CHAPTER - TWO
2.1. SACRED GEOGRAPHY OF PURI AND SIMHACHALAM

(A) Sacred Geography of Puri

Puri, the site of Lord Jagannath is the centre of a great cultural tradition consisting of sacred and secular institutions with their religions and said function and cultural values with symbols and norms. Puri forms one of the four Dhams of the Hindus, renovated by the tradition at the instance of Adi Shankar, the great teacher and revivalist of philosophic Hinduism at the four corners of India. In North, Badrinath dedicated to Lord Vishnu, in South Rameswaram, associated with the worship of Lord Siva, established by Rama, the reincarnation of Lord Vishnu. In West, Dwarka, dedicated to Lord Krishna and in East, Puri - the place of Lord Jagannath, the Krishna - Vishnu incarnate. To every Hindu people, a visit to all the Dhams is almost obligatory in his life.

Regarding the geographical location, Puri is situated right on the coast of Bay of Bengal in Orissa. It lies between 19 - 28°N and 20 - 35°N latitude and between 84 - 29°E and 86 - 25°E longitude. Puri is the fifth largest town of Orissa. It has covered a geographical area of about 10,159 Sq. Kms. Puri has a population of 2,911,720 (1981 Census) people. Puri town is the district headquarters at the distance of about 500 Kilometres from Calcutta and nearly 100 Kilometres to the South of Cuttack by road. Puri town is bounded on the South by the sea, Bay of Bengal, on the East by Chakratirtha, on the West by the famous burial ground of Hindus i.e. Swargadwar and on the North by Natia river.
The fame of Lord Jagannath and His temple was known to the British authorities long before their conquest of Orissa. During British rule, in 1881, Puri Municipality was established. The British government made it a district head-quarters for better administration. Puri has several other sacred tanks and temples, which are placed within Hindu legends. A number of various monastic orders called Mathas with sumptuous establishments and estates are situated at Puri. At Puri, there is a famous library named as Raghunandan library situated in Emara Matha which has many precious and rare collections of palm leaf manuscripts called as Madala Panji or chronicles of Jagannath temple. Every detail of all the historical happenings of Lord Jagannath and the temple are found in Madala Panji, the temple chronicle, was written in the later part of the 16th century A.D. Puri is widely known as a great religious and sacred centre (Kshetra) and a place of pilgrimage (Tirtha) since the days history could reckon.

The height of the main temple of Jagannath is 214'8" above the road level. It is crowned with Vishnu's sacred wheel and flag which catch the eyes of the tourists and pilgrims from a long distance. The sculptural and architectural heritage of Puri coupled with its sanctity as Vishnu or Purushottama Kshetra since early medievals days, attracts thousands of visitors from all corners of the World throughout the year. The architecture, the stone carvings, statues, idols, etc. affixed on the walls of Jagannath temple, have been the subject of different philosophical thoughts and interpretations. The image of Lord Jagannath evidently stood as a great trademark in the Hindu realm.

The importance of the town as a seat of Vaishnavism increased when Chodaganga Deva constructed the temple of Purushottam i.e. Jagannath and installed the
images of the deities. Thereafter it became famous as the abode of Purneshottama Kshetra (Senapatil 1977).

According to Cunningham, the ancient name of Puri town was as Charitra mentioned by the Chinese pilgrim Hieun Tsang as Che-li-ta-lo. But the restoration of the word Che-li-ta-lo as Charitra and its identification with the town of Puri are open to doubt.

The sacred complex of Puri has been affected to a considerable extent by the general development in the secular aspects of the town which are fast expanding both in area and in activities. At Puri, a number of changes are taking place under the impact of modernisation and urbanisation. With the gradual increase in the population of Puri and change in the traditional modes of thought, a number of different varieties of shop centres, hotels, lodging houses, schools, colleges, universities have come up in Puri. Different types of shop centres of Puri besides catering the needs of local people, look after the needs of the pilgrims and other tourists. Through these shop centres, exchange of ideas, ways of life, belief pattern and traditions take place. Pilgrims and tourists purchase many sacred articles like sacred photographs, propitiation items i.e. vermillion, bangles, prasads etc. The sacred complex serves the local, regional, and the entire Hindu universe, through sacred activities, being served by all of them in one form or another. In India, a sacred complex of a place of Hindu pilgrimage itself is an intricate combination of the great and little traditions (Vidyarthi: 1961).

For all practical purposes, the secular Kshetra of Puri constitutes a Kshetra of cultural heterogeneity. The secular Kshetra may be said as a place where local cultures are disintegrated and new integrations of mind and society are developed. Men are concerned with 'Rational'
organisation of production of goods with expendiential relations between buyer and seller, ruler and native and foreigner (Redfield and Singer: 1956: 161 - 194).

(B) Sacred Geography of Simhachalam

Simhachalam, the site of Lord Narasimha is situated on a hill 800 feet above the sea level, in a tiny hill range of the Eastern Ghats, at a distance of 10 miles to the north of Visakhapatnam, the principal port of Andhra Pradesh. The hill range on which the temple is located is known as the Kailasa (17.47°N and 83.21°E). The range runs from east to west from Lawson's Bay on the coast near Visakhapatnam to Simhachalam, forming a natural boundary to Visakhapatnam. In their present state, the hills are only of modest height when compared to the main ranges of Eastern Ghats, ranging from 600 feet to 1,663 feet above mean sea level with a rising gradient towards the West.

The geographical setting of the region around Simhachalam can best be understood in the context of the geography of Visakhapatnam region and the state of Andhra Pradesh. The most conspicuous topographical feature of Andhra Pradesh is its river system which makes it a veritable rice granary of South India. The Krishna and the Godavari are its two major rivers and the Penna, the Tungabhadra, the Langulaya and the Vamsadhara are its minor rivers.

The Simhachalam has a population of 8,100 (1981 census) people. The Simhachalam temple stands on the hills which is locally known as the Simhachalam. the height of the Simhachalam temple is about 1,500 feet above the mean sea level. A natural valley runs along the north western slope of the hill covering almost half of the height of the hill. In course of time, a small village grew round the
temple and steps were built along with the course of water sloping down to serve as an approach both to the village and the shrine.

The Simhachalam temple is dedicated to Lord Narasimha (Man-Lion), the fourth incarnation of Lord Vishnu, placed on the hill top. The climate of the hills is influenced by their elevation and nearness to the Sea, is cool, steady and enjoyable. The mean temperature is not known to rise beyond 92°F nor fall below 68°F. The main difference in the climate of the port town Visakhapatnam on the plains and of Simhachalam on the hill is that the Summer is still less pronounced and the winter is a little more severe at Simhachalam.

The rainfall of Visakhapatnam district when compared with the Godavari-Krishna region is less. The mean annual rainfall on the hills is about 40 inches. Maximum rainfall occurs in the month of October during the retreating monsoon period and the mean monthly average is about 7 inches. The soil of Visakhapatnam district in most of the areas is red and contrasts with the fertile blacksoil of the deltaic region. And the associated rocks bring forth black soil. The soil on the western hills, supports maximum vegetation.

The hill range on account of its climate, rainfall, and soil has abundant growth of flora. The hill, cut into terraces, is now made use of for developing large plantations of pineapple, jackfruit and banana. The hills are dotted with fruit-bearing trees. The hill-range also abounds in medicinal herbs, some of which are used by the natives for curing diseases, peculiar to the locality of both human beings and cattle.
The rough and irregular topography of the hill range standing in marked contrast to the low-lying plains presents a restful natural scenery. The scenery of the hills marked by green tufts of grass with bushes. The western hills particularly with their springs, are clothed in thick verdure and offer a most natural point of attraction in the entire area.

Hence, the Simhachalam, the most popular sacred place of Andhra Pradesh, constitutes a well-known cultural centre. It may be said as a Vaishnava shrine where people worship to the Lord Simhadri Appanna, capable of giving progeny to women and capable of fulfilling wishes of devotees. As the most popular vaishnava shrine of Andhra Pradesh, the Simhachalam temple is now very much alive and growing its strength as years pass by.

2.2. (A) HISTORY AND ORIGIN OF LORD JAGANNATH

The wellknown temple of Lord Jagannath stands on an eminence at Puri on the east-coast of India. The origin and antiquity of Lord Jagannath worship at Puri is still shrouded in mystery. Any authentic historical account is not forthcoming about the origin of the Deities and their first installation at Puri. There were various Puranas, recorded different accounts, but many of them agree that before the incarnation of Lord Jagannath at Puri, Nila Madhab was the presiding Deity in Purushottam Kshetra and even till the present day His image is being worshipped on the Ratha Sinhasan to the left side of Lord Jagannath (Panda : 1952).

For centuries, Puri has been an important centre of Hindu worship, famous alike for sanctity and historic associations. The sanctity of this place, the seat of Jagannath, the Lord of the Universe exists from prehistoric
period, to which traditions cannot reach.

History says that the structure of the present temple was put up in the time of a king of Orissa, Ananga Bhima Dev, who ruled Kalinga Kingdom in 1174 A.D. The temple of Jagannath built in an elevated ground about 20 feet above the level of surrounding area, presents an imposing sight and can be seen from miles away.

Jagannath, as a synonym of either a Budhist or Brahmanical deity in origin does not find mention in the popular lexicon 'Namalinganusanam' which was compiled in the fourth century A.D. The first mention of Jagannath, as the manifestation of the Buddha is found in the work, 'Jnanasiddhi' of Indrabhuti, the founder of Vajrayana system of the Buddhism (Mahapatra : 1954). Jagannath propitiated by Indrabhuti in the beginning of his work. The image of Jagannath, be it Brahminical or Buddhist, in origin, is not found anywhere else in ancient India, except at Puri. The images of Jagannath that are to be seen in various other places of Orissa, Bengal, Bihar, M.P., and Andhra Pradesh, were carved in imitation of the image of Jagannath at Puri which has got a long history behind it.

Traditions regarding the Buddhist origin of Jagannath are current in Orissa for centuries, and have found expression in the Oriya literature of 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. The Buddhist origin of Jagannath also finds mention in the literature of Dharma cult written in old Bengali language which will be evident from the esoteric Buddhist literature.

According to tradition, Sankaracharya (788 - 820 A.D.) in course of his spiritual conquest of India, stayed at Puri which was well known by his time as a chief centre of religion and culture. He found Bhogavardhan Pitha at Puri, which is one of the four Sankaracharya pithas of
India. Sankara defeated the Buddhist Pandits of this place by his vast learning and irrefutable arguments, converted most of them to his own faith and proclaimed Jagannath Buddha as identical with great Brahminical God Purushottama of the Gita. This peaceful process of assimilation of a great Buddhist deity into the pantheon of Brahminism strengthened its influence at Jagannath-Puri, which was a strong centre of Buddhism before his days. After establishment of pitha by Sankara at Jagannath-Puri forms a landmark in the history of Orissa, as it was followed by the revival of Sanskrit learning and literature in this area (Mohapatra: 1957).

The earliest work of importance is the Mahabharata of Sarala Das, written in the 15th century A.D. during the reign of King Kapilendradeva. Sarala Das appears to describe the origin of the worship of Jagannath to that of Madhava or Nilamadhava, also named Sabarinarayana by the Sabara community of the bygone days. The story begins with Vasu Sabara (Visvavasu), the son of Jara Sabara, who used to worship secretly the stone image of the traditional God of his community - Madhava. The practice of secret worship is ascribed to the command of the deity Madhava Himself; the God wanted to be worshipped secretly because of the Kaliyuga, and had threatened Vasu to wipe out his community if disclosed the secret to others.

Mishra in 1971 discussed that Indradyumna was a devotee of Vishnu and was inspired by what he had heard from Jara regarding the worship of Krishna. After offering prayers to Jamesvara Mahadāva at Puri he completed the construction of a temple and was anxious about the deity whose image would be installed there. Indradyumna established friendship with Jara who told him about the existence of the half burnt body of Srikrishna at Rohini Kunda. Krishna was killed by Jara's arrow and while his body...
was being consumed in fire, a heavenly voice ordered to throw the half-burnt body into the sea. This partly burnt body of Krishna floated down to Rohini Kunda in the shape of a Daru. When Indradyumna's efforts to remove the Daru away from Rohini Kunda failed, he was advised by Srikrishna in a dream, to send for Jara Sabar and Vasu Brahmin to lift the "Mahameru-like Daru" which was not a "mere piece" of log, but the 'Pinda' or the very body of Srikrishna himself. Indradyumna followed these instructions and employed the services of Jara and Vasu who were able to lift the Daru. The striking feature here was that where there was failure of thousands of Indradyumna's men to remove the daru but the miraculous success of the joint endeavour of two persons belonging to two different cultures, namely the non-Aryan and Aryan.

Now Indradyumna was at a loss as to how the images could be made out of the Daru. So he again sought divine grace. The Lord appeared in a dream and asked him to request Jara to build the images. Jara entered into the temple and along with a queer-looking Brahmin and out of the Daru, constructed three images of three different shapes - the tallest, the medium size and the smallest. When the sound of the implements used in the making of the images was no longer heard, Indradyumna became impatient and dashed inside the temple and found incomplete images. Sarala Das said that Jara's descendants would be known as Daitas and those of Vasu as the Brahmin priests; both the groups are now associated with the Jagannath worship in temple. The wooden statues of Jagannath which have very peculiar and uncommon features, have been explained on due to the will of Vishnu. The effort to explain the strange form and the unusual substance (wood) of Jagannath - is the beginning of speculations not only about the "Origin" of Jagannath, but also about His "true nature" with the development of the concept of Jagannath as a deity proceeds.
also the upvaluation of wooden image. Both the form and the substance of it, seem to have disturbed the upper strata of the Hinduistic society from the very beginning. In fact, the upvaluation of Jagannath is the natural consequence of the upvaluation of Nilachal (Tripathy : 1978).

Lord Jagannath is like a clear mirror in which everybody finds himself reflected and confirmed, but which remains untouched, unspoiled and unaffected. He majestically stands there on His throne graciously smiling down to his devotees. Lord Jagannath stands as a unique symbol of the great flexibility and dynamics of Hinduism, of its capacity to absorb, integrate and remodel, of its tolerance and magnanimity (Tripathy : 1977).

Throughout the history of Hindu religion, symbols and forms and personalistic conceptions of the Divinity have played a great part in matters of worship. In Hinduism, the domain of symbols and worship of divine personalities is a vast one, so we followed some of the symbols used and divine personalities adored, in worship and meditation, from the Vedic times down to the present day with a view to realising God in some aspect or other (Swami Yatiswarananda : 1956 : 433).

2.2. (B) HISTORY AND ORIGIN OF LORD NARASIMHA

The origin of the Simhachalam temple is shrouded in mystery and legends. It has a hoary past of about 1000 years. Like many other Shrines of South India, the Simhachalam temple has a 'Sthalapurana' (Sthalamahatmaya) of its own which gives a mythological origin to the temple. This temple has been a centre around which many legends have been woven and songs have been sung. The current tradition in and around Simhachalam recounts these stories and many literary compositions in Telugu record the glories of Simhadrinatha.
On the basis of historical evidence, it has been accepted by the scholars that the temple of Simhachalam was probably founded in about 9th century A.D. The epigraphical evidence starts from the reign of Kulottunga, the Chalukya Chola ruler (A.D. 1076 - 1118) who was responsible for introducing Tamil culture into this region of Kalinga. From 11th century the temple grew into vaishnava centre.

In the 13th century, the entire temple renovated by Narasimha Deva (A.D. 1237 - 63), the Ganga ruler who was responsible for building the Konark temple. Under the patronage of Gangas and under the care of Madhava saints like Narahariteertha the temple became an important Vaishnavite centre.

The local 'Sthalapurana' contains account of the foundations of the temple and relates the well known story of Hiranyakasipu who was furious with his son Prahalada, for his ardent devotion to his mortal enemy, Vishnu, with a view to getting rid of such a misbehaviour and undesirable son, so he subjected him to various forms of cruel treatments. The Sthalapurana further narrates how Prahalad was thrown into the sea and Simhachalam hill placed on top of him and how Vishnu went to the youth's rescue stood on one side of the hill and tipped it up so that the boy could crawl out on the other, and how Prahalada in his gratitude founded this shrine. Thus Simhadri is the place where the Lord rescued Prahalada. The form of Varaha Narasimha was assumed by him.

In subsequent ages this temple which was the favourite resort of Devas, fell into disuse and decay. King Pururava with his beloved consort, Urvasi during their peregrination are said to have visited this hill and at the instance of Urvasi, located the God, who appeared in his dream and ordained that he should be exposed to view only
on the third day of bright half of the month of Vaisakha and that he should be covered up with sandal paste during the rest of the year. So Chandan Yatra festival is performed on the 3rd day of the bright half of the month of Vaisakha (Akhsaya Thrutiya).

The story of Prahalada can be found both in the 'Vishnu Purana' and the 'Bhagabata'. Like all the Sthalapuranas dealing with Prahalada story, the 'Sthalapurana' of Simhachalam temple draws from these classical Puranas. Jaya and Vijaya, the gatekeepers of the celestial abode of Lord Vishnu, were cursed to be born as demons by the Lord for the disrespect they showed to some visiting sages. They were born as Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksha to the sage Kasyapa, and grew into mighty demon lords, disturbing the peace of the world. Sumukha was born as a son of Hiranyakasipu, named as Prahalad, became a devotee of Lord Vishnu even from his birth and thus brought upon himself the wrath of his father.

The most important of the traditional stories current around the temple is the visit of Ramanuja to the temple. He visited the temple after his victorious debate at Puri, and stay at Srikuramam. Ramanuja found the Simhachala 'Kshetra', a centre of saivism. He engaged the "Pandits" there in a discussion and defeating them in a debate, took personal possession of the temple and converted it into a vaishnavite shrine. He ordered the priests to convert the Linga into a 'vaishnava' icon of the Varaha Narasimha. Immediately the work of conversion began, but before the work was finished, the icon began to bleed. This was taken to mean that the Lord was displeased, and acting under the impulse of restoring its former shape, the 'Sthapatis' applied sandalwood paste all over the image. Then, the flow of blood stopped. They presumed that the Lord desired to manifest himself in that form. So the idol
can't be kept in the shape of a Linga, allowing only a single day for the display of the new form.

This tradition is not supported by any literary testimony. But the protagonists of the Vaishnava origin, however, argue that these arguments are all deliberate attempts to debase the prestige of Vaishnava shrines in general and of Ramauja in particular who enjoy great popular esteem. The devout 'Vaishnavas' believe that Simhachala Narasimha is a self-manifesting (Svayamvyakta) deity, and to trace any deficiency in the make up of the image is a blasphemy. The Lord willed to be in the form of Varaha Narasimha, covered with sandalwood paste (Sundaram : 1969).

The Simhachalam temple is a veritable treasure house of inscriptions. The bulk of the inscriptions are incised on the inner walls and pillars of the cloister of the temple. The very early inscriptions because of the renovation of the 13th century, are found only at places like the Alvar Sennidhi, the outer walls of the Assembly Hall, the marriage hall and the porch near Gangadhara.

The main purpose of all the records, whether they are incised by kings or private individuals, is to donate gifts in kind or in cash to the Lord for their wealth, prosperity and progeny. These donations are usually meant for the upkeep of service or a 'bhoga' or to reward men connected in some way with the temple. Though the main purpose of the inscriptions is donative, they supply the historian valuable details of political and social history by mentioning the names of the king holding sway over the region and by giving details of the date and nature of grant and of the antecedents of the recipient.
2.3. (A) STATE AS WELL AS NATIONAL LEVEL IMPORTANCE

LORD JAGANNATH

The Puri temple of Lord Jagannath which occupies an unique position not only in the state of Orissa, but also in relation to the whole of the union. It's national importance is so great that it needs no mention to the public of India.

Lord Jagannath primarily a Hindu deity, had been made to symbolize the Orissan empire, a collection of heterogenous elements, the person or the dynasty of the monarch being the binding force (Dash: 1977). The history of Jagannath is to a great extent, the religious history of Orissa. Jagannath is the oldest deity in the world; who is still being worshipped. The worship of Jagannath is based on syncretism of different creeds.

The all—India Hindu tradition is just like a circle being composed by the segments of the regional traditions which are represented by ellipses. The regional traditions again are composed of the segments of several ellipses representing the sub-regional traditions which are again interlocked ellipses and demonstrate the graphical nature of the character of a continuum typical for the process of Hinduisation. Thus the process of Hinduisation is, therefore, almost paradoxically interrelated to the regional tradition in a double way. The Hindu tradition which is the frame of reference of Hinduisation, is at the same time its product (Eschmann: 1978).

The recognition of Jagannath as the "King of the Orissan Empire" under whose overlordship henceforward the king ruled as his deputy and son finally established in the early 13th century the legitimation ideology of the future Gajapati Kings of Orissa. But the early development of the cult and the origin of its strong relationship with the
political power in Orissa has to be traced back to the Somavamsa dynasty after their conquest of central Orissa.

Generally in Hindu religion, people worship a variety of Gods, Goddesses annually on different occasions and during different ceremonies or festivals. A typical Hindu devotee believes in a myriad of Gods whose total number is about 33 crores. The history of Hindu places of pilgrimage (Tirtha) is inextricably linked with the bhakti faith. This bhakti religion with its emphasis on personal faith and self-sacrifice became the best religion. Here one of the characteristic features of the cults at these centres of pilgrimage was an increasing process of a ritual "royalisation" of the deities. It shows how an ordinary Hindu is a polytheist. Common people pay respect to all deities.

The Jaganath temples in a strict sense of the term are distinguished by their cult images of wooden materials representing Jagannath, Subhadra and Balabhadra, often with the addition of the Sudarsana-chakra to complete the fourfold form of God.

Most of the autochthonous tutelary deities of Orissa underwent a process of Hinduisation, the intensity and direction of which usually was directly influenced by the parallel rise of the sub-regional political authority from tribal Chieftainship to Hindu Kingship (Kulke: 1978). Through the construction of the great temple (Bada-deula) at Puri, Jagannath becomes the most important deity of Orissa in particular and India in general.

The worship of Lord Jagannath is for the highest minds among the Hindus, a pure system of theism. To the polytheistic multitude it offers the infinite phases of divinity as objects of worship and provide for their
delectation, an infinite number of ritual and ceremonials. In a word, it supplies the spiritual requirements of different classes of Hindus at different stages of their intellectual development.

A number of new temples of Jagannath, the most important deity of Hindus are coming up in many places outside Orissa and even outside India. Under the auspicious of the International Society of Krishna consciousness (whose head-quarters is in Los Angeles, California of U.S.A.) temples of Jagannath are being constructed at several cities all over the world.

Lord Jagannath is an unsectarian name. All Hindu sects of India as well as of the world worship the deity, which is eclectic. The followers of Sankaracharya, Ramananda, Kabir, Chaitanya, Nanak are to be seen doing homage to the great God. The common link of all these sects is their beliefs in the supremacy of Jagannath.

People from all parts of India resort to Puri - the seat of Jagannath - the Lord of the Universe, as it is considered by all as the most important sacred place of India. The world famous car festival of Jagannath is not only restricted within India, but also performed in London, San Fransisco and at several other centres. People of different countries observe the car festival. It shows the gradual emergence of an International cult which is being developed from purely a local cult.

Pilgrimage to reputed holy places have ever been popular in India. No pilgrimage was ever so extensively practised and so generally famed as that of pilgrimage to Jagannath of Puri. It is difficult to imagine by what fortuitous circumstances that idol became so celebrated. This national reverence for holy places has been for ages
concentrated on the city of Puri. On these inhospitable sands, Hindu religion and Hindu superstitions have stood out for 18 centuries against the world. Here is the national temple where the people flock to worship from every corner of India.

Thus, through the Jagannath temple Puri attracts pilgrims from all over India, and may be called as religious centre of all-India importance, still it is indissolubly bound up with the culture and history of Orissa-Jagannath cult and Oriya culture are almost identical. The all India importance of the Jagannath cult is derived from its firm rootedness in the soil of Orissa (Lutt : 1977).

2.3. (B) STATE AS WELL AS NATIONAL LEVEL IMPORTANCE OF LORD NARASIMHA

The Simhachalam temple, like other temples of the land, represents more the outward projection of peoples' inner spiritual aspirations. It is a centre the community gathering around to satisfy their religious and cultural life. The people endow the temple and this enriches the liberal arts, each one of them comprising one means of dedication to the deity. In an indirect way, the temple also serves as a means to transfer the wealth from the more wealthy sections of the community to the less favoured and deserving sections of the community. The Telugu proverb "the temple is a better place of security than the house" offers a clue to the economic, social and political status of the temple. It is a place where one can at anytime expect not only food and shelter but also security and solace.

The temple is not playing the same cultural role as it played in medieval times. Though it now extends its paternage to the study of "Veda", "Puranas", 'Itihasa' and
'Agama', it does not maintain the vast array of musicians, singers and dancers, which it used to maintain. On the other hand, it now spends liberally to encourage sanskritised education, charitable institutions and other temples.

Simhachalam acts as a meeting place of men hailing from different places and pursuing different vocations. One of major sections of devotees hails from Orissa. From medieval period to present days, it has been occupying a special attraction to people from all the places of India, particularly from Orissa. The influences from different regions made their imprint on Simhachalam and shaped its political and cultural history. On the political plane, the region became a bone of contention between the royal dynasties situated to its north and south. As a consequence, Gangas and Gajapatries on one side, Chalukya Cholas, Kakatiyas, Reddis and the Vijayanagar rulers on the other, exercised their influence on this region. The administration, ritual, cultural life, architecture, sculpture and epigraphy of the temple reveal the influence from the region of Orissa, Andhra and Tamil Nadu. Thus, the interest of Simhachalam temple lies in its variety of enrichments.

Inscriptions of Simhachalam Temple are a valuable guide to the chronology of the political as well as social life of the medieval times beginning from the last quarter of the 11th century and ending in the first quarter of the 17th century. These inscriptions are eminently useful for the reconstruction of the political history of the region. Simhachalam was like a landmark in the Kalinga region. All the kings who claimed authority over this part of Kalinga invariably incised their inscriptions on the walls of the temple. The earliest inscriptions belong to the reign of the Chalukya Chola. The main bulk of inscription pertains to the royal family of the Gangas.
The Simhachalam inscriptions are of great value for a study of the political and cultural history of the region. The architecture of Simhachalam temple is an admixture of South Indian Dravidian style and Orissan style. Hence, it is not homogenous. The shifting nature of political history of the area and the lack of any definite style of architecture indigenous to this area made it open to several influences.

The sculptures in the temple hold a great attraction to the pilgrims and devotees who visit the temple. They praise the religious sculptures, which abound in the temple, with great esteem. And this sculptures at Simhachalam temple remain the witnesses of the great workmanship and all the same their 'Charm' infinite variety and the marvellous skill (of the sculpture) which used 'stone like metal' are praise-worthy. The remarkable growth of Visakhapatnam during present century has been to the advantage of Simhachalam and contributed to its development and there is a continuous flow of population between the former and latter. Many offices of the state and central Governments are located on the route to Simhachalam. The villages lying on this route have prospered by catering to the needs of Visakhapatnam. The entire area from Visakhapatnam to Simhachalam gradually became well-knitted with communication. Then, the 'Zamindars' of Vijayanagaram have been greatly responsible for the continued prosperity of the temple in the modern times. They endowed the temple with lands and are responsible for channelling the water of the mountain for flowers and fruits and popularising the temple by their patronage. The temple now owns land in the villages situated nearby, and thus plays a significant role in the economic life of the region. It is now one of the principal suppliers of flowers and fruits to the markets of Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram, Chittivalasa and Kottavalasa. Simhachalam is thus very much alive and grows in strength as years pass by.
As an important vaishnava shrine of Andhra Pradesh, the Simhachalam Temple is easily the most popular temple of Visakhapatnam district. The names like 'Simadri', 'Appana', 'Simhalu', 'Simhachalam' and so on are very popular among the people of the villages and towns. The names are with reverence to the Lord Simadri Appana capable of giving progeny to women. To understand the influence exerted by Srimahadrinath over the common folk of the district, one has to visit the temple in early hours on Saturdays and on festive occasions. The villagers enjoy themselves by coming here from the previous day, form into circles and spend the entire night singing devotional songs (Bhajan) in praise of the Lord, before they pay obeisance to the Deity.

The Simhachalam temple has the national importance due to its sculptural and architectural uniqueness. The temple is very important for its stone inscriptions carved on the walls of the temple. The importance of Simhachalam temple in state level is now more prominent due to Visakhapatnam port and as it was in medieval times. Its cultural influence extends from the Godavari to the region of the Mahanadi and festivals are being attended by a vast number of pilgrims covering all cornners of India.

2.4. (A) LORD JAGANNATH AND PURI IN HINDU LITERATURE

Puri (Shrikshetra) has been an important centre of Hindu worship, famous alike for sanctity and historic associations. The sanctity of this place, the seat of Lord Jagannath, the Lord of the Universe, exists from prehistoric period where traditions can not even reach properly. To determine the antiquity of Lord Jagannath as well as Puri is a difficult task Legend and tradition throw light on the problem, but a critical examination of the evidences furnished by them is essential for any reasonable
hypothesis to be made on their basis. It is necessary to turn to Sanskrit texts both Vedic and Puranic for the purposes.

In the Rigveda we find a reference to Daru (wood) in the Sukta. This verse also occurs on the Atharva Veda with a slight variation. Sayanacharya (1300 - 1380 A.D) interpreted this Sukta and referred the name of the Lord as Purusottama and place of worship as the supreme place of the Vaisnavite. In Purusottams tattva (Jiv.Vol II P.563), Raghunandana explains the same verse from both Rigveda and Atharva Veda with reference to Purusottama Jagannath of Puri.

During the age of Upanisadas we also find reference to the description of Purusa as the creator of the universe. Various conception of Purusa as described in them are the special features of the Upanisadas. The Svetasvetara Upanisada and the Kaivalya Upanisada describe Purusa as one who possesses neither hands nor legs, who has no eyes but sees everything, no ears but hears all and who though unknowable knows everything. This description of Purusa serves as the basis of the peculiar form of Purusottama and His associates.

Valmiki mentions Jagannath in the Uttarakanda of the Ramayana wherein Rama is described as exhorting Vibhisana to devote himself to the worship of Jagannath. Scholars, however, are of the opinion that the Uttarakanda of the Ramayana is the composition of a much later date and that there have been lots of interpolations in the text. But, there are reference to the names of the deities in the Kiskinda Kanda which may not be regarded as a later insertion.
Tradition has associated the worship of the deity Purusottama with the name of Indradyumna. The epic story of Indradyumna and the tank named after him, appear to have helped to develop the traditional association of the king Indradyumna and Indradyumna Sarovara with Purusottama Jagannath. In the Mahabharata the name of Indradyumna is mentioned. In the Mahabharata (III, 114/22A) we find mention of Vedi which is identified by some with Antarvedi where Lord Jagannath is enshrined. We find a reference in the Santi Parva of the Mahabharata regarding the religion of Lord Jagannath.

The references of Purusottams Kshetra (Puri) and Lord Jagannatha are made in the Puranas. The Matsya Purana, which is considered as one of the oldest of the Puranas mentions Purusottama Kshetra at two places. But, it contains no reference to the deity Jagannath or the king Indradyumna. Among the later Puranas, namely Vishnu, Agni, Padma, Narada, Brahma and Skanda, we got more references to Lord Jagannatha, the deity and the place of his installation. But, it is only in the Agni, Padma, Brahma and the Skanda Puranas, there occur passages about the sanctity of the place, construction of the temple and the part played by king Indradyumna.

Skanda Purana differs with other puranas on certain area as it introduces some novel features. Now, when the Padma Purana refers to Purusottama as worshipped by the Bhils, the Skanda Purana presents Purusottama as the "Sabara Devata" or the deity devoutly worshipped by the Sabaras under the leadership of Visvavasu. It introduces the term Mahavedi Antarvedi in the place of 'Vedi' of the Mahabharata. It also introduces the conception of 'chaturdha-murti' (four-images) by narrating the process of installation on the Mahavedi of the four deities in the temple of Puri. The idea of worshipping the three deities-
of Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra, each with a separate mantra or hymn, occurs for the first time in the Skanda Purana. The specification of the colour and dress of the three deities is also another notable feature. Finally, the description of each deity as given here also deserves careful consideration.

In other Sanskrit texts, we find reference to Purosottama Dharma and the deities of Purusottama, Subhadra and Balabhadra in Barhaspatyasutram, Kapilasamhita, Tirthachintamani, Ksetramahatmya, Niladrimahodaya, Purusottamachandrika, Rudrayamala, Tantrayamala, Purusottamatatva, Saubhagyamanjusa etc. Expecting Niladrimahodaya, all these works describe Purosottama more or less in the same manner as does the author of the Skanda Purana. In the Niladrimahodaya, however, a detailed account of rituals and festivals associated with the worship of Purusottama Jagannatha is given.

No account of the tradition associated with Lord Jagannatha can be regarded as complete without the consideration of various literary works in Oriya. The earliest work of importance of this nature is the Mahabharata of Sarala Dasa, written in the fifteenth century A.D. during the reign of king Kapilendradeva. Sarala Dasa appears to ascribe the origin of the worship of Lord Jagannath to that of Madhava or Nilamadhava, also named Sabarinarayana by the Sabara community of the bygone days. He gives a detailed description of installation of three deities: Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra.

The Deulatola by Nilambava Dasa offers a slightly different account of the three images, but much details regarding the construction of the temple and the installation of the images of the three deities is given by Sisukrushna Dasa. Jagannatha Dasa in his 'Daru Brahmagita'
presents the story of the construction of the temple as well as the images with a little variation. Lord Jagannatha has very often been characterised as the Buddha incarnation of Vishnu in the Orissan literary tradition. Already Sarala Dasa (1st half of the 15th century) refers to this identification several times in his Oriya Mahabharata.

This tradition persisted and flourished in the works of Panchasakha (the five associates of Chaitanya in Puri, beginning of 16th century) and others in the 16th century and was again revived in the 19th century by the sect of Mahima Dharma. Such associations with Buddha led many scholars to conduct that Jagannatha has originally been a Buddhist deity.

Yet, Buddha was not the only form of Vishnu which Lord Jagannath was identified with. There are sufficient evidences in the cult practices to show that at least in a certain phase of His development, Lord Jagannatha has really been considered as identical with Nrusimha, the Man-Lion. The Purusottama Mahatmya of Skanda-Purana, for example, views Nrusimha as a combined form of all the three deities, Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra. Even to this day, on the occasion of renewal of the wooden images (the festival of Navakalevara) when the wood for fashioning the images in cut in the forest, the 'Vanayaga' is mainly conducted mainly with the Nrusimha mantras and even the consecration ceremony of the images, later, is uniformly performed with the 32-syllabic Mantraraja-Nrusimha-Mantra.

It was the Krishna incarnation, however, which was to succeed in the end; partially also due to the reason that the cult of Krishna became increasingly popular in the beginning of 11th and 12th centuries not only in the South but also in Bengal and Orissa owing to the tremendous influence of Bhagavata Purana. Till the time of Sarala Dasa
the identification of Lord Jagannath with Krishna must have become very popular that he was inspired to evolve an interesting story about the material identification of the wooden image of Lord Jagannath with the (dead) body of Krishna. He ingeniously combines two different traditions regarding the nature of Lord Jagannatha - one declaring him to be Buddha and the other to be Krishna. The substance of the wooden status of Lord Jagannatha is Krishna himself whereas its form is that of Buddha.

Gajapati Purusottamadeva, the powerful Monarch of Orissa (1464 - 1497 A.D.) himself worshipped Jagannath as Krishna is attested by a reference in a contemporary Oriya work and the Gitagovinda of Jayadeva describing the amorous sports of Krishna with Radha and other comrades was regularly recited before the deities in the night. Jagannatha is now Krishna.

One important fact which cannot be overlooked here is the introduction of the practice of reciting Gitagovinda before the deities in the main temple, and the sacramental nature of the song composed by the poet Jayadeva. According to Nimbranka, Vallabhacharya, Shri Chaitanya and many other Vaishnava Acharyas, Radha and Krishna concept was a sort of dualism referring to the Bhakta and Bhagavan i.e. the devotee and the god, and nothing else.

Jagannatha Dash composed the Oriya Bhagavata to propagate the liberal Vaishnavism among the people. The style which he adopted was so simple and philosophy which he explained through his work was so universally accepted throughout Orissa that his Bhagavata was daily recited and worshipped in each house. Even at present it is still continuing in almost all villages of Orissa. All these facts lead to the conclusion that Lord Jagannatha has been taken by the people as the central figure of Vaishnavism (Mishra - 1984).
Salbeg, son of Lalbeg, a Muslim General of 17th century and a brahmin widow was a great poet of Vaishnavism particularly of Lord Jagannatha. He composed many beautiful songs in reverence of Lord Jagannatha after he was denied entry to the temple. His songs are still being sung amongst the people of Orissa.

The Puja manuals of Lord Jagannatha enjoin that a meditation on the deity (Krishna) is to be done against the setting of beautiful Vrindavana situated on the bank of Yamuna. This, of course, simultaneously makes the place Vrindavana in North India the main abode of the deity and the temple of Puri or the Blue Mountain (Nilachala) only a subsequent and subsidiary spot of divine manifestation. The beginning of 16th century witnessed a reaction on this predominance of Vrindavana. The five Oriya associates of Chaitanya (Panchasakha) declared the Blue Mountain to be the 'eternal peace', the nityāsthala of Krishna. "Vrindavana, Mathura, Dwarka and Ayodhya etc. are the places which have originated from the Nilachala and contain only a part of the glory of Puri", says Balarama Dasa one of the Panchasakha, in his Vedanatsaraguptagita. The Purusottama Mahatmya according to Vishnurahasya which, in all probability, has been composed in the first half of the 16th century, also considers Nilachala as the eternal dhama of Vishnu from where the Bhaktas do not have to come back to the mundane regions once they arrive in it. The upvaluation of Lord Jagannatha is, in fact, natural consequence of the upvaluation of Nilachala.

It is significant to note here that the superiority of Jagannatha and Nilachala over Krishna and Vrindavana is propagated not only by the Oriya poets of Orissa but also by some 'northerners' who should have less reasons to be so enthusiastic about the Kshetra. Bhupati Pandita, a Brahmin from Uttara Pradesh learned Oriya and
composed the famous Oriya Kavya Premapanchamrita towards the end of 17th century.

The Muktichintamani, an anthology of reference to the glory of Jagannatha (around 1500 A.D.) quotes Brhadvishnupurana saying that; the glow which shines like a streak of lighting in the space of the heart of the Yogins, invisible on the Blue Mountain in the shape of a wood.

Kavisamrat Upendra Bhanja Deva, the greatest of the Oriya poets, writing in the 18th century, describes the image of Lord Jagannatha as shapeless, devoid of form being the svarupa of Vishnu. To him, Lord Jagannatha represents the nirguna (non-qualified) form of God.

The Universality of Jagannatha-religion is most prominently noticed in the acceptance of Mahaprasad by members of all castes and creeds together. The greatness of Mahaprasada has been loudly acclaimed in the Puranas, such as Padma, Vishnu, Bhavisya, Brahmavaivarata, Varaha, Garuda and other tantric texts like the Brahmayamala and Rudrayamala. Rather than washing the hand after taking Mahaprasada, a devotee touches his head with that hand as he considers Mahaprasada to be most sacred.

2.4. (B) LORD NARASIMHA AND SIMHACHALAM IN HINDU LITERATURE

The most important feature of Simhachalam temple is its Vaishnava icons. This is a treasure house of several forms of Narasimha. The sculpture is based on slokas and stavas of Narasimha. There are forceful representations of the incarnations of different forms of Lord Vishnu. The culture of this region was thus an admixture of the traditions coming from Orissa, Andhra and Tamilnadu and may also influenced the art and architecture of this region. The most characteristic feature of the Simhachalam temple is its variety of enrichment itself. The temple has the
architectural and sculptural peculiarities.

The Simhachalam, like many other shrines of South India, has a 'Sthalamahatmya (also known as 'sthalapurana') of its own which has given a mythological origin to the temple. The current tradition in and around Simachalam recounts these stories, and many literary compositions in Telugu record the glories of Simhadrinatha.

Sthalapurana:
The Sthalapurana is divided into thirty two chapters. The number is obviously chosen to glorify the thirty two manifestations of the Lord Narasimha which the 'Purana' mentioned. The first four chapters describe the greatness of Lord 'Nrihari' on the Simhachala, of the mountain and of its main spring, the Ganga Dhara. The 'Purana' recounts the mythological story of Lord Vishnu saving Prahalada on this mountain which is there the 5th to 29th chapter and the revival of the worship of the Lord in another life cycle by king Purarava in the concluding chapters. The 'Sathalapurana' of Simhachala is one of the many 'Sthalapuranas' written in honour of various shrines found in the country. Dr. V.C.Krishnamacharyulu observes that most of the 'Sthalapuranas' of the Telugu country were composed after the attempted establishment of Islam in Andhra during the 14th century. He points out that the writers of the 'Sthalapuranas', had written in honour of the shrines dedicated to Lord Narasimha tried to associate the stories written about. Thus, the well known Narasimha 'purana' written to glorify the Lord of Ahobala Kshetra by Yerra Preggada, connects the story of Narasimha found in Vishnu Purana with Ahobala. Ahobala is stated to be the place where Lord Vishnu rested after killing Hiranyakasipu. In a similar fashion, the 'Sthalamahatmya' describes Simhachalam as the spot where Lord Vishnu discovered to rescue Prahalada. Thus, the very nature and
purpose for which the 'Sthalapuranas' were written preclude them from giving any historical information.

Errapragada

Errapragada, of the famous trinity "Kavi Traya" who translated the Mahabharata into Telugu and who flourished in the 14th century was the first to make reference to Simhadri in the extant literature. In his 'Nrisimha Puranam' he mentions Simhadri as a place of pilgrimage which was visited by a sage in the course of his tour to holy places in India. However, Errapragada does not describe the place, as the main aim of his work was to celebrate the Lord Nrisimha of the Ahobala 'Kshetra'.

Srinatha :

If Errapragada, makes a mention of Simhadri, Srinath, the Telugu poet, who flourished in the 15th century, described a festive gathering at the 'Kshetra' (Simhadri Tirunallu) and various classes of ladies that assembled at the festive gathering after they climbed up the hill. He was a poet laureate of the Reddi court in the early fifteenth century.

Krishnadeva Raya : (A.D. - 1509 - 29)

Krishnadeva Raya, the great poet king of Vijayanagara, mentions his visit to Simhadri in his 'Amuktamalyada' and this is also repeated in the 'Manucharitra' of his court-poet Allasani Peddana. Krishnadeva Raya's visit to Simhadri is also mentioned in 'Krishnaraya Vijaya' by Dhurjati, the well known poet of the 17th century, who notes in his work that Krishnadeva Raya planted a pillar of victory at Simhadri.
Pingali Surana, another renowned Telugu poet of late 16th century, also mentions about 'Simhachaladhiśa' in his great classic 'Kalapurṇṇodayam', while describing the pilgrims of 'Manikandhara'.

Two poets named Kuchimanchi Timmkavi of 18th century and Kattamuri Kameswara Kavi of 19th century composed their 'Prabandhas'. The former's work 'Simhasaila Mahatmya' is a 'Prabandha' of five cantos which narrates the story of the incarnation of God Vishnu as Varaha Narasimha. The second poet wrote 'Lakhami Narasimhacharitra'.

Kurmanatha, writer poet of 18th century wrote 'Simhadri Narasimha Sataka'. The story of Muslim invasion on the Simadri temple and the rebuff was beautifully described with full of invective and satire. This 'sataka' of Kuramanatha is a popular work and is known to many devotees of the Lord. The devotees of the Lord usually cite this work to show the efficacy of the devotion to Simhadrinatha.

Literary references apart, there are several anonymous writers who sang devotional songs in praise of Lord Simhadrinatha. Some of the devotional songs are now preserved in the Oriental Manuscripts Library at Madras.