

Recent Study on Two Vaishnavite Temples of the Undivided Puri District of Odisha in India

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Abstract: The study of the Vishnavite temples of the undivided Puri district is an important aspect of the temple building activities of Odisha in Eastern India. The district of Puri is well-known in Odisha for its historic antiquities and religious sanctuaries. The Vaishnavite temples noticed in the different parts of the undivided Puri district represent the Kalinga style of temple architecture of Odisha. Among the extant Vaishnavite temples, two have been taken here for the scholarly discussion. The names and sites of these two temples are viz; Sakhi-Gopala temple of Kantolbai and Jagannatha temple of Rupadeipur. The Sakhi-Gopala temple at Kantolbai is a significant Vaishnavite shrine reflecting the religious, architectural, and artistic traditions of the late medieval period. The vimana of the Sakhi-Gopala temple houses deity Sakhi Gopala, along with subsidiary icons of Patitapabana and Radha-Krishna. The sculptural program of the temple features rich iconography from Krishna-lila narratives, including depictions of Trivikrama, Narasimha, and Varaha. The jagamohana and natamandapa are decorated with narrative reliefs that celebrate the life and exploits of Lord Krishna, alongside erotic and devotional motifs. Now, the temple is being managed under the administrative control of the Satyabadi Sakhi-Gopala Trust Board. The Jagannatha temple of Rupadeipur is a significant shrine and it plays an essential role in the religious and cultural life of the region. Architecturally, the temple follows the traditional Odishan temple design, comprising a vimana (sanctum tower) and a jagamohana (assembly hall), both aligned eastward. Iconographically, the temple preserves notable images of Vishnu's incarnations as Trivikrama, Narasimha, and Varaha in its exterior niches, each richly detailed and reflecting distinct Vaishnavite symbolism. Inside the sanctum, the wooden deities of Jagannatha, Balabhadra, Subhadra, and Sudarsana are enshrined on a simhasana, flanked by brass icons of Lakshmi, Radha-Krishna, and other figures, representing a syncretic devotional surroundings. The presence of both Shaivite and Shakta images within the Vaishnavite framework underscores Odisha's inclusive religious landscape. Overall, the temple exemplifies the continuity of sacred architectural and iconographic traditions in Odisha, serving as a vital node of rural devotion and cultural memory. The aim of this article is to focus on art and architecture along with religious significance of the above two Vaishnavite temples of the undivided Puri district of Odisha. Methodologically, both the primary as well as secondary sources have been used in this article.

Keywords: Sakhi-Gopala, Jagannatha, temple, image, art, architecture, Kantolbai, Rupadeipur, Khurda, Puri, Odisha

1. INTRODUCTION

The study of art and architecture of the Vishnavite temples of the undivided Puri district are the important aspects of the Hindu temple building activities of Odisha in Eastern India. Some of the earlier scholars had given importance to the artistic activities of the famous Vaishnavite temples of Odisha like Sri Jagannatha temple, Narasimha temple, Alarnath temple, Gopinath temple, etc, but they have not undertaken their research works on other minor Vaishnavite temples of the coastal belt of Odisha. The temples of Odisha represent a distinct category within Indian temple architecture and are commonly referred to as the "Kalinga style" (Behera, 1993, p.1). An inscription found on the capital of a pillar in the Mukha Mandapa of the Amritesvara temple at Holala (in Karnataka's Bellary district) cites the Kalinga style alongside Nagara, Dravida, and Vesara as one of the four principal classifications of Indian temples (Madras Epigraphica Report, 1914-15, p.90 and Kramrisch, Vol.1, 1946, pp.286-295). All the extant temples in Odisha, including those dedicated to Vishnu, conform to this Kalinga style architectural tradition. Within this tradition, each temple form and its structural elements are designated by specific terms (Mohapatra, 1982, p.14). The Bhubana Pradipa, a treatise on temple design,

categorizes Odishan temples into three primary types viz; *rekha*, *pidha*, and *khakhara* (Bose, 1931, p.78). A distinguishing feature of these temples is their abundance of sculptural decoration. In fact, some Vaishnavite temples of the undivided Puri district are the important sacred shrines of the coastal belt of Odisha considering their religious significance. The earlier Puri district of Odisha is divided into three modern districts like Puri, Khurda and Nayagarh. The indigenous artistic ideas of some Vaishnavite shrines/temples of the undivided Puri district draw the attention of art historians and archaeologists to do undertake research works. Among these, two Vaishnavite temples have been taken here for scholarly discussion and these shrines exhibit the *pidha* type of temple architecture of Odisha.

These temples are such as Sakhi-Gopala temple of Kantolbai and Jagannatha temple of Rupadeipur. The Sakhi-Gopala temple at Kantolbai, situated near Bhusandapur in Odisha's Khurda district, is a significant Vaishnavite shrine reflecting the religious, architectural, and artistic traditions of 16th century A.D. The Jagannatha temple of Rupadeipur is a significant Vaishnavite shrine dedicated to Lord Jagannatha, a revered form of Vishnu. Despite its rural setting and smaller scale, the temple plays an essential role in the religious and cultural life of the region. Some of the important minor Vaishnavite temples of the undivided Puri district have not been documented by the art historians in detail. Hence, the present article aims to shed light on the temple's historical significance, structural composition, and its enduring role in the spiritual life of the community. The objective of this piece of work is to highlight the art and architecture along with religious significance of the above two Vaishnavite temples of the undivided Puri district in the coastal belt of Odisha.

2. METHODOLOGY

Both the primary and secondary sources have been used in the writing of this article. The primary data have been collected through Gazetteers, Texts, the practical observation, public opinions, hearsay accounts and interview methods during the period of experimental field survey. The collected data with regard to the art, architecture and religious significance of the Sakhi-Gopala temple of Kantolbai and Jagannatha temple of Rupadeipur of the undivided Puri district is mostly based on practical observations and a few sources of the earlier scholars. A few secondary data relating to the present article are also utilised by the author. The data collected from both the primary and secondary sources are examined and used in the present article.

3. DISCUSSION AND RESULT ANALYSIS

In fact, Vaishnavism might have existed in Odisha from the early medieval period. Under the imperial Gangas, Vaishnavism flourished throughout the length and breadth of Odisha (Das, 1977, p.376). After the visit of various Vaishnava preachers to Odisha and establishment of different *mathas*, worship of Lord Vishnu in the form of Jagannatha, Rama, Narasimha, Vaman, Krishna, Narayana, Varaha, Sakhi-Gopal/Gopinath, etc. in the Puri district has been widespread. Really, Vaishnavism had deeply influenced the religious life of the people of Odisha. The descriptions of different aspects like art, architecture, religious significance, etc. of the Sakhi-Gopala temple of Kantolbai of modern Khordha district and Jagannatha temple of Rupadeipur of Puri district are briefly discussed below.

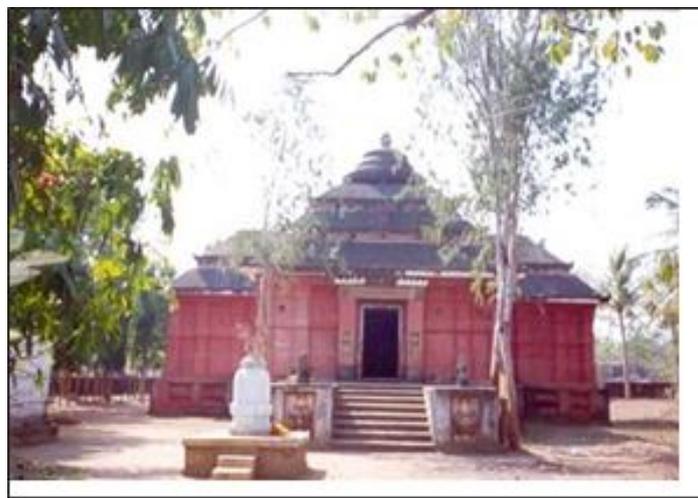
3.1. Sakshi-Gopala temple of Kantolbai

The temple of Sakhi-Gopala is located in the peaceful and culturally significant village of Kantolbai, situated approximately 1 kilometer east of Bhusandapur Railway Station in the Khordha district of Odisha. This sacred shrine holds a special place in the hearts of the local devotees and is a focal point of spiritual activity in the region. Architecturally, the temple is composed of three principal structures viz; the *vimana* (sanctum tower), the *jagamohana* (assembly hall), and the *natamandapa* (dancing hall), which collectively form the traditional layout commonly seen in temples of Odisha. Constructed using laterite and sandstone, the temple structure reflects typical regional materials and building techniques. While the temple may not possess significant architectural grandeur in terms of design innovation or intricate ornamentation, it holds immense religious and cultural value for the local population. It is considered an important shrine in the locality, drawing worshippers and visitors who seek blessings and spiritual solace. The temple has been completely renovated, and its orientation is towards the east, adhering to traditional Hindu temple architecture that aligns the deity with the rising sun. This study attempts to explore and document the artistic features along with religious sanctity of the Sakhi-Gopala temple of Kantolbai.

Art and Architecture of the temple

Vimana

The *vimana* of the Sakhi-Gopala temple is designed in the *pidha deula* (Bose, 1931, p.185), a traditional form of temple architecture commonly found in Odisha. It rises to an approximate height of 40 feet from the surface of the temple complex, standing tall and serene against the village skyline. The *vimana* is elevated on a substantial *pistha*, measuring 5 feet in height, which not only provides a strong foundation but also enhances the overall elevation and visual prominence of the shrine. The base of the *pistha* is rectangular in shape, with dimensions roughly 36 feet in length and 28 feet in width, offering a broad platform for the superstructure. The *pistha* is adorned with a series of vertical and horizontal bands, although these are relatively plain and are covered with plaster. No elaborate carvings or decorative motifs are present, indicating a simpler aesthetic approach, possibly due to renovation or stylistic choice. Above the plinth, the *bada* (base portion of the *vimana*) follows the *panchanga* type featuring five distinct divisions such as *pabhaga*, *tala jangha*, *bandhana*, upper *jangha*, and *baranda*. These elements are integral to the classical Odishan temple architectural terms, each serving structural and ornamental purposes.



At the centre of the northern side niche is housed with the four-armed image of Trivikrama, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. The deity is mounted on a double-petalled lotus pedestal, a symbolic representation of divine purity and transcendence. The iconography of deity Trivikrama is rich and traditional. The image Trivikrama holds the *chakra* (discus) in his upper right hand, the *gada* (mace) in the lower right, the *sankha* (conch) in the upper left, and a lotus (*padma*) in the lower left hand. The left leg of the deity is firmly placed on the pedestal, while the right leg is raised, touching the image of Lord Brahma a reference to the cosmic scale of Trivikrama's stride. Additionally, the right leg is depicted pressing upon the head of King Bali, symbolizing the legendary *Balidana* (sacrifice) scene associated with the Vamana avatar. Beneath the uplifted leg are two small standing figures Vamana and the sage Sukracharya, adding depth and narrative to the composition. The entire sculptural slab of the deity measures approximately 2½ feet in height, offering a compact yet powerful visual of divine authority and mythological storytelling.

On the western side of the *vimana* resides Narasimha, the fierce man-lion incarnation of Vishnu, serving as the *parsvadevata* (subsidiary deity). His image is also set upon a double-petalled lotus pedestal. The deity is depicted with four hands: the upper right hand holds the *chakra*, the upper left wields the *gada*, while the lower two hands are actively engaged in the dramatic act of disembowelling the demon king Hiranyakashyapu, his iconic adversary. The intensity of the scene is balanced by the presence of two diminutive female attendants, gracefully flanking the pedestal. The sculpture is painted in a variety of colours, enhancing the visual richness and devotional appeal of the icon.

On the southern side, we find Varaha, the boar-headed form of Vishnu, as the *parsvadevata*. This four-armed deity is installed on a uniquely three-tiered pedestal, suggesting a more elaborate design. In his upper right hand, Varaha holds the *chakra*; in the lower right, he gently supports the hand of a female figure, possibly Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and his consort. The lower left hand holds a conch (*sankha*), while the upraised left arm bears the miniature figure of Prithvi (Mother Earth), whom he is

said to have rescued from cosmic deluge. A male figure, possibly a devotee or celestial being, is also carved in a standing posture on the left side of the pedestal. This image, too, is vibrantly painted, preserving the colour tradition that once adorned many ancient Indian temples. Above the niches housing the *parśvadevatas*, the temple features projective eaves, an architectural element that provides shade and protection from the elements. These eaves are topped by two small *pidha* mouldings, arranged one above the other, adding a miniature echo of the main temple spire and contributing to the aesthetic coherence of the overall design.

The *gandi* (Bose, 1931, p.181) of the *vimana* features a pyramidal superstructure that is architecturally composed of three distinct, flat-shaped tiers known as *pidhas*. Each *pidha* forms a horizontal level, stacked one above the other, and contributes to the stepped, pyramidal appearance characteristic of this style of temple architecture. At the corners of the *kanthis*, the recessed spaces that separate these individual *pidhas*, small *dopichha* lions are fixed. These figures, named *dopichha* for their double-headed or stylized form, add ornamental and symbolic significance to the structure. Additionally, within the intervening recesses or *kanthis*, other small, intricately carved figures have been inserted. These diminutive stone sculptures represent various miscellaneous motifs and deities. Unlike the original structure, these elements were not part of the initial temple design but were added later in the 1980's by the Department of Orissa State Archaeology during restoration or enhancement work. These inserts enrich the aesthetic appeal of the *vimana* while reflecting the evolving history of the temple's maintenance and cultural additions. A particularly notable feature is that the center of the middle *pidha* on each side of the *gandi* is adorned with a *jhapa simha*, a projecting lion figure that enhances the symmetrical balance and dramatic visual appeal of the structure. On top of the *kanika pagas*, which are vertical projections rising along the sides of the *gandi*, *dopichha* lions are again prominently fixed, continuing the motif used in the lower tiers. Furthermore, Garuda figures, finely crafted and symbolically significant as the vehicle (*vahana*) of Lord Vishnu, are found inserted at the four cardinal/principal directions of the *beki* (a member positioned just above the *rahas* portion of the *gandi*). The *mastaka*, or crowning portion of the *vimana*, consists of several important architectural and symbolic elements stacked in a particular order. These include the *beki* (a neck-like structure), the *ghanta* (a bell-shaped member), another *beki* placed above the *ghanta*, the *amalaka sila* (Borner & Rath Sarma, 1966, p.141), the *khapuri* (skull-cap shaped member), the *kalasa* (a pitcher-like finial), the *ayudha* (a representation of Vishnu's chakra or weapon), and finally, the *dhvaja* (Donaldson, Vol.III, 1986, p.1183), which signifies divine presence and power.

Inside the sanctum, the temple enshrines the image of Sakhi Gopala, who is worshipped as the presiding deity. This primary deity is accompanied by a *daru* (wooden) image of Lord Patitapabana, both of whom are revered and actively worshipped. According to tradition and longstanding public belief, the current image of Sakhi Gopala was originally brought from the Vijayanagara Empire, specifically from the Kanchi region, by King Purusottama Deva. Historically, this sacred image was first enshrined in the sanctum of this very temple, before it was eventually transferred to the Jagannatha temple complex in Puri, and finally installed at the Sakhi Gopala temple at Satyabadi, where it resides today (Mohapatra, 1989, pp.72-73). Additionally, Radha-Krishna images, known as the "Chalanti Pratima" (processional deities) of the temple, are also housed within the sanctum. These brass idols are worshipped during special occasions and rituals. All these deities are placed together on a plain *simhasana* (pedestal or throne) that stands approximately 2 feet in height. The main image of Lord Gopala (Krishna) measures around 3½ feet in height and is exquisitely carved from black chlorite stone. This deity is depicted in a flute-playing pose, captured in the midst of dance, embodying a dynamic and joyous form of divinity that aligns with the Bhakti traditions of Krishna worship. The sanctum itself has a single doorway that opens into the *jagamohana* (assembly hall). The doorjambs of this entrance are relatively plain, lacking the elaborate decorative motifs typically found in many other Odisha temples. However, the base of the doorjambs is adorned with *khakhara mundis* miniature, pointed arch motifs characteristic of regional temple architecture. Interestingly, the commonly found deity images of Gaja-Lakshmi (usually placed on the lintel) and the Navagrahas (nine planetary deities typically installed above the doorway) are completely absent here.

Jagamohana

The *jagamohana* or assembly hall, of the temple is constructed in the *pidha deula* style, a traditional architectural form commonly seen in the temples of Odisha. The entire structure rises to a height of approximately 28 feet from the base level of the temple complex. This elevation contributes to the

grandeur of the temple's frontal view and establishes its importance as the primary congregational space preceding the sanctum (*vimana*). The *jagamohana* is vertically divided into four distinct architectural segments such as *pistha* (platform or base), *bada* (wall portion), *gandi* (trunk or body of the superstructure), and *mastaka* (crowning element). The *pistha*, or foundational platform, has a rectangular base, measuring approximately 65 feet in length and 25 feet in width. This expansive base provides stability and also serves as a plinth for the superstructure. The decorative treatment of the *pistha* is very similar to that of the *vimana's pistha*, indicating a harmonious architectural design shared between both structures. Though modest in ornamentation, it is essential in grounding the structure and setting the proportional aesthetics.

The *bada*, which forms the vertical wall segment above the *pistha*, follows the *panchanga* or five-fold division style typical of *Kalingan* temple architecture. These five divisions are *pabhaga* (bottom base moulding), *tala-jangha* (lower wall portion), *bandhana* (decorative binding course), upper *jangha* (upper wall portion), and *baranda* (moulded cornice).

Most of the architectural components of the *bada* are relatively plain, showing minimal ornamental carving, with the exception of the upper *jangha*, which is rich in sculptural detail. The niches of the *upara jangha* are beautifully adorned with a variety of narrative and decorative sculptures, primarily focused on divine and mythological themes particularly from the life of Lord Krishna. These niches are housed with graceful dancing female figures, scenes of the Sandhasura Badha (killing of the demon Sandhasura by Krishna), Radha-Krishna *yugala* (divine couple) images, *maithuna* (erotic) figures, the Giri-Govardhana episode where Krishna lifts Mount Govardhan, amorous couples, female musicians holding various instruments, erotic depictions in classical Indian style, the Sakatasura Badha, Krishna with a cow, Kaliya Dalana (Krishna subduing the serpent Kaliya), images of Gurundi Gopala, and dancing Krishna figures. These sculptural panels are significant not only for their artistic excellence but also for their didactic value. They narrate key episodes from the life of Krishna, invoking devotion and enhancing the spiritual atmosphere of the temple.

The *baranda*, forming the uppermost portion of the *bada*, is conspicuously devoid of decorative elements, providing a visual pause between the richly carved upper *jangha* and the structure above. The balustraded windows are noticed on the middle wall of the northern side of the *bada*. Each of these windows is composed of two intricately carved balusters, adorned with dancing female figures, adding elegance and a sense of rhythm to the otherwise solid wall surface.

The gandhi and mastaka of the Jagamohana

Rising above the *bada*, the *gandi* of *jagamohana* continues the architectural designs of the *pidha deula* with a pyramidal superstructure. It is composed of three horizontal *pidhas* or platforms, arranged one above the other in a stepped formation, creating a tapering profile as it ascends. The *kanthis* between these *pidhas* are artistically filled with a variety of miniature sculptural elements. Among these are dancing female figures, images of Garuda, the divine mount of Lord Vishnu, depictions of *Mirabai*, the devotional poet-saint, and numerous Krishna figures reflecting various moods and divine episodes. At the corners of the *kanthis*, small *dopichha* lions, double-headed lion motifs, are fixed, consistent with the lion iconography also seen on the *vimana*. These lions serve both as decorative and symbolic protectors of the sacred space.

A notable feature of the *gandi* is the absence of a fully articulated *mastaka*. Instead of the usual sequence of *mastaka* elements, the *jagamohana* has only a single *kalasa*, placed at the center of the uppermost *pidha*. This *kalasa* is flanked on the northern and southern sides by two *jhapa simhas* (projecting lion figures) adding visual dynamism to the topmost tier. However, the typical *mastaka* elements such as the *ayudha* (chakra) and the *dhvaja* (flag) are entirely missing, indicating either a stylistic variation or perhaps the result of historical loss or structural limitation.

Doorway Ornamentation

The inner walls of the *jagamohana* are notably austere and unadorned, which stands in stark contrast to the richly sculpted and ornamented outer walls of the structure. This deliberate simplicity may reflect a design choice intended to create a solemn and meditative atmosphere within the interior space, emphasizing function over embellishment in the sacred gathering hall.

At the center of the *jagamohana*, there stands a Garuda pillar, rising to a height of approximately 3 feet. Mounted at the top of this pillar is a sculpted image of Garuda, the traditional *vahana* (divine mount) of Lord Vishnu, who is the presiding deity in his *Gopala* form. The image of Garuda is depicted in a kneeling posture, symbolizing both humility and readiness to serve the deity. This central placement underscores Garuda's importance in Vaishnavite iconography and serves as a symbolic guardian and devotee of the Lord.

The *jagamohana* has two entryways; one doorway is located on the western side, providing access from the sanctum area. The other doorway opens towards the *natamandapa*, the temple's dancing or festival pavilion, facilitating the ritual movement of deities and devotees between these sacred spaces. All the doorways of the *jagamohana* are remarkably plain and devoid of elaborate carvings, which is unusual when compared to the more highly decorated entrances found in many temples of Odisha. This plainness contributes to the understated elegance of the space and reflects a modest approach to interior ornamentation. Despite the general simplicity, there are select decorative details that enhance the doorways delicately. The base of the eastern doorway's jambs is finely adorned with *khakhara mundis* (miniature pointed-arch motifs) that are typical of Odisha's temple art. These small decorative features provide a touch of refinement without overwhelming the structural simplicity.

The jambs of the doorways overall remain mostly plain, maintaining consistency with the rest of the interior's modest aesthetic. Especially, the conventional images of Gaja-Lakshmi, typically placed above the door lintel as a symbol of prosperity, and the Navagrahas (nine planetary deities) usually found on the architrave, are entirely absent from their respective traditional positions. This absence is significant and suggests either a stylistic departure from norm, intentional omission, or possibly a later alteration during restoration phases.

Natamandapa

The *natamandapa*, or the dancing hall of the temple, is constructed in the *pidha deula* style, maintaining architectural consistency with the *vimana* and *jagamohana*. This hall rises to an approximate height of 32 feet from the temple complex's ground level. The *natamandapa* is elevated on a platform measuring 5 feet in height, giving it prominence and spatial separation from the surrounding ground. The base of the *bada* is designed on a square plan of 25 feet on each side, creating a balanced and symmetrical platform for the superstructure to rise upon. The *bada* follows the traditional *panchanga* division, consisting of *pabhaga* (foot or base), *tala-jangha* (lower wall section), *bandhana* (binding or string course), upper *jangha* (upper wall section), and *baranda* (moulded cornice or projecting ledge). While the *pabhaga*, *tala-jangha*, *bandhana*, and *baranda* are plain and devoid of any ornamentation, the upper *jangha* distinguishes itself with a series of niches containing a rich array of sculptural scenes. These include erotic depictions in the classical Indian style, amorous couples in intimate poses, Lord Vishnu seated on Garuda, episodes from Lord Krishna's life, such as the Bakasura Badha (slaying of the demon Bakasura), the Kaliyadalana (subjugation of the serpent Kaliya), and dancing female figures, interpreted as *gopis* (female devotees of Krishna), captured in graceful, rhythmic poses. These carvings not only reflect devotional and mythological themes but also convey the aesthetic ideals of grace, beauty, and divine love, all central to the Bhakti traditions in Odisha. Above the *bada* rises the *gandi*, a pyramidal superstructure composed of three horizontal *pidhas* or stepped platforms, a defining feature of *pidha deula* architecture. The intervening *kanthis*, or recesses between these *pidhas*, are housed with miniature sculptures, featuring; various forms of Lord Krishna, figures of Garuda, and depictions of the Dashavatara, the ten principal *avatars* (incarnations) of Lord Vishnu. These iconographic elements reinforce the Vaishnavite character of the temple. At the corners of the *kanthis*, small *dopichha* lions, symbolic lion figures with stylized features are fixed, contributing to the temple's decorative and protective imagery. The center of the middle *pidha* projects slightly outward and is flanked on both sides by *jhapa simhas*, lion motifs with dynamic postures that symbolize strength and vigilance. Additionally, the *dopichha simhas* are found at the top of *kanika pagas*, the vertical projections on each face of the *gandi*. At the four principal directions of the *beki*, Garuda figures are prominently inserted, continuing the motif of divine guardianship. The *mastaka*, or crowning portion of the *natamandapa*, follows a simplified version of the classic *Odishan* format. It comprises of *beki*, *ghanta* (bell-shaped element), another *beki* above it, the *amalaka sila* (ribbed disc resembling a gooseberry), *khapuri* (skull-cap shaped component), and *kalasa* (pitcher-like finial). However, unlike the *mastakas* of other parts of the temple, the *ayudha* (divine weapon, usually a *chakra*) and the *dhvaja* (flag or banner) are conspicuously missing.

The inner side walls of the *natamandapa*, much like those of the *jagamohana*, are devoid of decorative embellishments, maintaining a plain and solemn interior environment that may have been intended to focus attention on the performance or ritual enactments within the hall. In the northeast corner of the *natamandapa*, placed on the floor, is a large stone slab approximately 6 feet in height, upon which is carved a majestic image of Mahavira Hanumana. This powerful figure is depicted holding two massive rocks, one in each hand, a dynamic and forceful representation symbolizing strength, devotion, and divine intervention. There is a single doorway leading into the *natamandapa*, positioned on the eastern side. Above this entrance, carved on the architrave, are the *Navagraha* figures, representing the nine planetary deities. These celestial beings are shown seated in *padmasana* posture, each carrying their distinctive attributes, reflecting the classical iconographic norms of Hindu temple art. Flanking the *Navagraha* panel on either side are carvings of Madhu and Kaitabha, the two mythological demons vanquished by Vishnu. These demon figures emphasize the protective and purifying symbolism associated with the entrance. The doorjamb base is decorated with *khakhara mundis*, arched motifs that soften the geometry and offer a touch of ornamentation to the otherwise modest entrance. On either side of the doorway, within niches carved into the wall, are the figures of Jaya and Vijaya, the *dvarapalas* (divine gatekeepers). These two guardian deities are richly decorated. Together, these guardians reinforce the sanctity and inviolability of the sacred space, standing as protectors of the deity within. In front of the *natamandapa*, a raised platform measuring 5 feet in height has been constructed, likely to serve both ceremonial and practical purposes. A flight of ascending steps leads up from the eastern side, facilitating smooth access to the *natamandapa* and onward passage to the *garbhagriha*.

All the structural components of the temple complex, including the *natamandapa*, appear to have been heavily plastered with cement mortar, a likely product of modern restoration efforts. While this may have been carried out for preservation or maintenance, the application of cement plaster has often been criticized for obscuring or damaging original sculptural details and architectural features.

Boundary Wall

The entire temple compound is covered within a boundary wall that rises to a modest height of approximately 5 feet. Constructed from laterite stone, a common and durable building material in the region, the wall serves both as a protective barrier and a defining spatial boundary that separates the sacred temple precinct from the surrounding environment. Its relatively low height allows for visual access to the upper temple structures while still delineating the sanctified area. The boundary wall is punctuated by a single gateway located on the western side, which functions as the primary point of entry into the temple complex. This gateway is designed with symbolic guardianship in mind. The two large size stone lions are prominently placed at ground level on either side of the entrance. These lion figures, carved in dynamic and alert postures, serve as *dvarapalas* (mythical gatekeepers), a motif deeply rooted in Indian temple architecture. Their presence conveys a sense of strength and vigilance, warding off malevolent forces and welcoming devotees into the sacred space. The pairing of the lions with the western entrance not only fulfills the traditional architectural principles but also enhances the spiritual ambiance for those entering the temple.

Date of the temple

The exact date of construction of the present Sakhi-Gopala temple at Kantolbai remains uncertain, as no definitive epigraphic or textual records have yet been discovered to establish its precise origin. However, scholars have made informed estimations based on stylistic and architectural analysis. Particularly, B.K. Ratha, a distinguished authority on Odishan art and architecture, has suggested that the temple was likely constructed in the 16th century A.D. (Ratha, 1990, Vol.3, p.132). This hypothesis is based on comparative study with other contemporaneous temples and the specific design elements present in the structure. The architectural features, including the *pidha deula* style of the *vimana* and *mandapas*, the use of laterite and chlorite stone, and the sculptural themes focused on Krishna-lila and Vaishnavite iconography, all support the view that the temple was built during the first half of the 16th century A.D. This period was marked by significant Vaishnavite devotional activity in Odisha, particularly under the patronage of regional rulers and spiritual movements inspired by figures such as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Thus, the temple's construction may be seen as part of a broader religious and artistic trend of the era.

Management and Administration

In the present day, the Sakhi-Gopala temple of Kantolbai is being managed under the administrative oversight of the Trust Board of the Sakhi-Gopala temple at Satyabadi. This board functions within the

legal and organizational framework provided by the Endowment Commissioner of the Government of Odisha. The Trust Board is responsible for overseeing the temple's daily rituals, maintenance, financial matters, and religious events. This management structure ensures that the temple continues to serve as a living institution, supporting both religious worship and cultural heritage preservation. The involvement of the Endowment Commission further helps regulate the administration, promoting transparency and accountability while preserving the sanctity and historical legacy of the temple for future generations.

3.2. Jagannatha Temple of Rupadeipur

The Jagannatha temple of Rupadeipur is located approximately 5 kilometers from Satasankha in the Puri district of Odisha. The temple is an important Vaishnavite shrine that contributes to the religious and cultural fabric of the region. Despite its relatively modest scale, it draws attention due to its architectural features and association with the worship of Lord Jagannatha, a widely revered form of Lord Vishnu. Under the Suryavamsi Gajapatis, worship of Vishnu was identified with the worship of Jagannatha (Das, 1977, p.376). The Jagannatha temple complex of Rupadeipur comprises two main architectural components such as the *vimana* (sanctum or sanctum tower), and the *jagamohana* (assembly hall or porch in front of the sanctum). Both the structures are built using a combination of laterite blocks and bricks. The Jagannatha temple faces to east.



Vimana

Architectural Features of the Vimana

The *vimana*, which houses the main sanctum and enshrines the principal deity, is constructed in the *pidha deula* style, a pyramidal structure consisting of horizontal tiers (*pidhas*) that gradually taper upwards. The *vimana* rises to an approximate height of 35 feet from the ground level, giving the temple a vertical emphasis that enhances its visual presence in the landscape. The entire structure of the *vimana* is heavily plastered with lime, a common historical practice intended to protect the temple surface from weathering while also providing a finished appearance. This plastering, however, conceals much of the original stone texture and possibly earlier carvings. Architecturally, the *vimana* is divided into four principal components such as *pista*, the plinth or base platform, which is around 1 foot high, serving to elevate the structure slightly from ground level. *Bada*, the wall section, is a significant part of the elevation. *gandi*, the main pyramidal superstructure composed of *pidhas*. *mastaka*, the crowning top portion of the tower. The *bada* (vertical wall section) is designed in the *panchanga* style, featuring five horizontal divisions such as *pabhaga* (base molding), *tala jangha* (lower wall), *bandhana* (Boner and Rathsarma, 166, p.142), *upara jangha* (upper wall), *baranda* (moulded cornice or upper ledge). The base of the *bada* forms a square plan of 30 feet, providing a substantial foundation for the upper portions. While most of the component parts of the *bada* are plain and devoid of elaborate decoration, the *baranda* portion contains some erotic sculptures, which are characteristic of many Odishan temples and reflect symbolic and artistic traditions related to fertility, divine union, and the transcendence of worldly desire.

Parsvadevatas of the Vimana

The three central niches on the outer walls of the *bada* typically located on the north, south, and west sides are occupied by the *parsvadevatas*, or attendant deities, who are traditionally associated with Lord Jagannatha in his form as Vishnu. On the northern niche, there is an image of Trivikrama, a form of Vishnu associated with the Vamana (dwarf) *avatara* who covers the universe in three steps. The image of Trivikrama is carved on a chlorite stone slab and measures approximately 1½ feet in height. The deity is depicted with four arms and is installed on a double-petalled lotus podium, signifying divine purity and spiritual elevation.

The image Trivikrama holds a traditional attribute like *chakra* (discus) in the upper right hand, the lower right hand carries a *padma* (lotus), the upper left hand bears a *shankha* (conch), the lower left hand wields a *gada* (mace). A notable iconographic detail is that one of Trivikrama's legs is firmly planted on the pedestal, while the other leg is raised and touches the image of Brahma, signifying the cosmic dimension of Vishnu's stride as he conquers the three worlds. This composition reflects a well-known mythological episode in which Vishnu, as Vamana, measures the universe in three steps to humble the demon king Bali. To the right of the pedestal, a small figure of Garuda, the divine vehicle of Vishnu, is also carved. This figure reinforces the deity's identity and signifies devotion, as Garuda is often shown in a posture of reverence and loyalty to his master.

The western side niche of the *bada* houses the powerful image of Lord Narasimha, who serves as one of the three *parsvadevatas* (attendant deities) of the temple. This formidable deity known as the man-lion incarnation of Vishnu is portrayed in a dynamic and ferocious form that vividly captures the mythological moment of his slaying of the demon Hiranyakashyapu. The image of Narasimha is four-armed and is installed upon a plain stone pedestal, emphasizing the figure's prominence without distraction from excessive ornamentation. His upper two hands bear Vishnu's iconic weapons like the *shankha* (conch) and the *chakra* (discus), signifying divine sound and cosmic order respectively. The lower two hands are shown tearing open the entrails of the demon Hiranyakashyapu, vividly portraying the moment when Narasimha emerges to destroy evil and restore dharma. On the right side of the podium, a small yet significant figure of Garuda, the divine mount and loyal servant of Vishnu, is installed in a reverential pose, acknowledging the deity's presence. On the left side, a miniature female devotee is carved, likely representing a pious worshipper witnessing or venerating the act. This compositional balance between ferocity and devotion is a hallmark of traditional Vaishnavite iconography, blending transcendental power with spiritual surrender. The southern side niche of the *bada* enshrines the image of Varaha, the boar incarnation of Vishnu, who is known for rescuing Goddess Prithvi (Earth) from the depths of the cosmic ocean. The slab on which the image is carved measures approximately 1½ feet in height and is made of chlorite stone, a material widely used in Odishan temple sculpture for its smooth texture and ability to retain fine detailing. The image of Varaha is depicted with four arms, standing majestically on a plain pedestal. The deity holds a *chakra* in his upper right hand, symbolizing divine control over the universe. In his lower right hand, he gently grasps the hand of a female figure, likely Goddess Lakshmi, suggesting the compassionate and protective nature of the deity. The left upper arm is raised and supports a miniature figure of Prithvi Devi (Mother Earth), which is a central iconographic element in the Varaha narrative. Unfortunately, the lower left hand of the deity is completely broken, leaving some ambiguity in the original gesture or object once held. A small Garuda figure is installed directly on the pedestal beneath the deity's two feet, further reinforcing the deity's Vaishnavite identity and creating visual continuity with the other *parsvadevata* niches. The positioning of Garuda below the deity's feet reflects a common stylistic convention where divine mounts act both as symbolic supports and devoted attendants. All three *parsvadevata* images of Trivikrama, Narasimha, and Varaha are enshrined within *pidha mundi* niches, a form of miniature shrine motif used in the temple's exterior wall design. These niches display the architectural form of the main temple and serve as sacred frames for the subsidiary deities.

The *gandi*, or superstructure of the *vimana*, is built in the pyramidal *pidha deula / bhadra* temple (Bose, 1931, p.185) style and shows a well-balanced tiered elevation. It is divided into two horizontal segments, known as *potalas*. The lower *potala* comprises of three flat-shaped *pidhas*, while the upper *potala* is more compact, consisting of two *pidhas*. Each of these *pidhas* is meticulously designed with small decorative *tankus* on all sides stylized miniature representations of finials or pinnacles adding visual rhythm and ornamental richness to the superstructure. One of the most striking decorative features on the *gandi* is a *gaja-kranta* motif (Donaldson, 1986, Vol.III, p.1184), prominently placed on

the upper *pidha* of the lower *potala* on the eastern side. This motif, which typically depicts a lion trampling an elephant, is a symbolic representation of the victory of divine power and wisdom (lion) over brute strength and pride (elephant). It is a popular sculptural element in Odishan temple architecture, symbolizing the triumph of good over evil. At the corners of the *kanika pagas* (vertical offsets of the *gandi*), *dopichha* lions stylized lion figures with double-headed features are affixed. These guardian figures not only serve an aesthetic purpose but are also considered protective emblems, deterring negative energies from approaching the sanctum. At the top of the *beki*, Garuda figures are found in all four principal directions. These figures appear to support the *amalakasila*, the ribbed circular stone disc found in the *mastaka*, or crowning element of the *vimana*. Their symbolic role as upholders of the divine structure reinforces the temple's Vaishnavite sanctity, with Garuda seen as the eternal carrier and devotee of Lord Vishnu.

Mastaka of the Vimana

The *mastaka*, forms the topmost part of the temple superstructure and serves both a symbolic and architectural purpose. It marks the culmination of the vertical elevation and spiritually signifies the connection between the earthly temple and the divine realm. The *mastaka* of the *Jagannatha* temple's *vimana* is composed of several traditional architectural elements arranged in a vertical sequence like *beki*, the transitional neck portion that separates the main *gandi* from the elements above, *ghanta*, a bell-shaped structure placed above the *beki*, symbolizing significance and divine vibration, another *beki* sits atop the *ghanta*, reinforcing the transitional layering of the upper *mastaka*, *amalakasila*, a large ribbed disc-like stone resembling a segmented fruit, often interpreted as representing the sun or a lotus and it marks the stability of the cosmos and divine energy, *khapuri*, a smaller domed capstone placed above the *amalaka*, serving as a connector to the crowning finials, *kalasa*, the sacred pitcher or urn placed above the *khapuri*, symbolizing abundance, immortality, and the sanctity of the temple. *Ayudha* (*chakra*), the divine weapon of Vishnu, placed as a finial above the *kalasa*, establishing the temple's Vaishnavite affiliation. *Dhvaja*, the flag-post or finial flag crowning the very top of the *mastaka*, representing the temple's living presence and spiritual authority. Each component of the *mastaka* (Bose, 1931, p.183) reflects ritual and cosmic significance, combining form with sacred function.

Sanctum and the Presiding Deities

The sanctum (*garbhagriha*) of the *Jagannatha* temple is the holiest inner chamber, where the principal deities reside and where daily rituals and offerings are performed. At the spiritual heart of this sacred space are the *daru* (wooden) images of Lord Jagannatha, Balabhadra, as well as Subhadra, collectively revered as the Jagannatha Trinity. These deities are carved in a distinct style associated with the Jagannatha tradition of Odisha, which emphasizes divine abstraction and ritual symbolism over lifelike anatomical detail. In addition to the trinity, the Sudarsana Chakra, representing the celestial discus of Vishnu and an integral part of the Chaturdha Murti, is also worshipped in the sanctum. Together, these four sacred figures are enshrined on a *simhasana* (ritual throne) measuring approximately 3 feet in height, symbolizing their supreme position within the temple. Aside from the primary deities, the sanctum also houses several subsidiary brass idols that represent other divine figures associated with Jagannatha worship and the broader. Goddess Lakshmi, consort of Jagannatha (Vishnu), Madana Mohana and Radha-Krishna, representing the romantic and devotional aspect of the Vaishnava faith, Anthua Gopala, a form of child Krishna, and Patitapabana, a compassionate aspect of Jagannatha, representing the Lord as the saviour of the fallen. These metal idols are installed near the primary figures and are revered during various ritual occasions throughout the year. The interior of the sanctum is supported by four massive stone pillars, which bear the weight of the ceiling and define the sacred central space. These pillars, though structural, contribute to the solemn and enclosed ambiance of the sanctum, creating an atmosphere of divine isolation and focus for worship. On the northern inner wall, two niche images are carved, adding subtle sacred ornamentation to the otherwise unadorned interior. These include Chandra Shekhara, an aspect of Lord Shiva identified by the crescent moon on his matted hair, Goddess Durga, the powerful feminine deity depicted in her classic warrior form. Both images are carved from sandstone and measure about 8 inches in height, suggesting they serve more as votive representations than principal deities. Despite their small scale, they display standard iconographic attributes in their hands, signifying their divine roles. Their presence in the sanctum indicates a synthesis of Shaivite and Shakta traditions alongside Vaishnavism, a feature not uncommon in Odishan temple architecture. The interior walls of the sanctum are completely plain, consistent with many sanctums in Odisha, where simplicity within contrasts with the elaborate decoration outside, focusing spiritual

energy inward. On both sides of the inner doorway, the figures of Jaya and Vijaya, the traditional *dvarapalas* (divine gatekeepers) are depicted. These guardian figures are carved in commanding postures, symbolizing their role in protecting the sanctum from negative forces and guiding devotees into the presence of the divine



Doorway of the Vimana

The *vimana* has a single doorway that opens into the adjoining *jagamohana* (assembly hall). This entryway, though modest in scale, is ritually significant as the threshold between the inner sanctum and the outer worship space. The door jambs are largely devoid of decorative ornamentation, reflecting a restrained approach to the entrance design. However, the middle of the doorway lintel is carved with an image of Gaja-Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and auspiciousness, seated beneath an arch and flanked by two elephants engaged in the traditional ablution (*gaja-snanam*). This placement invokes blessings upon devotees who pass beneath her gaze. The lintel itself is adorned with a series of elegant motifs, including *Nagabandhas* (serpent motifs entwining the frame), lotus flower devices, and creepers entwined with frolicking boys, symbolic of fertility, abundance, and divine playfulness. The *navagraha* panel, commonly placed above the doorway lintel in many temples to honour the nine planetary deities, is absent in this temple. This omission is unique and may reflect either a local variation or a different ritual focus.

Jagamohana of the Jagannatha temple

The *jagamohana*, or assembly hall, of the Jagannatha temple at Rupadeipur is a relatively recent addition to the temple complex, distinct in both style and material from the older *vimana*. This flat-roofed structure rises to a modest height of approximately 12 feet from the ground level. According to the oral traditions and accounts shared by local residents and temple priests, the *jagamohana* was constructed in the 1970s, reflecting a period of restoration and expansion intended to accommodate more devotees and ritual activities. Architecturally, the *jagamohana* does not follow the classical *pidha deula* form seen in traditional Odishan temples. Instead, it embodies a simple, functional design suited for modern construction techniques. The outer walls of the *jagamohana* are entirely plain, devoid of sculptural embellishments or relief work, which distinguishes it from the ornate exteriors of the older *vimana* and suggests the use of cement and brick masonry rather than carved stone. On the inner western wall, specifically the left section, the *jagamohana* houses a large niche that contains three significant images, which are central to the devotional practices observed in this hall. These include two images of Satya Narayana and one image of goddess Lakshmi. The first image within this niche is that of Lord Satya Narayana, carved on a stone slab measuring approximately 2½ feet in height. The image is four-armed and is installed upon a double-petalled lotus pedestal, symbolizing purity and divine origin. The deity displays *shankha* (conch) in the upper right hand, representing auspicious sound and cosmic vibration, *varada mudra* (gesture of boon-giving) in the lower right hand, with a small lotus emerging from the palm, symbolizing blessings and purity, a *panji* or horoscope in the upper left hand, underscoring the deity's association with cosmic order and destiny, and *padma* (lotus) in the lower left hand, reinforcing the theme of spiritual unfolding and transcendence. Interestingly, this particular image

is locally revered as Surya-Narayana, suggesting a syncretic form that blends the iconographic elements of Vishnu with those of the sun god (Surya), a fusion commonly found in various regional traditions of Odisha. Adjacent to this is the image of Devi Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. Like the Satya Narayana figure, this image also measures around 2½ feet in height and is carved from granite, a durable and visually striking stone. The deity is shown with four arms and is seated upon a lotus pedestal, reinforcing her traditional association with beauty, purity, and abundance. She displays *padma* (lotus) in each of the upper hands, an *amrita kalasa* (pot of nectar) in the lower left hand, symbolizing immortality and divine sustenance, *varada mudra* (Donaldson, 1986, Vol. III, p. 1188) in the lower right hand offers blessings to her devotees. The third image within the niche is yet another depiction of Satya Narayana, differing in both pose and symbolism from the earlier figure. This image is installed on a plain pedestal, reflecting a slightly less ornate treatment. The deity is shown in a seated pose with displaying an *akshamala* (rosary) in the upper right hand, signifying devotion, meditation, and the cyclical nature of time, a *panji* or horoscope in the lower right hand, continuing the theme of cosmic time and divine order, *abhaya mudra* in the upper left hand, offering protection and reassurance to devotees, and the lower left hand resting gracefully upon the left knee, reflecting a meditative composure and serenity. At the base of this slab, a small figure of Garuda, the traditional mount of Lord Vishnu, is carved on the right side of the pedestal. His presence reaffirms the Vaishnavite identity of the image and adds narrative depth to the sculptural program. All the three images are enshrined within a single large wall niche, framed by a beautifully carved makara-headed *torana* (arch). The makara, a mythical aquatic creature with a composite form (part crocodile, part elephant or fish), is a traditional motif in Odishan temple architecture symbolizing protection between the earthly and the divine. According to the temple priests, these images were installed during the construction of the *jagamohana* in the 1970's. Though modern in origin, these icons reflect a faithful continuation of traditional iconographic styles and devotional themes, ensuring that the newer structure harmonizes with the temple's ancient spiritual legacy.

On the right side of the western inner wall of the *jagamohana*, a prominent niche is carved into the wall, housing two sacred icons that hold considerable local religious importance. These images are those of Devi Vimala, a powerful form of the goddess worshipped as a guardian deity, and Ghata Mangala, represented through symbolic elements associated with prosperity and divine presence. The image of goddess Vimala, enshrined on a stone slab measuring approximately 2 feet in height, presents a striking visual representation of Shakti in her benevolent yet commanding aspect. The four-armed image of the goddess is installed upon a double-petalled lotus pedestal, a traditional base symbolizing purity, divinity, and spiritual awakening. The goddess holds/displays a diminutive female figure in the upper right hand, possibly a symbolic manifestation of a devotee or a subsidiary goddess, *varada mudra* (gesture of granting boons and blessings) in the lower right hand, signifying generosity and protection, *pasa* (noose) and an *ankusa* (elephant goad) in the upper left hand, tools often symbolizing control over ignorance and the guiding of spiritual seekers, an *amruta-kalasa* (pot of nectar) in the lower left hand, representing immortality and divine sustenance. To her right side at the base of the pedestal, the figure of a lion, her conventional *vahana* (mount), is finely carved. The presence of the lion emphasizes her role as a powerful protectress and a warrior aspect of the goddess, resonating with the iconography of Durga and other Shakta deities. Next to her is another stone slab, which bears a more symbolic yet equally revered object of worship Ghata Mangala. This sacred object consists of a *kalasa* (ritual water pot) topped by a green coconut, a traditional symbol of fertility, prosperity, and the divine feminine energy. It is locally worshipped with great reverence as Ghata Mangala, a representation of auspiciousness and maternal benevolence. Though not anthropomorphic like Vimala, this form of worship connects to the age-old rural and Tantric traditions in Odisha, where pots (*ghatas*) become vessels of divine presence during rituals and festivals.

Garuda Pillar and Spatial Layout

At the center of the *jagamohana*, one encounters a striking octagonal pillar of approximately five feet in height, which serves both a structural and symbolic function. Seated gracefully at the top of this pillar is the figure of Garuda, the mythical eagle mount of Lord Vishnu, depicted in a kneeling posture. This posture indicates humility, devotion, and readiness to serve the deity. Garuda's inclusion at this central location highlights the Vaishnavite identity of the temple and emphasizes his role as the eternal attendant and protector of Vishnu in all his incarnations, including that of *Jagannatha*. The eastern side of the *jagamohana* features a single doorway, which serves as the main point of entry into the sacred

precinct. Architecturally, the doorway is simple and devoid of decorative ornamentation, in contrast to the elaborate doorframes commonly seen in classical temples of Odisha. However, its religious significance is clearly emphasized by the placement of two large lion figures, positioned on either side at ground level. These lions act as *dvarapalas* (temple guardians), a common motif in Odishan and Indian temple architecture symbolizing power, vigilance, and the expulsion of evil from the sanctified space within.

Aruna Stambha

Standing proudly in front of the *jagamohana* is an Aruna Pillar, a 12 feet high monolithic column which marks the sacred axis and reflects the ancient Indian tradition of placing tall, freestanding pillars in front of temple halls. While it is referred to as Aruna Stambha traditionally dedicated to Aruna, the charioteer of the sun god Surya. It may also serve as a *dhvaja stambha* (flagstaff pillar), symbolizing divine presence and the spiritual axis *mundi* of the temple. These types of pillars are meant to draw the attention of devotees to the sanctity of the temple and often become focal points during the ritual processions. Interestingly, unlike many other temples in the region, the Rupadeipur Jagannatha temple does not have a boundary wall enclosing the complex. This openness may reflect either a later construction phase or a conscious architectural decision, allowing for direct access and visual connectivity between the temple and its surrounding environment, a feature sometimes seen in rural temple layouts.

Date of the temple

As per local oral traditions and public opinion, the temple is believed to be not more than 600 years old. However, in the absence of inscriptions or dated records, art historians and archaeologists have relied on architectural analysis to approximate the temple's age. Based on the stylistic features of the *vimana*, such as its *pidha* superstructure, iconographic program, and material usage (laterite and chlorite), the construction of the temple can be tentatively assigned to the second half of the 16th century A.D. This period corresponds with a flourishing phase in Odisha's temple architecture under the patronage of local kings and religious authorities. It is likely, based on both local tradition and architectural patronage patterns, that this temple was built by a ruler from the royal family of Puri, possibly in an effort to extend Jagannatha worship beyond the central city to surrounding villages like Rupadeipur. Such extensions were common during the post-Gajapati era when devotion to Jagannatha evolved into a unifying cultural force across Odisha.

4. CONCLUSION

We know from the above facts that the Sakhi-Gopala temple of Kantolbai stands as a vital embodiment of Odisha's rich religious, artistic, and architectural heritage. Its architectural configuration comprising the *vimana*, *jagamohana*, and *natamandapa* adheres to the classical *pidha deula* style structure of Odisha, reinforcing the continuity of regional temple-building traditions. Despite the absence of intricate carvings and elaborate structural flourishes seen in some of Odisha's more monumental temples, the Sakhi-Gopala temple holds deep symbolic and devotional significance. The sanctum's principal deity, Trivikrama, along with subsidiary forms of Vishnu such as Narasimha and Varaha, represent the diverse manifestations of divine protection and cosmic order. The inclusion of figures like Garuda, Jaya-Vijaya, and sculptural narratives from Krishna's life further enrich the temple's iconographic program and connect it with Vaishnavite Bhakti traditions. The *jagamohana* and *natamandapa* serve not only architectural purposes but also function as vital liturgical and communal spaces. Their exterior sculptural programs depicting Krishna's divine exploits, dancing gopis, and mythological episodes offer visual theology accessible to devotees and visitors alike. Significantly, the temple's history reveals its evolving role through time. Most probably, the temple was originally constructed in the 16th century during a period of vibrant Vaishnavite devotionalism. The modern interventions especially the use of cement plaster reflect both preservation efforts and the tension between conservation and authenticity. The temple is actively administered by the Trust Board under the Government of Odisha's Endowment Commissioner. The Sakhi-Gopala temple thus exemplifies the resilience of sacred architecture in the face of time, social change, and environmental factors. It may not rival the grandeur of major pilgrimage centers, but its local significance, devotional vitality, and adherence to traditional Odishan temple architecture make it a meaningful case study in heritage preservation. The Jagannatha temple of Rupadeipur is a significant monument of regional devotion, architectural heritage, and religious continuity in Odisha. Despite its modest size and rural setting, the temple encapsulates key elements of traditional Odishan temple architecture, ritual symbolism, and

iconographic depth, particularly in its *vimana* structure. Constructed in the *pidha deula* style, the *vimana* exhibits a well-articulated vertical form. With classical divisions such as *pista*, *bada*, *gandi*, and *mastaka* demonstrating the builders' adherence to canonical design while incorporating local adaptations. The detailed iconographic program reinforces the temple's strong Vaishnavite identity while also capturing mythological narratives central to Hindu theology. These sculptures are not merely decorative but serve a didactic and devotional function, inviting worshippers to reflect upon the cosmic and moral themes embodied by each incarnation of Vishnu. Similarly, the presence of the Jagannatha Trinity (Jagannatha, Balabhadra, and Subhadra) in wooden form within the sanctum reinforces the temple's alignment with the broader Jagannatha tradition, while the inclusion of associated deities such as Sudarsana, Lakshmi, Radha-Krishna, and Anthua Gopala demonstrates the integrative nature of Vaishnavite worship in Odisha. The symbolic presence of the Garuda pillar, makara *toranas*, lion guardians, and the Aruna Stambha collectively reinforce the sacred ambiance and ritual functionality of the temple space. The lack of a surrounding boundary wall and the openness of the complex reflect both its rural character and perhaps a conscious choice to remain connected with the surrounding community and landscape. The architectural analysis suggests the 16th century, possibly under the patronage of local rulers aiming to extend Jagannatha worship beyond Puri. As such, the temple of Rupadeipur is not only an architectural entity but also a cultural artefact, an embodiment of enduring religious traditions, regional artistic expression, and the localized manifestations of pan-Indian devotional practices. On the whole, the artistic designs and architectural patterns of the above two Vaishnavite temples of the undivided Puri district give some ideas with regard to the Hindu temple art of Odisha in Eastern India.

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