social reformers.

The Panchasakhas have also warned that without the guru coming to help, one cannot know the real truth in the world. But as in everything else, the Panchasakhas revolted against the idea of making an idol of the guru. A guru, who encourages helpless dependence and makes an idol of himself will be more a hindrance than a help. The Panchasakhas were determined to start a mass movement in society for a change in outlook and attitude. Having personified the system of worship, they said one could not see God only in the temple, one could feel Him inside one's heart also. In this regard said Achyutananda, "The knowledge you seek for is stored in your heart. You have to find it there and realise it. The knowledge of the Brahma, Brahmajnan, is never far from you, it is inseparably contained in your own temple." Achyutananda did not acknowledge the definition of the origins of the Varnas, i.e. Brahmanas from the mouth, the Kshatriyas
from the arms, Vaishyas from the thigh and the Sudras from the feet of the God. He said that Vaishyas were the eyes, Kshatriyas the ears, Brahmins the breath of the nose and the Sudras the face as a whole. These four Varnas were created from a flame. At the height of feeling of high and low, caste and untouchability, their struggle thus was successful in raising egalitarianism.

Earlier we have discussed how Lord Jagannatha was the linch-pin of society and also how the Panchasakhas struck against the different props of the said society. The question, therefore, arises, is why did they spare Jagannatha. Even most of them had prayed to Jagannatha at the initial stages of their writings. Very often they also claimed to have been born by the grace of Lord Jagannatha. Besides this, a large number of devotees renounced their affiliation with different minor religious sects and they

83. "Vaishya to nayan atai,
   Kshatriya shrabanaku kahi
Brahmana nasara paban,
   Sudra Je mukhare Praman,
Emante chari jati kahi,
   Jyoti madhyaru janma hoi."

Gupta Gita.
worshipped Lord Jagannatha as supreme deity.\footnote{84} Here we should not forget that originally Lord Jagannatha was a tribal deity and it was only from the 13th century onwards that he underwent the process of Brahmisation. This must surely have been disliked by the Sudras or non-Brahmins who often tried to project Him as a God of the Little Tradition. It was proved by the version of Sarala Dasa in his \textit{Mahabharata} that Jagannatha was being worshipped by a Sabara Viswawasu in the form of Nilamadhab.\footnote{85} Balarama Dasa and his other comrades have also characterised Lord Jagannatha as a deity of the Little Tradition.\footnote{86} \textit{Laxmi Purana} of Balarama Dasa is also another evidence in which Laxmi got a declaration of social equality and a casteless society by Lord Jagannatha himself. So it appears that the tirade was not so much against Jagannatha as it was against the metamorpho-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{Sandhya bandan japa homa; Panchadevatanka Pujana, Baisvadeva atithi puja; Samasta kale paritejya. Jatimananka dharma jete; Adara na kale ta chitte. Brahman kshatra Vaishyannar, Je aba Sudrara Vichar, Jani Sarba Karma tejile; Eka Jagannatha bhajile. Veda Vedanga je purna; purbaru thila je pathana. Taha chhadile bhaktibale; Asre Sricharana Kamale.} \textit{Jagannatha Charitamruta, p.141.}
\item \textit{Sarala Mahabharata, A.B. Mohanty (ed.), 1968, pp.208-27.}
\end{itemize}
sis that they (Panchasakhas) experienced in course of time. Apart from this, when Lord Jagannatha had been so popular as the sovereign-deity of Orissa, it was wise on part of the Panchasakhas to use him to mould the rest of the society. One could well argue that had Jagannatha continued as a deity of the Great Tradition, the majority of the people in Oriya society, who were no doubt Sudras, would have been alienated themselves from Him and possibly might have set up a deity of their own. In that case the status of the state deity would have been lost to Jagannatha. The cleavage thus ended in cohesion. Jagannatha, the central pivot in Oriya socio-religious life, who was a deity of the king and the priests, now occupied a place in mass consciousness because of the lofty efforts of the Panchasakhas.

The contribution of Panchasakhas to shape the Oriya society, literature and culture cannot be overestimated. Sarala Dasa, who preceded the Panchasakhas was the pioneer of the movement. He was maker of Oriya literature. With the influence of Sarala Dasa, the Panchasakhas emerged, who dedicated themselves to the service of God and used their stylus (Pen) for the upliftment of the common men. They exercised their pens in all possible manner for the educa-

tion and regeneration of the people. They strove to bring out a new social order by removing the social barrier that separated man from man and community from community. They were eminently successful in their mission and made the people to believe in social equality in the premises of Jagannatha temple of Puri, through their writings. It is also believed that minimization of caste tension and oppression in Orissa is certainly a contribution of the Panchasahas. They brought the spiritual lore that was as yet a sealed book in Sanskrit to the doorsteps of the peasant's cottage. Through their Ramayana, Bhagavata and Harivamsa they made all the esoteric teaching accessible to the common Oriya, unschooled in Sanskrit. They wrote ballads to carry their messages of ideal living and desirable attitudes to life even to the illiterate womenfolk in the inner courtyards. Even now Balarama's Baula Gai, Laxmi Puran Suanga, or Jagannatha's Mriguni Stuti, Jasovanta Dasa's Govinda Chandra constitute the main stack-in-trade of the wandering minstrels of Orissa. Their recitals of these ballads from door to door to the accompaniment of the mono-string Kendra, draw children and womenfolk to the doors, windows and streets as though by magic. Their appeal is undying because they were written by devout souls with eyes fixed on the
common man's spiritual benefit. All that is moral, cultural or holy in Rural Orissa even today, is most certainly due to the sincere missionary labour of the Panchasakhas.