

ମହାଗୋପନରେ ମହାବାହୁ

# Mahāgopanare Mahābāhu

The Secret Sojourns of Lord Shree Jagannātha

*Written by*  
**Panchami Manoo Ukil**



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Cover painting  
Kalapahada carrying the Deities on elephant back (Gopana Leela, Gada Kujanga)  
Artist Nibedita Pattnaik, Acrylic on Canvas, 4x5 ft



ତୋତେ ହୋ ତୁହି ରକ୍ଷାକର  
ମୁଁ ଛାର ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ମାତର  
ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଦାସ, ଭାଗବତ



Oh Lord of the Universe do protect yourself.  
For, how can I, a mere human, come to your rescue!

Jagannatha Dasa, Odia Bhagabata

ମହାଗୋପନରେ ମହାବାହୁ

# Mahāgopanare Mahābāhu

The Secret Sojourns of Lord Shree Jagannātha



ଆହେ ନୀଳ ଶଉଳ ପ୍ରବଳ ମଉ ବାରଣ  
ମୋ ଆରତ ନଳିନୀ ବନକୁ କର ଦଳନ । ଘୋଷା ।  
ଗଜରାଜ ବିକ୍ରା କଲା ଥାଇ ଘୋର ଜଳେଣ  
ବକ୍ର ପେଷି ନକ୍ର ନାଶି ଉଦ୍ଧାରିଲ ଆପଣ । ୧ ।  
ଘୋର ବନେ ମୃଗୁଣୀକି ପଡ଼ିଥିଲା କଷଣ  
କେଡ଼େ ବଡ଼ ବିପତ୍ତିରୁ ରକ୍ଷାକଲ ଆପଣ । ୨ ।  
କୁରୁକ୍ଷେତ୍ର ତଳେ ଶୁଣି କ୍ଳେପଦୀର ଜଣାଣ  
କୋଟି ବସ୍ତ୍ର ଦେଇ ହେଲେ ଲଜ୍ଜା କଲ ବାରଣ । ୩ ।  
ରାବଣର ଭାଇ ବିଭୀଷଣ ଗଲା ଶରଣ  
ଶରଣ ସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଲଙ୍କେ କଲ ରାଜନ । ୪ ।  
ପ୍ରହଲ୍ଲାଦ ପିତା ସେ ଯେ ବଡ଼ ଦୁଷ୍ଟ ଦାରୁଣ  
ପ୍ରମୁରୁ ବାହାରି ତାକୁ ବିଦାରିଲ ତକ୍ଷଣ । ୫ ।  
କହେ ସାଲବେଗ ହୀନ ଜାତିରେ ମୁଁ ଯବନ  
ଶ୍ରୀରଙ୍ଗା ଦରଣ ତଳେ କରୁଅଛି ଜଣାଣ । ୬ ।  
ଆହେ ନୀଳ ଶଉଳ ପ୍ରବଳ ମଉ ବାରଣ  
ମୋ ଆରତ ନଳିନୀ ବନକୁ କର ଦଳନ । ଘୋଷା ।

ଭକ୍ତ ସାଲବେଗ

O Lord of the Blue Mountains, lofty and majestic  
Do trample over the lotus pond of my sorrows.  
A mighty elephant king called out to you in distress  
You vanquished his tormentor, with Your “chakra”.  
An injured doe writhing in pain in the deep forest  
Amidst grave danger, You emerged as her saviour.  
From the assembly of the Kurus, Draupadī called out in anguish  
An infinite flow of drapes You sent, protecting her modesty.  
Bibhīṣaṇa, the brother of Rābhaṇa, came, seeking shelter  
Accepting his devotion, You, crowned him king of Laṅkā.  
Father of Prahallāda, most evil and ruthless  
Placing him on your thighs, You ripped him to death instantly.  
Says the humble and poor Sālabega, I’m but an outcaste  
All I can do, O Lord, is, take refuge at Your sacred lotus feet.  
O Lord of the Blue Mountains, lofty and majestic  
Do trample over the lotus pond of my sorrows.

**Bhakta Sālabega**

early 17th century Oḍiā poet

Translation Panchami Manoo Ukil



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For nearly a decade now, the Ila Panda Centre for Arts (IPCA) has consistently endeavoured to showcase and promote the visual arts of Odisha through multifaceted and innovative initiatives covering art exhibitions, symposia, art residencies, art publications, grants, exposure field visits and MFA scholarships. In all its work, IPCA continues on its mission to shine the light on bringing artists and art practitioners to the forefront by providing an appropriate platform, while keeping alive the rich cultural legacy and invaluable heritage of the state.

True to its vision, IPCA's 'Mahagopanare Mahabahu' exhibition is a milestone event, a rare first, unique and one-of-its-kind. Conceived, curated, and organised by IPCA, this seminal exercise has meant the world to us, and to the participating artists and mentors; to all who have been deeply engaged in putting together the exhibition and this publication as a pure labour of love, based as it is on historic happenings related to our beloved Lord of the Universe, Shree Jagannatha Mahaprabhu.

It is with our collective prayers that we offer this entire work at His feet and seek blessings that 'Mahagopanare Mahabahu' successfully reaches out to a wide and varied audience, so that they may learn and understand the little known facet of 'Gopana Leela' that is so intrinsic to the history of Shree Jagannatha tradition and consciousness.

Jai Shree Jagannatha.

**Paramita Panda**

Founder Trustee, Ila Panda Centre for Arts  
Bhubaneswar



## INTRODUCTION

Neelachala Nivasaya Nityaya Paramatmane  
Balabhadrasubhadrabhyam Jagannathaya tay Namaha

Mahagopanare Mahabahu originated as a whisper in a dream, and, has now taken the form of a resounding echo, an echo that emanates from the confluence of art, heart and faith. Dreams and miracles have always been integral to the repertoire of Lord Shree Jagannatha down the ages. This time too, a dream has taken shape, perhaps aligning with the will of the Lord, and, hence, now presents itself as a miracle, the miracle of this magnum-opus initiative, Mahagopanare Mahabahu – the Secret Sojourns of Lord Shree Jagannatha, by Ila Panda Centre for Arts (IPCA).

The “Madala Panji” (chronicle of the Puri Jagannatha temple) states that between 670 -1733 AD, the Jagannatha temple was repeatedly attacked by invaders who came to plunder the huge wealth of the temple, and, desecrate the temple and idols. Therefore, during such invasions, the king, royal officials, pontiffs of Mathas, and temple servitors would repeatedly move the idols through water and forest routes and worship them in secret, before transporting them back to the temple after the invaders had left. Raktabahu, Kalapahada, Hashim Khan, Keshodas Maru, Kalyana Malla, Mukarram Khan, and, Taqi Khan were foremost among the invaders, some of them plundering and looting the temple multiple times. Infact, during one of his raids, Kalapahada had burnt down the sacred Kalpavata tree inside the temple premises, while Keshodas Maru had burnt down the three holy chariots of the Deities. Through these invasions, the ruling kings of Odisha, temple servitors, as well as, the brave Paika warriors, valiantly fought the attackers and did everything they could to protect the Deities again and again. Such repeated invasions ensured that while the Holy Trinity were moved around over the centuries, they were secretly worshipped in several sites in the Chilika area, as well as, in other places like Kapileswar, Banapur, and, Sonapur (where the idols were buried underground for one hundred and forty four years). These phases of the Lord being worshipped in secret hideouts are referred to as Gopana Leela or the secret sport of the Lord. Every place associated with a Gopana Leela of the Lord is known as a Leela Kshetra.

According to available sources, Purushottama Kshetra was attacked eighteen times by iconoclasts, Mughals, and, Afghans. During these attacks, the temple (Shree Mandira) was raided twelve times. The Deities were secretly removed to places outside Puri eleven times, while they were shifted from Ratna Simhasana to a secret space inside the temple premises only once. For centuries, the massive wealth of Indian temples, and, idols of deities made of gold, silver and precious stones, has attracted invaders from within and outside the subcontinent. However, in the case of Purushottama Kshetra (Puri), the chief target of the attackers was the Daru Vighraha, the wooden idols of Shree

Chaturdha Murti, enshrined in the Shree Mandira. The reason was that they knew that Lord Shree Jagannatha was considered to be the ruler of Odisha, represented by the Gajapati king of Puri. Therefore, by decimating the divinity that lay at the very core of kingship in Odisha, they would demoralise the King and the people, and, defeat them easily.

Not much is known about the history of the Leela Kshetra sites, except from information in Madala Panji, Chaini Chakada, Chhamu Chitau, Khordha Itihas, historical texts, novels, oral tradition and folklore. However, the relevance of this important aspect of Shree Jagannatha culture cannot be undermined because of its many implications that define the very character of Jagannatha consciousness, as well as, the unshakeable bond and belief of the Odia race, with regard to their undisputed God and ruler, Lord Shree Jagannatha. A historic attempt to bridge the information gap on Gopana Leela of the Lord was made by a high-level delegation of the Shri Jagannatha Prachar and Prasar sub-committee of Shree Jagannatha Temple Administration (SJTA) in 2007-2008, under the leadership of the Chief Administrator, SJTA, Shri Suresh Chandra Mohapatra, IAS. Dr. Bhaskar Mishra, noted scholar, researcher and writer, as well as senior servitors including Daitapati sevaks, were also a part of this team. Over two years, the team visited the sites where the Chaturdha Murti had been worshipped in secret for varying periods of time until the mid-eighteenth century. They delved into minute details, documenting the sites through photographs, videography, as well as, collecting information through verbal interactions with local people, including descendants of those servitors, rajas, and, zamindars who had been associated with the Gopana Leela as and when it had occurred. All the information thus collected, was collated into a volume by Dr. Bhaskar Mishra, forming a rich and dependable documentation in Odia.

In 2022, the widely acclaimed and successful theatre production “Ahey Neela Saila” presented by Sambad group was another historic step in bringing to light, one of the stories of Gopana Leela of Lord Shree Jagannatha to the public eye. Meticulously researched and crafted, the play was sold out, as devotees of the Lord lapped it up with ecstatic fervour, requesting for re-runs. In 2024, a group of accomplished visual artists came together to present “Brahma Gopya”, an exhibiton of paintings on Leela Kshetra Kot Samalai. The artworks were created on neem wood, the relevance of neem resting in the fact that the Chaturdha Vighraha are carved out of neem wood every Nabakalebara.

As the narratives of Gopana Leela began to open up through various mediums of art, Ila Panda Centre for Arts (IPCA) decided to explore the possibility of presenting all the stories on one platform through visual art, including the narratives in English text, in order to open up this mystical aspect to a wider audience of devotees and art lovers, worldwide. The idea was shared with senior artists who had already forayed into this territory with “Brahma Gopya”. When approached, the artists unhesitatingly expressed their willingness to participate in the project, assuring IPCA of

their best efforts for this unique, comprehensive, and, first-of-its-kind initiative. A list of capable and established artists was drawn up who were mentored by eminent experts on Shree Jagannatha culture, Dr. Bhaskar Mishra, Shri Pitabas Rautaray, Dr. Asit Mohanty, and, by leading artists, Shri Baladev Maharatha and Shri Pradosh Swain, in a rigorous two-day mentoring camp. The mentors impressed upon the artists the finer nuances of each Gopana Leela that included history, geography, architecture, devotion, loyalty, bravery, and details of the natural biodiversity of the area. This intense exercise has resulted in the creation of fifty three artworks that can only be described as “divine”, obviously inspired and blessed by the great Lord of the Universe, Lord Shree Jagannatha, Himself. Each painting is a narrative in finest brushstrokes, recreating and conveying emotions and action meticulously, thereby, bringing alive the narratives of the past. Viewing the artworks, it is evident that the artists carried out the assignment solely as a humble offering to the Lord, with sincere love and devotion.

On seeing the stories of Gopana Leela unfolding on canvas, we at Ila Panda Centre for Arts were exceedingly overwhelmed and gratified. Late Ila Panda had been a woman ahead of her time. An entrepreneur by profession, she was an alumna of Vishwa Bharati University, having studied Visual Arts at Shantiniketan, followed by a degree from the Royal College of Arts in London. While pioneering the culture of a large business conglomerate in Odisha in the 1960's with her husband, the iconic Dr. Bansidhar Panda, Ila Panda (former Member, Rajya Sabha), was constantly making a difference to the art world in Odisha through her unwavering patronage to artists and artisans. She also supported the Lord Shree Jagannatha temple at Puri and is prominently remembered for her significant contribution for “Gaja Uddharana Beshha” in 1980. Hundreds of artists over five decades have been recipients of her mentoring and generous patronage, making her perhaps the most prolific art patron in Odisha in modern times. Aably carrying forward this rich legacy is Ila Panda's daughter, Paramita Panda, Founder Trustee, Ila Panda Centre for Arts, who established the foundation in 2016 in the memory of her mother. The vision behind this initiative was to foster “art consciousness” and inspire patronage for visual arts and artists in society, while also enabling young Odia artists to have access to higher education in art, as well as, exposure to global art trends. This has been made possible through IPCA - MFA scholarships for artists to pursue a Master's degree in Fine Arts in reputed art universities in India, and, through regular art residencies, exhibitions, publications, excursions, etc. Mahagopanare Mahabahu, therefore, is a coming together of the traits of devotion and munificence in the personality of Ila Panda, and, this initiative is a dedication to her abiding memory.

Art has been a medium of expression of human communication since prehistoric times, as is evident from ancient cave paintings. Visual art represents a dialogue that transcends the barrier of language, enabling artists to contextualise their

thoughts and experiences, thereby connecting them to viewers through an expression of shared identity. Connections created through art foster understanding and empathy in community spaces and also act as valid documentations of social and cultural history in different time periods. To this end, Mahagopanare Mahabahu is not only an artistic pursuit, but, more importantly, is the first ever comprehensive documentation of this immensely important facet of Shree Jagannatha consciousness, depicting the rich and underlying subtleties in the character, culture, and beliefs of the Odia race. At a time when "Odia Asmita" is gaining traction, this display of narratives of our past through art will certainly create a sense of pride in our roots. This book also contains the stories of each Leela Kshetra, in order to provide a background to the artworks. The stories have been written after research and reference, under the guidance of eminent experts, and, would hopefully contribute towards adding information on this lesser known subject.

From conception to completion, Mahagopanare Mahabahu is the outcome of eight long months of painstaking work by a team that came together, bound by the spirit of unbridled love and devotion for Lord Shree Jagannatha. Throughout the journey, there were many inexplicable moments, moments when the Lord made His divine presence felt, assuring and reaffirming. Therefore, this unique initiative is no ordinary expression, but a collective offering of devotion and love at the divine feet of the Lord of the Universe, and, we hope that everyone who traverses this journey through the artworks and narratives feels the same communion with the Divine Lord of the Universe. On 6th June, 2024, I proposed the concept of this exhibition to Paramita and received her unconditional concurrence. As I shared the idea with esteemed artist Shri Baladev Maharatha the following day, I received his wholehearted commitment of support. We were soon joined by eminent Delhi-based artist Pradosh Swain, whose confidence encouraged us to think of presenting the exhibition in Delhi. Eminent experts and writers on Lord Shree Jagannatha, Dr. Bhaskar Mishra, Shri Pitabas Rautaray and Dr. Asit Mohanty came on board to generously mentor the artists with their valuable narrations of first-hand research experiences. Shri Baladev Maharatha meticulously guided the artists on the presentation of the themes. All participating artists in this collaborative mission approached the project with utter humility, knowing for a fact that without the will of the Lord, they would not be able to bring out the best of themselves while portraying the stories on canvas.

For me, personally, writing the stories has been nothing short of miraculous. Writing in longhand, I constantly felt as if an unknown force was holding my pen as it glided, line after line appearing cogently on paper. I did not know much about the Leela Kshetra episodes except for Kot Samalai and Gada Kujanga (the story of Bisara Mohanty), yet, whatever research I attempted from within the available sources of information, seemed to throw open the places, characters and scenes vividly, thereby enabling me to draft the stories within a short span of time. I feel extremely privileged and deeply humbled to have been chosen to write the stories. The omissions if any, are mine with sincere regrets.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Paramita Panda for entrusting us with this project. We hope that this initiative by IPCA will be a testament to the enduring legacy of Shree Jagannatha consciousness and culture. I thank Sunita Mohapatra, Executive Director, IPCA, for being a steadfast support, and, for meticulously organising and coordinating the event. I remain grateful to all the mentors and artists for harmonising their intents and ensuring smooth culmination of this shared dream. My gratitude to Priyanka Mohanty, (Falcon Charity Foundation), for collaborating with IPCA for the publication of this book. I'm sure that the book will play a pivotal role in disseminating these rare and unique stories of the Lord to a wider audience. I also express my gratitude to Jagi Mangat Panda (OTV), Pragati Mohanty (SNM Group), Sanjana Patnaik (ACE Commercial Co. Pvt. Ltd.), and, Shalini Mohanty (Serajuddin and Co.) for their valuable support for this project.

I sincerely hope that Mahagopanare Mahabahu will be an eye-opening experience for the viewers and act as a catalyst towards reenergising and echoing the spirit of "Odia Asmita" throughout the world. May the Lord of the Universe, Lord Shree Jagannatha Mahaprabhu, bless us all!

#### **Panchami Manoo Ukil**

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KOT SAMALAI

In the seventh century AD, during the reign of the Bhaumakara King Shovana Deva I, the dreaded Raktabahu raided Purushottama Kshetra or Puri through the sea route. Hearing of this attack, the King ordered the servitors to shift the Shree Chaturdha Murti out of Puri. The servitors carried the Deities on bullock carts to the Dobandha jetty on the banks of the River Bhargavi, from where the Deities were ferried through the rivers Bhargavi, Kuakhai and Mahanadi, until they arrived at Gaughat on banks of the Mahanadi. From there, the Shree Chaturdha Murti were again carried on bullock carts to Baghapalli village in Subarnapur (present day Sonapur) where they were consecrated on an open air platform called 'Sudhalipta' at Sadhaka Chandramani Das Ashram and worshipped with all due rituals for forty-five years.

However, the servitors and devotees were constantly wary of the invaders finding out about the Shree Chaturdha Murti's hideout.



Kot Samalai, Lipishree Nayak, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

Subsequently, the Deities were moved to a cave in the Chhalia hills in Gopalli, where they were literally buried under the ground (Patali) and a banyan tree was planted over the site. Over the years, the banyan tree assumed gigantic proportions, keeping the site completely concealed and came to be known as Dian Bara (the Divine Banyan). The deities thus remained underground, to be found by the great Somavamshi king, Jajati Keshari I, after ninety-nine years. In the Kosala Itihasa Katha text, historian Purna Chandra Rath writes: the Shree Chaturdha Murti were worshipped in a cave in Trikuta hill in Kot Samalai in the Chandili hill range. A giant tree was planted at the mouth of the cave. The Daita servitors stayed at the nearby Biribandha village, while the Pati servitors stayed at



Kot Samalai, Priyadarsini Mohanty, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

Ratanpur: After one hundred and fifty years, King Jajati Keshari brought the deities out of the ground and built a grand temple for them. Therefore, King Jajati Keshari is known as Dwitiya Indradyumna (Indradyumna I being the king of Malwa who built the first Jagannatha Temple at Puri and enshrined the Chaturdha Murti there).

The cave in which the deities were buried is known as the Shree Jagannatha Gumpha. Two other nearby caves are named Dhvani Gumpha and Madhava Gumpha.



Kot Samalai, Pradosh Swain, Acrylic on Canvas, 5 X 4 ft



Kot Samalai, Nibedita Pattnaik, Acrylic on Canvas, 5 X 4 ft

The Madala Panji states that after his ascension, King Jajati Keshari of the Somavamshi dynasty, enquired about the absence of Shree Chaturdha Murti. He was informed that the Deities had been taken to a secret hideout in Sonepur nearly one and a half centuries ago and were buried under the ground in order to protect them from attackers. The King left for Sonepur immediately with a team of royal officials and servitors. The team made enquiries but no one seemed to know anything. It is said that on reaching Chhalia, they found an elderly woman lighting lamps under a tree. On being questioned, the old woman revealed that their forefathers had been worshipping the tree outside the 'gumpha' or cave and hence they had been continuing the practice. That night, the Lord appeared in a dream and



Kot Samalai, Jyotirmaya Pattnayak, Oil on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

instructed the King to have the tree dug out of the ground. The next day, the site was dug up. The Lords emerged from the roots of the Dian-Bara (the Divine Banyan), jaded and dull in appearance. To the relief of the King, the Brahma Padartha or divine soul matter seemed undisturbed. The King ordered that new bodies of the Deities would be created without delay. Servitors went out in search of Neem trees, and, soon, the new idols were carved according to the prescribed rules. The transference of the divine Brahma Padartha (divine soul matter) from the old idols to the new idols (Nabakalebara) was conducted. The old idols were buried underground and the new idols were carried to Puri. The new idols were then installed in a magnificent temple built by King Jajati Keshari I.

Senior scholars and researchers are of the view that Kot Samalai and Gopalli are the same place but in order to maintain secrecy of the site, the name of Kot Samalai has been mentioned as Gopalli. With the efforts of the administration and local people, a lot of development work has taken place to bring alive this sacred site for the present and future. A new temple has been constructed at the site where the Deities had been buried. The idols of Shree Chaturdha Murti are enshrined in the temple and are receiving due worship. Since the last many years, the Patali Mahotsav is being held in honour of the Gopana Leela of the Deities at this place, which is now known as Patali Shreeksheetra. >>>



Kot Samalai, Mamata Samantaray, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft



Kot Samalai, Pradeep Pandey, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 4 ft



Kot Samalai, Subash Pujahari, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 4 ft



CHADHEIGUHA

The Madala Panji states that during the reign of King Prataparudra Deva (1510 AD), the Afghan invaders led by Amura Surathan (Amir of the Sultan of Bengal) entered Odisha through Gauda Desha (Bengal). At this time, King Prataparudra Deva was in the south, quelling a rebellion. On realizing that he would not be able to stand up to the might of the invaders, the King's deputy at the capital city of Cuttack, Govinda Bidyadhar, fled the scene and went into hiding at Saranga Gada fort. As news of the attack spread, the servitors of the Lord were advised by Kabi Dindim Jeeva Deva, the chief priest of the King of Puri, to shift the Holy Trinity of Lord Shree Balabhadra, Goddess Subhadra, and Lord Shree Jagannatha out of Puri before the invaders arrived there. In the meantime, the king, Prataparudra Deva, on hearing of the attack, rushed back to Cuttack, covering the distance in only ten days, which otherwise, would have taken thirty days.

The priests, servitors, and Paika warriors, with the help of Chabisi Kuda Parichha, carried the Deities in a wheeled cart up to the river mouth from where the Deities were transported by boat to the white Chadheiguha hills, deep inside Chilika Lake. The invaders, meanwhile, had reached Puri and embarked on a spree of vandalizing temples and idols. King Prataparudra Deva reached Puri and waged a fierce battle with Amura Surathan, and, drove the Afghan army out of Odisha. According to the Madala Panji, the Shree Chaturdha Murti resided in Chadheiguha for three months, while other researchers mention the duration as fifteen days. Some writers have also opined that the invasion was led by Ismail Ghazi while others mention that the Afghan army was led by Hussein Shah.

The Chadheiguha hills rising in the midst of Chilika Lake have been compared to the glorious and majestic white elephants of Lord Indra, by the eminent Odia poet Radhanath Ray in his iconic poem 'Chilika'. These hill islands are the wintering grounds for tens of thousands of migrating birds. As the birds feed and fatten up on this island, their droppings render a white coating to the hills which is why these hills are known as Chadheiguha (bird-dropping) hills. These hills were blessed to house the Deities who were worshipped here in secrecy until the threat of attack subsided. After the Afghan army retreated, King Prataparudra Deva ordered for the idols to be shifted back to Puri where the Shree Chaturdha Murti were reinstated on the Ratna Simhasana by the Gajapati King of Puri. >>>



Chadheiguha, Santosh Moharana, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft





GADA KUJANGA

The Shree Mandira was the target of the most barbaric attack in 1568 AD. At this time, the throne of Odisha was lying vacant as there was no successor after the death of Gajapati Mukunda Deva, the last independent king of Odisha. Taking advantage of this situation, the Nawab of Bengal, Sulaiman Karrani, sent his general Kalapahada (Black Mountain) to loot all temples in Odisha, especially the Shree Mandira with its famed wealth in the Ratna Bhandara, which drew the attention of the invaders.

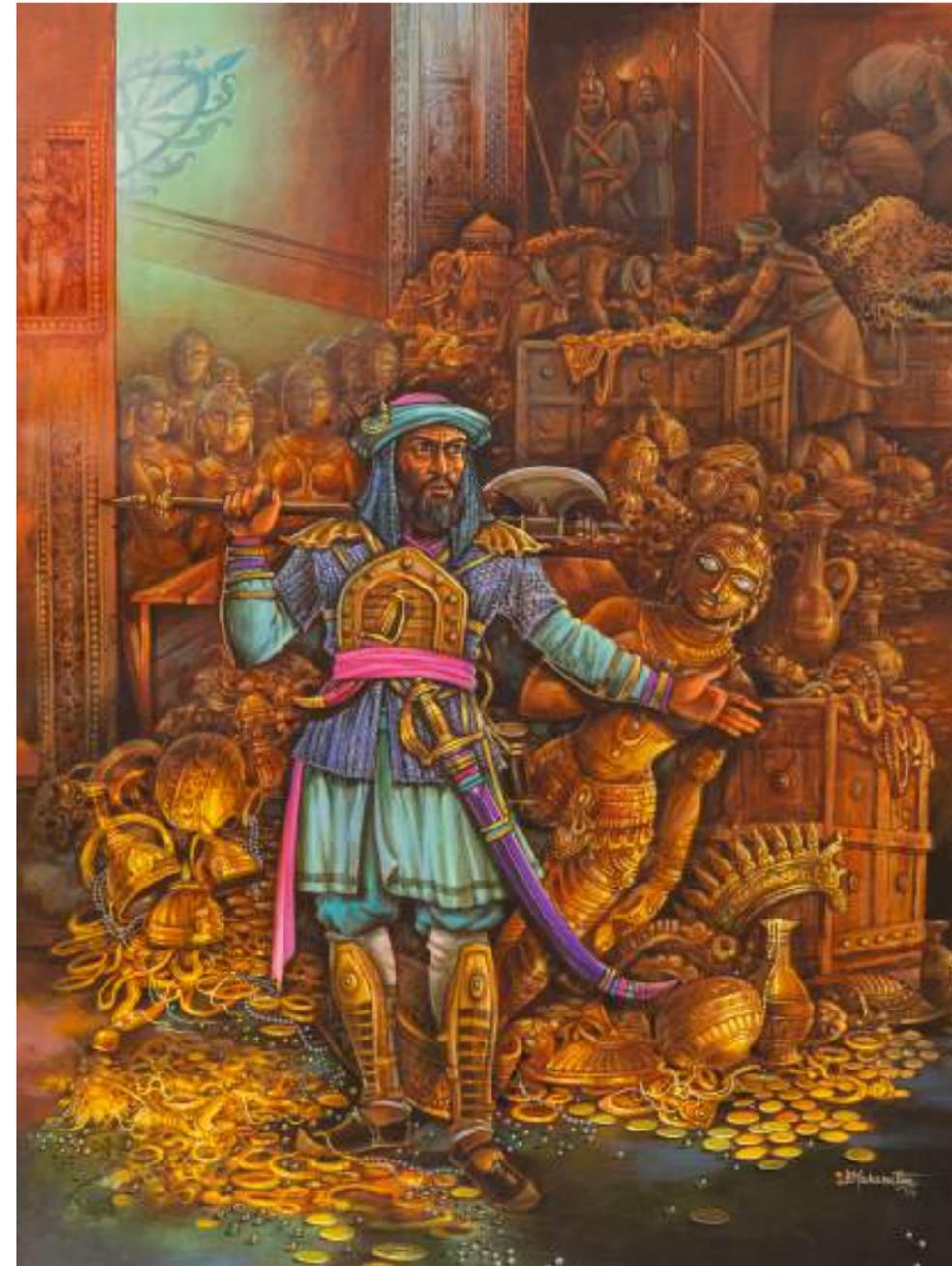
On hearing of the attack, Parichha Dibyasingha Pattanayak went to the temple to take the Shree Chaturdha Murti to safety before the invaders arrived in Puri. The Deities were taken by boat to Chhapali and buried underground in a place called



Gada Kujanga, Rajesh Nayak, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

Hatipada or Hastipatana. As soon as Kalapahada received information of the Deities being under the ground at Hatipada, he rushed there with his troops. Crossing over the estuary, he reached the spot and had the ground dug up. He pulled out the idols and carried them on elephant back to Puri where he desecrated all the temples and idols of the gods and goddesses. He dug out the sacred Kalpavata tree, threw horse dung into the temple and set it on fire. He, then, took the sacred idols of Shree Chaturdha Murti to the banks of the Ganga in Bengal and set them aflame.

However, as soon as the idols began to burn, Kalapahada's body began to disintegrate with his organs falling off, one after the other. His Qazi told him that this



Gada Kujanga, Baladev Maharatha, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

was the result of desecrating and dishonouring the great Lord of the Universe. Hearing this, Kalapahada's son, Bayazzid, threw the half-burnt idols into the waters of the Ganga. The half-burnt idol of Lord Shree Jagannatha floated down the river until it was found by someone who picked it up and threw it in his backyard to use as firewood. Bisara Mohanty, a great Vaishnava devotee of the Lord, was witness to this entire incident. He decided that he would have to retrieve the sacred wood and take it back with him to Odisha. He requested the man for the piece of wood, saying that he needed to make a new Mridanga (a traditional drum) as he made a



Gada Kujanga, Nibedita Pattnaik, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft



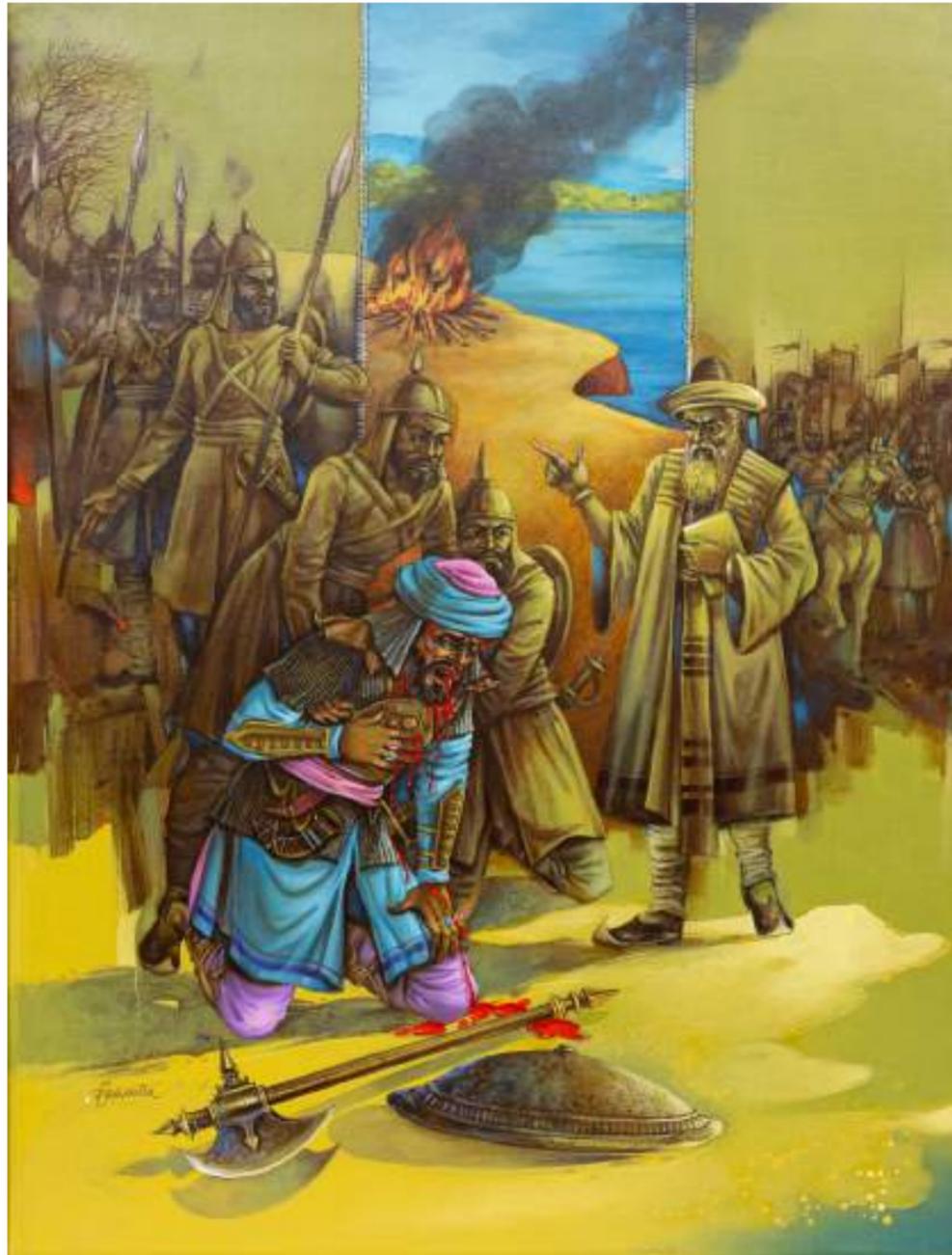
Gada Kujanga, Pradosh Swain, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

living by playing the Mridanga. After receiving the wood, he secretly removed the sacred Brahma Padartha (divine soul matter). He encased the Brahma Padartha inside his Mridanga and returned to Odisha.

After 1510 AD, with the advent of Shri Chaitanya Deva, the Bhakti movement had gained momentum. The spirit of Bhakti drew people towards Gaudiya Vaishnavism by which they began to adore Lord Shree Jagannatha as Lord Shree Krishna. One such devout was Bisara Mohanty, a devotee of the Lord from Jajpur. As news of Kalapahada's barbaric attack on Puri spread throughout Odisha, Bisara Mohanty reached Puri. He discreetly followed Kalapahada's troops carrying the Deities to the Ganga in Bengal. Hiding behind a tree,

he witnessed the most horrific and heartbreaking incident of the burning of the Deities. It took Bisara Mohanty eight months to retrieve the burnt remains of the Lord and carry the Brahma Padartha back to Odisha. He first arrived at Chandbali, from where he boarded a fishing boat to reach the estuary at Gada Kujanga, then known as Anantapur. Even, now, there exist two villages flanking Gada Kujanga on either side, called Balarampur and Jagannathapur, which lend credence to the fact that this place had indeed played an important role in the Gopana Leela of the Lord.

In Gada Kujanga, the Brahma Padartha was worshipped in utmost secrecy inside a dense forest on the banks of Hanuman Sagar. Apart from the king, the only other person who knew about this secret worship was



Gada Kujanga, Baladev Maharatha, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft



Gada Kujanga, Laxman Kumar Nayak, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

Hati Bahubalindra. The king had sworn Bahubalindra to secrecy, saying that he would die the moment he revealed the secret hideout of the Brahma Padartha. In this way, the Lords were worshipped at Gada Kujanga for a period of eight years. After eight years, King Ramachandra Deva was directed by the Lord in a dream to take them back from Gada Kujanga to Puri, and to reinstate them in the form of new idols on the Ratna Simhasana, with due rituals. In 1575 AD, King Ramachandra Deva sent the royal priests and emissaries in a grand procession to Gada Kujanga. Accompanying them was Bisara Mohanty. After the death of the King of Gada Kujanga, his deputy Bahubalindra was in charge of administrative affairs. He was informed about the reason for the visit and told that the procession had been sent by the Gajapati King under directions from the Lord. Bahubalindra knew that he could not hold the



Gada Kujanga, Dr. Stitadhi Rath, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

secret any further and revealed the hideout of the Deities. At that very moment, he dropped dead, as he had violated the code of secrecy. The Brahma Padartha was then carried back to Puri where new idols were carved. According to historians, the new idols were enshrined on Ratna Simhasana in the Shree Mandira on 17th July 1575 AD (Shravana Shukla Navami Tithi) during the reign of King Ramachandra Deva.

The terrifying episode of Kalapahada remains a black mark not only in the history of Odisha, but also in the psyche of the Odia people across generations, who are haunted by the brutalities inflicted on their Aradhya Devata, the Lord of the Universe, who courses through their bloodstreams. At this point, it is pertinent to note the origin of Kalapahada. According to oral traditions, 'jana shruti,' Kalapahada was born as a Hindu named Kala Chand. After marrying a Muslim lady by the name of Dulari, he was ostracised from the Hindu community. Soon, he realised his folly of rejecting his religion and approached the learned men of Mukti Mandapa in Shree Mandira, as



Gada Kujanga, Pradosh Swain, Acrylic on Canvas, 5 X 4 ft



Gada Kujanga, Priyadarsini Mohanty, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

well as other seers and pandits to accept him back into the folds of Hinduism. However, all his appeals were rejected. Dejected and devastated by this rejection, he vowed to destroy all Hindu temples and idols of gods and goddesses, thus transforming into the terrifying Kalpahada. According to historian Kedarnath Mohapatra, by desecrating and destroying the temple of Lord Jagannatha in 1568 AD, the Muslims fulfilled a long-standing desire to vandalise and destroy the most important icon of Hindu religion of the time, the temple of Lord Shree Jagannatha, as well as, loot the famed wealth of the Ratna Bhandara, and, hence, considered it as a great victory over Hinduism. After this heinous attack, Hindus, and devotees of Lord Shree Jagannatha, not only in Odisha



Gada Kujanga, Mamata Samantaray, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 4 ft



Gada Kujanga, Binod Moharana, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

but all over India, were greatly demoralised. On seeing this collapse of the morale of the Hindus and devotees of the Lord, King Ramachandra Deva vowed to do everything to restore the glory of the Lord and the morale of the Odia people.

As the Lord had resided in secrecy at Gada Kujanga for some time, nearly four hundred and fifty years ago, it holds a special place in the minds and hearts of all devotees of Lord Shree Jagannatha. >>>





GOPALA TEMPLE, KHORDHA GADA

Entwined with the Gopana Leela at Gada Kujanga is the Gopana Leela at Gopala Temple in Khordha Gada.

In 1572 AD, Gajapati Maharaja Ramachandra Deva I, the founder of the Bhoi dynasty, had shifted the capital from Barabati in Cuttack to Khordha Gada. The site for the new capital was a spot at the foot of the Barunei hills between Cuttack and Puri, at a place called Khordha Palli near Khola Palli. A large fort with high walls was constructed in the new capital that housed the royal palace, darbar, treasury and stores. This new capital was named Jagannatha Cuttack.

Four years before the capital was shifted, a temple had been constructed at Khola Palli. Gajapati Purushottama Deva had brought an idol of Lord Gopala from Kanchi which received ritual worship at Barabati Fort in Cuttack. When Kalapahada invaded Odisha, fearing an attack on Cuttack, Gajapati Purushottama Deva moved the idol of Lord Gopala to the temple in Khola Palli. During subsequent invasions, this idol was moved to Rathipur Gada and Kantalabai Gada in Bhusandapur in the same area.

According to the Chakada Pothi text, after Gajapati Ramachandra Deva shifted his capital to Khordha Gada, he received instructions in a dream to retrieve the divine Brahma Padartha (sacred soul matter or life force of the Deities) from Gada Kujanga and place it inside new idols. He deputed his minister, Bada Padmanabha Pattanaika to bring the Brahma Padartha from Gada Kujanga. Accompanied by the royal priest, servitors and Bisara Mohanty, Bada Padmanabha Pattanaika reached Gada Kujanga where he received information about the secret location of the divine Brahma Padartha from Hati Bahubalindra. The divine Brahma Padartha was then retrieved and carried by Bisara Mohanty on his head in a magnificent procession from Gada Kujanga to Khordha Gada, where it was placed in the Gopala Temple at Khordha Gada.

Following the directions received in the dream, Gajapati Ramachandra Deva ordered for the commencement of the Nabakalebara (new embodiment of Deities) process. Teams of servitors embarked on Banajaga Jatra (the expedition to identify holy Neem trees for the sacred logs of wood) following prescribed rituals and processes stated in the Skanda Purana, to find the sacred Daru or wooden logs to sculpt the new idols. After a long search, the tree for Lord Shree Jagannatha's idol was identified, carrying requisite auspicious signs of Shankha (conch) and Chakra (discus or wheel). The presence of an anthill was noted at the base of the tree. To commemorate this auspicious finding, Gajapati Ramachandra Deva established a village at the spot which he named as Brahmapura and constructed a temple there dedicated to Lord Shree Dadhi Bamana. Bisara Mohanty was honoured with the title of Gadanayaka and was granted three hundred sixty Bati of Nishkara Bhumi in Singhal-Brahmapur Choupadī for the upkeep of the temple. Five generations of Bisara Mohanty's descendants had since then rendered service at the temple of Lord Shree Dadhi Bamana, until one of his descendants, Kunja Gadanayaka, died without an heir.



Gopala Temple, Khordha Gada, Bhanu Pratap Maharatha, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

The new idols of Shree Chaturdha Murti were sculpted anew in the historical Nabakalebara of 1575 AD. The divine Brahma Padartha was transferred into the new idols after which the Deities were carried to Puri in a regal procession befitting the Lord of the Universe. The procession passed the temple of Lord Nrusingha and entered the Singhadwara (Lion's Gate), after which the Deities were formally consecrated on the Ratna Simhasana on 17th July 1575 AD.

Later, in 1607 AD, in the reign of Gajapati Purushottama Deva, Hashim Khan attacked Puri. The Shree Chaturdha Murti were secretly carried out of Puri and again brought to Gopala Temple in Khordha Gada, where they received worship for one year until February 1608 AD, when they were taken back to Puri.

The temple of Lord Shree Dadhi Bamana stands today amidst the ruins of the fort and palace of Khordha Gada, a mute witness to the Gopana Leela of Lord Shree Jagannatha at the Gopala Temple at Khordha Gada. >>>



PANCHAMUKHI GOSANI PITHA

During the reign of Gajapati Purushottama Deva, there was information that Mirza Khurram, the general of the Subahdar of Bengal, was planning an attack on Puri. According to the Madala Panji, on receiving the news of the impending attack, Gajapati Purushottama Deva gave instructions to move the Shree Chaturdha Murti out of Puri. The idols were secretly carried in a four-wheeled cart up to the river mouth from where they were taken by boat to the famous temple of Goddess Panchamukhi Gosani in Kapileshwara in Brahmagiri, twelve kilometres away from Puri. At this temporary residence, the Deities were worshipped for about eight months, returning to Puri only after Dola Jatra.



Kapileshwara Sasan is situated on the banks of River Bhargavi. The Gajapati King who was a devout follower of the Goddess Panchamukhi Gosani, had constructed this temple for the ritual worship of the goddess. During their stay at Panchamukhi Gosani Pitha, the Shree Chaturdha Murti were seated on the Dola Bedi where the Dola Niti was performed. A site called Dola Melana Padia still exists to this day in Kapileshwara Sasan. While the deities were on the boat at Dobandha ghat of River Bhargavi, they were offered Shitala Manohi or dry food offerings and other ritual worship. While they remained at Panchamukhi Gosani Pitha, the Chapa Dalai servitors were in charge of guarding the boats from any kind of threat. >>>

Panchamukhi Gosani Pitha, Dr. Stitadhi Rath, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft





CHAKANASI

During the attack of Kalyana Malla, the Shree Chaturdha Murti were shifted to Mahishanasi in Chilika. Here, the Deities were worshipped atop a circular (Chakaa) pedestal on a sandbar island in the middle of Chilika Lake. Ever since, this place is known as Chakanasi. According to researchers, the Shree Chaturdha Murti resided at Chakanasi for a period of almost one year; from June 1611 AD to May 1612 AD. The Gajapati King had endowed Amrita Manohi land, the revenue from which was to be used for the rituals and offerings for the Deities.

According to Parikuda Itihasa by Dr. Radha Charana Panda, in the past there existed a Jagati (platform) at Chakanasi. On this platform was a Ratna Simhasana (throne). The Shree Chaturdha Murti were placed on this platform and offered ritual worship. While the said platform has disappeared, what still remain are fragments of the Simhasana lying around in the area.

On 18th April 2007, a high-level delegation from the Shree Jagannatha Temple Administration led by then Chief Administrator, Suresh Chandra Mohapatra, visited Chakanasi for a first-hand survey of the site. The delegation included Dr. Bhaskar Mishra, eminent scholar and researcher on Lord Shree Jagannatha, was part of this delegation in his official capacity as member of the temple administration, as well as, senior servitors of the temple including senior Daitapati sevaks. The visiting team found broken pieces of the Simhasana with one panel fragment portraying an exquisite carving of Nabagraha. They were informed by the local people that according to oral traditions - 'jana shruti,' the Deities had been offered Anna Bhoga or rice offerings during their stay at Chakanasi. This fact was substantiated by the findings of pottery fragments from the site many years ago; the Anna Bhoga would have been cooked in earthenware vessels (Kudua) as is the traditional practice followed in Shree Mandira. The team also saw an old well further down from the site of the platform where the Deities had been placed. The well is now filled up with sand. It is believed that in the past, the sweet water from this well was used for rituals as well as for cooking of Anna Bhoga. However, there was no sign of the circular platforms on which the Deities were worshipped. It is possible that once the Deities had been transferred out of Chakanasi, the wheel-shaped pedestals would have been removed from the site.

In 1612 AD, during the second attack by Kalyana Malla, the Deities were moved from Chakanasi to Sipinasi. According to oral traditions, 'jana shruti,' this happened at a time very close to Rath Yatra. Hence, the Deities were taken in a chariot procession along the three kilometre route from Chakanasi to Sipinasi. A folk song aptly describes this movement:

"From Chakanasi to Sipinasi

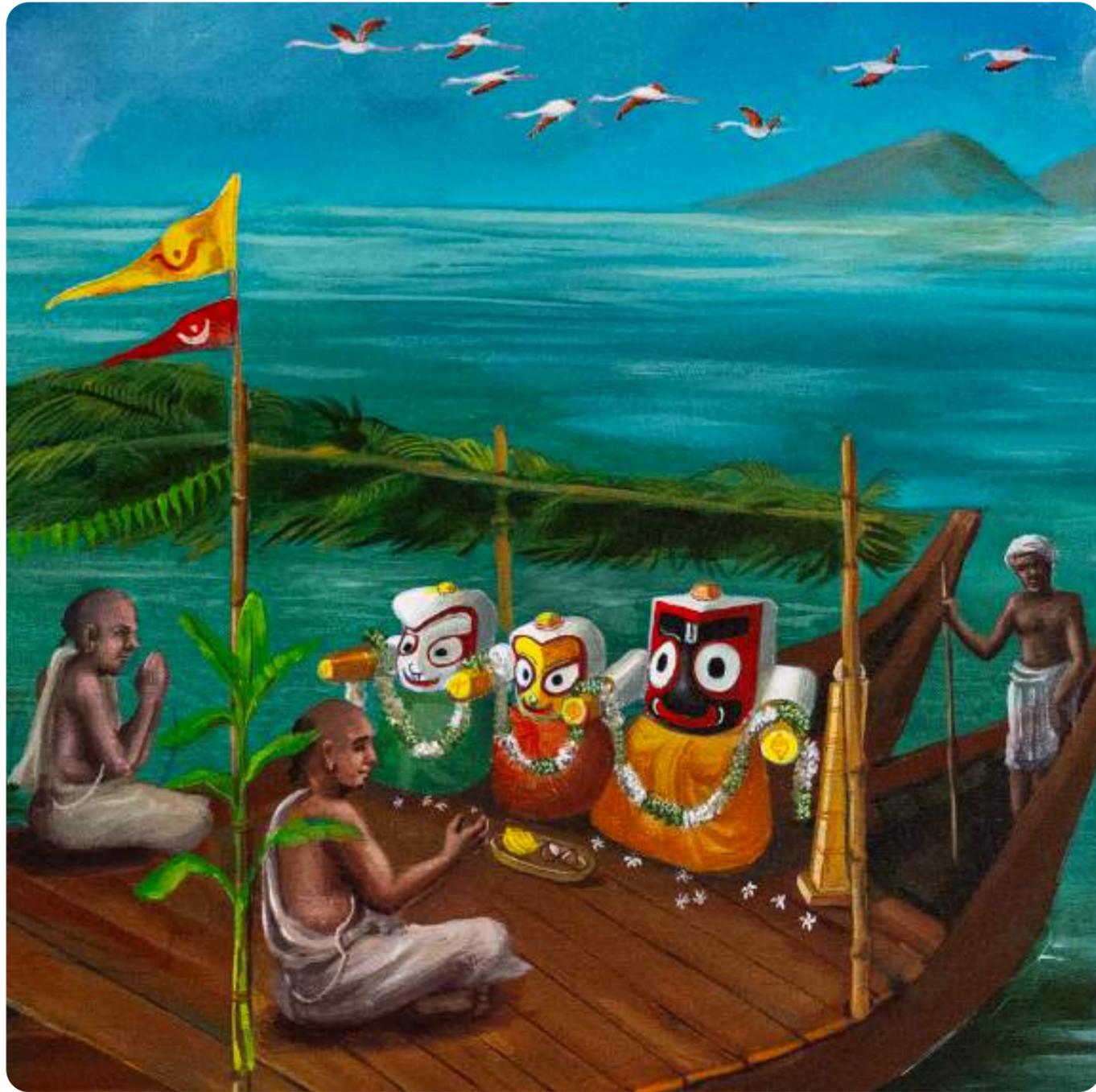
The Lords travelled, seated in their chariots."

Both Chakanasi and Sipinasi villages lie on a small and remote island inside Chilika Lake. If covered by foot, then the distance between the two villages would be approximately three kilometres. In Chakanasi, a small hut representing a temple, holds small idols



Chakanasi, Pradeep Pandey, Acrylic on Canvas, 5 X 4 ft

of Shree Chaturdha Murti. An unbroken panel of Nabagraha is being worshipped till date. Broken remnants of past structures are seen around the hut. Some local citizens have come together and formed a committee to work towards better preservation of this historic site. The people of this area have named the site as Sagara Shreekshetra. The Shree Chaturdha Murti are being worshipped here as Chakadeva. >>>



GURUBAI GADA

Among the temporary abodes of the Shree Chaturdha Murti, Gurubai Gada holds a very special position. According to the Madala Panji, the Shree Chaturdha Murti had been shifted to Gurubai Gada twice, the first time in 1612 AD during the attack by Kalyana Malla when they were taken from Chakanasi and secretly worshipped in a boat docked at Gurubai Gada, and, the second time, when they were moved to a nearby upturned banyan tree where they were worshipped on circular stone pedestals at the base of the tree. During these two phases of relocation, the Deities were offered ritual worship by a small group of servitors. At this time, only Shitala Bhoga or dry food was offered to the Shree Chaturdha Murti. The temple of Lord Shree Dadhi Bamana, constructed by the King of Nrusinghaprasad Gada, is now present at this site. The upturned banyan tree under which the Deities were worshipped was completely damaged during the super-cyclone of 1999. However, the hanging roots of the divine tree, seen even today, bear testimony to the secret sojourn of Shree Chaturdha Murti at this site, during that time.

On 18th April 2007, a high level delegation of the Shree Jagannatha Temple Administration visited the sacred site of Gurubai Gada. After the visit, research and enquiries around the remains of the upturned banyan tree, they miraculously unearthed the three circular pedestals on which the Shree Chaturdha Murti had been seated during their stay here. According to the text Parikuda Itihasa, one and half Bati (thirty acres) Amruta Manohi land was allotted by the King for the services and rituals of the Deities during their stay at this temporary abode.

In 1617 AD, during the second attack by Mukarram Khan, the Deities were carried along the banks of River Bhargavi and brought to Gurubai Gada where they had remained for a short span of time. From there, they were moved to the village of Gabapadara at the mouth of River Shalia in Banapur tehsil, where they received ritual worship in a boat.

The Gopana Leela at Gurubai Gada had occurred during the reign of Gajapati Purushottama Deva of the Bhoi dynasty. >>>

Gurubai Gada, Janardan Paramanguru, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 4 ft





GABAPADARA

During the second attack by Mukarram Khan in 1612 AD, as soon as the royal palace at Khordha Gada came under siege, the Gajapati King Purushottama Deva shifted with his family to Gada Manitri where he set up his royal residence and court. Apprehending an attack on the Shree Mandira and the Deities, the Gajapati ordered for the movement of the Shree Chaturdha Murti from Gurubai Gada to Gabapadara on the west bank of Chilika, bordering the tehsil of Banapur. Here, the Deities were placed on a docked boat, where ritual worship including Shital Bhoga or dry food offerings were offered to them. The village of Gabapadara is located near Banapur, on the banks of Chilika Lake, facing River Shalia.

Based on information in the Madala Panji, Dr. Abhimanyu Jena opines that the Shree Chaturdha Murti were taken to Gabapadara from Gurubai Gada where they were worshipped on a boat in the river; and, were subsequently shifted for a few days to Lord Banka Nidhi Temple in Gabapadara, where they were seated on a platform in the temple and received due ritual worship. Local people reveal that the Gajapati King had granted Amruta Manohi of Dedha Bati Sampatti (thirty acres of land), for meeting the expenses of the ritual worship of Shree Chaturdha Murti. >>>



Gabapadara, Janardan Paramguru, Acrylic on Canvas, 5 X 4 ft





ANDHARI GADA

The Shree Chaturdha Murti had resided temporarily in Andhari Gada, at Banapur. It was here that the divine Brahma Padartha, (sacred soul matter or divine life force), was removed from the idols and taken to Gada Manitri in complete secrecy. According to the Madala Panji, Gajapati Nrusingha Deva had resided at Gada Manitri for some time.

The Andhari Gada fort is one of the oldest and strongest forts of Odisha. In ancient times, it was well known as Andhari, an administrative subdivision of the state. Later, when Kalyan Malla was Subahdar of Odisha, Dharmu Rai Pitam had granted this fort to him.

Andhari Gada is located on the border between Banapur and Ranapur. Fifteen kilometres to the north of Banapur lie Bankadagada, and Niladriprasad. Andhari Gada is about five kilometres from this site, and was considered a secure fort as it was located inside a dense forest. Over time, the name of this place was changed to Andhari Mahim.

During the reign of Gajapati Purushottama Deva, Ahmed Baig Khan attacked the Shree Mandira in 1621 AD. It was at this time that the Shree Chaturdha Murti were transferred to Andhari Gada by the royal priest and servitors, where Shitala Bhoga or dry food was offered to the Deities, along with ritual worship. Within a few days of this event, Ahmed Baig attacked Banapur in 1622 AD. As there was no time to move the heavy idols, the King ordered that the divine Brahma Padartha be removed and taken to Gada Manitri. Overnight, the divine Brahma Padartha was removed and wrapped in silk cloth, after which it was taken to Gada Manitri in utmost secrecy by the Daitapati servitors. >>>



*Andhari Gada, Jyotirmaya Pattnayak, Oil on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft*





GADA MANITRI



Gada Mantri, Pradeep Pandey, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

During the reign of Gajapati Purushottama Deva (1617 AD), the Khordha Gada fort was invaded and destroyed by Mukarram Khan. At this time, the King, along with the royal family and all the royal court officials moved residence and the royal court to Gada Mantri. The Madala Panji recounts that on the way to Khordha Gada, the invaders had decimated the temple of Sakhigopal. The Shree Chaturdha Murti were moved first to Gurubai Gada and then to Gabapadara, and thereon to Gada Mantri village. The King shifted the idols to Gada Mantri where he lived for five years until 1622 AD, when he died.

Gajapati Purushottama Deva had built a royal palace on about two acres of land at Gada Mantri. He built twenty two water tanks or Pushkarinis and royal office quarters. The chiefs of Khandayat clans resided around the royal complex. The present temple of Lord Tritiya Deva was constructed

in front of the complex. Later, after his successor Gajapati Ramachandra Deva II embraced Islam, his wife Lilavati Patta Mahadei and her sons remained in residence at Gada Mantri.

Gada Mantri is a fort located in Begunia block of Khordha district and is a heritage site of great importance. Surrounded by hills and flowing streams, the lush green environs create a magical ambience. The village of Mantri is divided into two parts – Upper Mantri and Lower Mantri. Mantri holds utmost importance as it was here that the Gajapati King of Puri set up residence, brought the divine Brahma Padartha, held the Nabakalebara where new idols of Shree Chaturdha Murti were sculpted and the process of

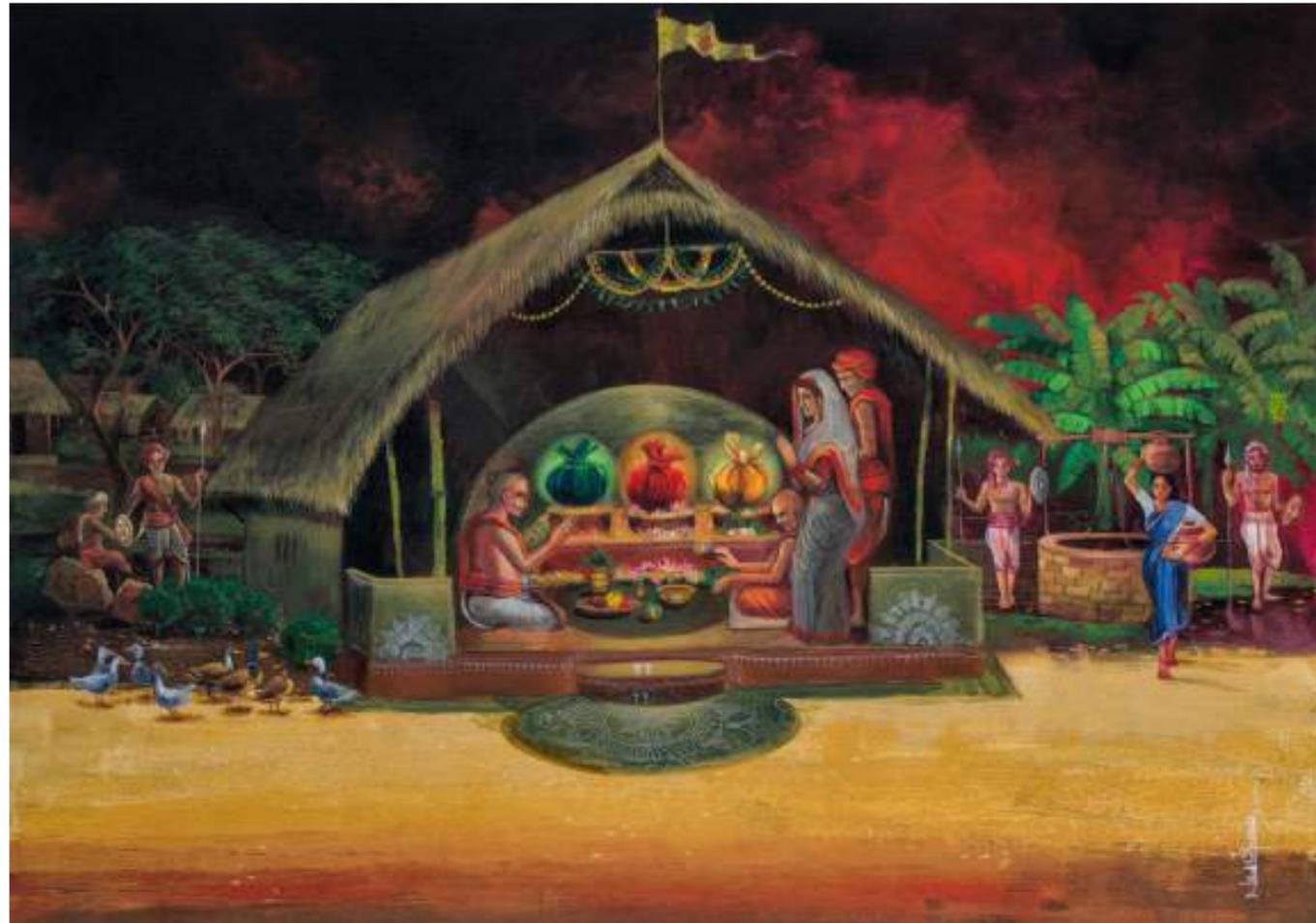
Gada Mantri, Raja Kishor Moharana, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft



transference of the divine Brahma Padartha was executed. The Gundicha Jatra or Rath Yatra was held here when the new idols were seated atop chariots that rolled on the Bada Danda of the village. To this end, the history of Gada Manitri is scripted in letters of gold in the history of Utkala.

Surrounding the village of Gada Manitri are the seven hills of Barunei, Kuruma, Rautapada, Kotalanga, Ramachandi, Narayani and Maninaga. These seven hills guard the village of Gada Manitri like a Chakravyuha or phalanx, a circular defensive military formation.

After the death of Gajapati Purushottama Deva, his son, Nrusingha Deva ascended the throne in 1622 AD. At this time, Subahdar Ahmed Baig attacked the Shree Mandira in Puri. A trusted informer passed on the message that Ahmed Baig was planning to attack Andhari



Gada Manitri, Nibedita Pattnaik, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft



Gada Manitri, Lipishree Nayak, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

Gada and Shree Chaturdha Murti. Therefore, the Paika warriors and the servitors of the Deities, having no time to carry away the huge idols, simply removed the divine Brahma Padartha from the idols, wrapped it in silk cloth and went in utmost secrecy to Manikapatana Ghat from where they entered the Chilika lagoon. The Daitapati servitors along with a few other servitors and the nationalist Paika warriors carried the divine Brahma Padartha in a boat towards the north of Chilika to reach the fort at Gada Manitri in the dead of night. Historians have set the date for this event as 8th August 1613 AD. The divine Brahma Padartha was kept in secrecy, in a thatched hut to the west of the Phandi Kupa well, where worship was offered following all due rituals. Even today, there are three commemorative



Gada Manitri, Subash Pujahari, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

idols being worshipped at the spot as Lord Tritiya Deva, in residence at Gada Manitri. There is no idol of Lord Sudarshana here.

After the divine Brahma Padartha reached Gada Manitri, the King ordered for a three-tier security around the site. The three tiers were Tala Gada, Upara Gada and Gada Bada, within which the valiant Paika warriors, carrying their glistening weapons, stood guard in the Chakravyuha formation. In Upara Gada, the houses belonged to the Dala Beheras. The house of the Kotha Karana was nearby. The Gajapati Maharaj had lived at this site with his family, surrounded by the Dala Behera, Jhapat Singh, Chhuala Singh, Paschima Kabata, Dakhina Kabata, and Jujhar Singh clans. To the west of the royal residence, facing east is the temple of Lord Shree



Gada Manitri, Lipishree Nayak, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 x 3 ft

Gobinda Jiu. Here, to the left of the idols of Radha and Krishna is Lord Shree Patitapabana. Even now, the Shree Gobinda Jiu temple is in the care of the Dala Behera family.

In 1613 AD, without the requisite pre-condition of Joda Ashadha (double Ashadha month in one year), the Nabakalebara (transference of divine Brahma Padartha to new idols) was held at Gada Manitri. This was conducted setting aside all prescribed traditional rites and rituals. The Vishwakarma Maharana had come from Puri to perform the Banajaga Niti (identification of the holy Neem trees for sacred wood logs) and sculpting of new idols. The local Maharanas had assisted him in this task. The descendants of the Vishwakarma Maharana still reside at Badhei Sahi of Gada Manitri, working as carpenters. The transference of the divine Brahma Padartha into the new idols was done with prescribed Vedic rites, including the yajna. After the transference, a site was chosen in the fort of Gada Manitri, where a circular platform (Chakaa) was constructed. The three idols were then seated on this circular platform and were offered ritual worship.

In 1614 AD, the Gundicha Jatra or Rath Yatra was held here in a very simple manner, without any of the fanfare associated with the chariot festival. The Chhera Pahanra, ritual sweeping of the chariots with a golden broom, was done by Thakura Raja Nrusingha Deva himself. The chariots rolled from the spot of the present Shree Tritiya Deva temple, up to the temple of Shree Kapileshwara Mahadeva. A temporary Gundicha temple had been constructed to the south of the Shree Kapileshwara Mahadeva temple. However, famous artist and researcher Baladev Maharatha has said that the Gundicha temple was built at Marthapada, about eighty four metres away from the seat of the Deities at Gada Manitri, where the chariots had arrived on Rath Yatra. After the nine day sojourn at the Gundicha temple, the Deities had rolled back in their chariots to their seat at Gada Manitri. The entire stretch of road on which the chariots had rolled was called the Bada Danda and today it is known as Gundicha Ghara Pada.

While the Gajapati had granted twenty two Pushkarinis (tanks) and twenty three Danda land (cattle grazing land), later it was reduced to eleven Danda of land. Of the twenty three Pushkarinis, ten exist until today. The Chandana Pushkarini, to the east of the Shree Kapileshwara Mahadeva temple, is seen to be in an almost buried condition. According to researchers, the Chandana Jatra had been conducted here in the Chandana Pushkarini, in 1622 AD. The idol of Lord Shree Dolagobinda had participated in the Chandana Jatra as Bijje Pratima. Presently, the idol of Lord Shree Dolagobinda resides in the Shree Gobinda Jiu temple and is worshipped there. To the south of the Chandana Pushkarini is the Haati Gadhua Pokhari, which is also seen to be in a neglected state.

After residing for two years at Gada Manitri, the Deities were taken in a wheeled cart, in a majestic procession through Khordha Gada, on the old Jagannatha Sadak road to Pattanaikiya, and from there to Purushottama Kshetra Puri, and were then enshrined on the Ratna Simhasana in Shree Mandira with all rituals and fanfare.

Gada Manitri, Subash Pujahari, Acrylic on Canvas, 5 X 4 ft



The Gopana Leela of the Lord at Gada Manitri is an enduring legacy that stands for the valour and pride of Utkala's valiant and loyal Paika warrior community. The ruins of the edifices that marked this historic event stand as mute witnesses to the divine play of the Lord for two years. The Tritiya Deva temple is where servitors Sarbeshwara Mahapatra and Rankanidhi Mahapatra and their clan members continue to offer daily ritual worship to the Chief Deities, even today. The Gajapati King had endowed Tini Bati Dasa Maana land for the upkeep of the Tritiya Deva temple. >>>



KOKALA GADA

Kokala Gada is located about fifteen kilometres from Alarnath in Brahmagiri, in Puri district. This place is also referred to as Gada Kokala. To the south of Kokala Gada flows the River Bhargavi whereas to its north flows River Luna. To the west is spread out the immense and immersive beauty of the Chilika lagoon.

Among the four fortresses established by Gajapati Ramachandra Deva I, the founder of the Khordha dynasty, the fortress of Kokala Gada is unique and of utmost importance. Goddess Bhagavati is the presiding goddess of the fortress while Lord Shree



Kokala Gada, Baladev Maharatha, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 x 3 ft



Neelakantheshwara Mahadeva is the presiding God of the fortress. According to researcher Suresh Kumar Jena, the idol of Goddess Bhagavati is believed to belong to the time of the appearance of the Pandavas in the Khandava forest of Brahmagiri.

The great valiant Paika general Lakshmidhara Patra had developed Kokala Gada as a flourishing and impregnable fortress. In 1530 AD, after receiving instructions in a dream, he had constructed the Shree Neelakantheshwara Mahadeva temple and had dug the Khandadhua Pushkarini to the north of the temple. He had donated large tracts of land for the running and upkeep of the temple of Lord Shree Neelakantheshwara Mahadeva. In the past, during attacks by religious fanatics on the Shree Mandira, he had facilitated the movement of Shree Chaturdha Murti through Kokala Gada, to various secret hiding places inside Chilika Lake, doing the same during the return journey of the Shree Chaturdha Murti back to Puri. After the Deities ascended the boats to travel through Chilika, the chief of the fortress assumed all responsibilities for the safety and worship of the Deities. In fact, the chief of the fortress would personally select the general of the navy (Mukhya Mangaraj) and enable him with the best boatmen, navigators and Paika warriors who would ensure a safe journey for the Deities. Kokala Gada being the last ghat or jetty of River Bhargavi, as well as the last fort in the path, all responsibilities of the Deities during their secret sojourns to Chilika were vested in the chief of the fortress. Due to the frequent passage of the Deities through this ghat, it was subsequently named Brahma Ghat.

In 1691 AD, on the orders of Aurangzeb, Nawab Ekram Khan Jamal and Abdullah Khan attacked the Shree Mandira with two large platoons of Mughal soldiers. On hearing of the attack, Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deva took the idol of Lord Shree Jagannatha

and hid it behind the temple of Goddess Bimala. The idols of Lords Shree Balabhadra, Goddess Subhadra, and, all the Bijje Pratima idols including Lords Rama-Krushna and Lord Madanamohana were sent to Kokala Gada. Later, the idol of Lord Shree Jagannatha was also secretly transported to Kokala Gada. Three fake idols of the Deities were carved out of sandalwood and placed on the Ratna Simhasana. According to historian Sir Jadunath Sarkar, at this time (March 1691 - May 1691 AD), Aurangzeb was camping at Bijapur. Hence, the three fake idols of the divinities were sent to Bijapur.

At Kokala Gada, the deities were enshrined in the temple of Goddess Bhagavati. A well was dug for water to be exclusively used in the rites and rituals of the Deities. This well is known as Manohi Kua. The Deities were offered the sweetest fragrant delicacies like Pitha and Mandua. Separate land endowments had been reserved for the upkeep and maintenance of the rituals of food offerings. These land parcels exist even now in the name of Khiri-Pitha land. Separate land was also earmarked for sourcing the earth to be used to make earthenware vessels (Kudua) for the cooking of food offerings for the Deities. A special kitchen (Rosha Ghara) was also set up to cook the Anna Bhoga (rice offering) for the Deities. While the Deities were at Kokala Gada, the important festival of Chandana Jatra was observed. A temporary Chandana Mandapa was erected near a tank to the east of the Kokala Gada fort. Hence, this tank is known as Chandana Pushkarini.



Kokala Gada, Jyotirmaya Pattnayak, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 x 3 ft

For the constant security and protection of the Deities at Kokala Gada, a special class of servitors called Baada Grahi were appointed and were anointed with the title of 'Gada Baada'. A set of Paika servitors were also appointed for supplying the daily needs of the Chandana Lagi Seva of the Deities. These servitors were honoured with the titles of Shreechandan and Harichandan.

To commemorate this site as Leela Kshetra, on 10th November 2011 (Kartika Shukla Ekadashi Tithi), local residents and devotees came together to begin construction of a temple, where the Shree Chaturdha Murti are enshrined today, receiving daily worship. >>>



BANAPUR BADA HANTUADA

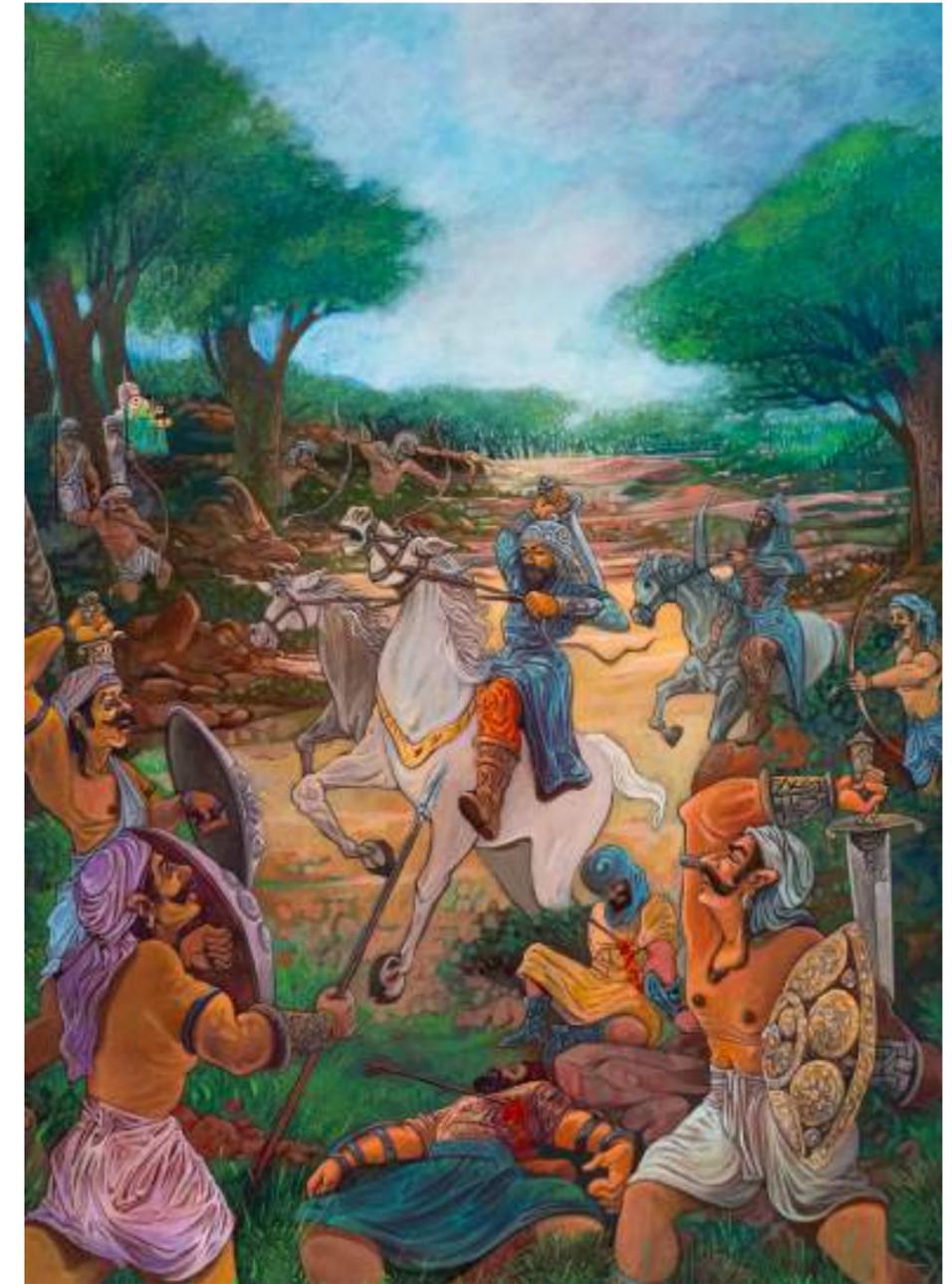
In 1691 AD, during the reign of Gajapati Dibyasingha Seva, on the orders of Aurangzeb, the Subahdar of Odisha, Ekram Khan, and, his brother Mastram Khan launched a fierce attack on Shree Mandira. As soon as the news of the attack spread, Sana Bishnu Parichha took the divine idols from Gada Kokala, placed them in a wheeled cart and sped towards the dense forests of Banapur and Bankada. While travelling thus, suddenly the horses stopped midway near a huge banyan tree, at a place called Bada Hantuada, and, in spite of repeated goading, refused to budge. Sana Bishnu Parichha instantly decided that the Deities would reside here at this very spot in the interim period, during their absence from the Shree Mandira. He ordered for three circular wheel-shaped platforms to be immediately prepared and placed on the site. The Shree Chaturdha Murti were then seated on the wheel shaped platforms after which regular ritual worship was offered to them.



Banapur Bada Hantuada, Mamata Samantaray, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

The Chaini Chakada text elucidates that on the return journey of the Deities to Puri from Bada Hantuada, Dharamu Pahanta Singh went and offered his reverence to Shree Chaturdha Murti at Bada Hantuada. He forced the Mughal attackers out of Puri. He then carried the Deities back to Puri by boat and took them inside the Shree Mandira. He was rewarded with the title of Nayaka of the two forts of Andhari Gada and Kokala Gada, and was honoured with a saree denoting the position of Rai Pitam.

According to historian Fakir Harichandan, in 1691 AD, the Shree Chaturdha Murti were taken to Bada Hantuada in Banapur, and were then moved to Niladri Prasad. King Jagannatha Harichandan had erected platforms for placing the Deities, after which he appointed servitors and priests, while also earmarking land endowments for maintenance of the required rituals. The news of the presence of the deities reached Subahdar Ekram Khan, after which he sent a strong army of Mughal soldiers to Bada Hantuada, to desecrate the idols. A fierce battle was fought between



Banapur Bada Hantuada, Rajesh Nayak, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft



Banapur Bada Hantuada, Santosh Moharana, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

the armies of Ekram Khan and the Paika army of King Jagannatha Harichandan. While the battle raged, the clever King Jagannatha Harichandan entrusted the divine idols to reliable carriers who carried the idols through dense forests for forty kilometres, from Banapur to the inaccessible forest covered valley of Shalia river; where the Bankada fort was located.

There are two differing opinions regarding the stay of Shree Chaturdha Murti at Bada Hantuada. The first school of thought holds that that the Deities had remained there for eight years, from 1691 to 1699 AD. On the other hand, essayist Rajendra Kumar Mohanty and researcher Brajabandhu Dash have said that the Shree Chaturdha Murti resided at Bada Hantuada for fifteen years, from 1691 to 1707 AD. The Kangoda Mandala comprising Banapur and Tangi tehsils had twelve forts and the Dala Behera chiefs of all these forts were given the responsibility of security of the Deities. The Dala Behera chief of Bhatapada fort was in command of this operation. In these fifteen years, the Chariot Festival of Shree Chaturdha Murti was held only twice. The Dala Behera of Bhatapada acted as the representative of the

Banapur Bada Hantuada, Raja Kishor Moharana, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft



Gajapati King of Puri, and performed the Chhera Pahanra (ritual sweeping of chariots with golden broom) during the Gundicha Jatra. As a reward for representing the King of Puri, the Bhatapada Dala Behera used to get a golden broom from the King.

The reign of King Jagannatha Harichandan of Banapur is considered to be the golden era of secret sojourns in Leela Kshetras of Lord Shree Jagannatha. The secret sojourn of fifteen years at Bada Hantuada framed by the natural beauty of Chilika Lake, the blue hills of Solari and the greenery of mango and coconut trees was so beautiful that the Lord left behind all the comforts of Ratna Simhasana and Shree Mandira, to perform Gopana Leela at this place. For the smooth functioning of the rituals of the Lord, the local chieftain constructed a platform of wood as well as a dwelling structure. The remains of the wooden platform have been preserved by the local people till date. The three circular platforms still remain intact and are worshipped even now at the Shree Chaka Deva temple. >>>



NAIRI

Among the various secret residences of the Shree Chaturdha Murti, the secret sojourn at Nairi village in Chilika in the eighteenth century, holds great relevance.

Gajapati Ramachandra Deva II (1727-1736 AD) was a great devotee of Lord Shree Jagannatha Mahaprabhu and had devoted himself completely in the service of the Lord. During his reign, the dreaded invader – iconoclast Taqi Khan invaded Puri in 1731 AD with the aim to destroy the Shree Mandira and the divine idols. Bada Parichha Paramananda Kuanra and Sana Parichha Bishnu Paschimakabata immediately shifted Shree Chaturdha Murti out of Shree Mandira, secretly carting them up to Dobandha jetty. From the jetty, the Deities were transported by boat across Chilika Lake to Nairi village in Banapur where the Deities were temporarily kept in residence in the Harihareshwara temple for seven months and twenty seven days, according to the Madala Panji.

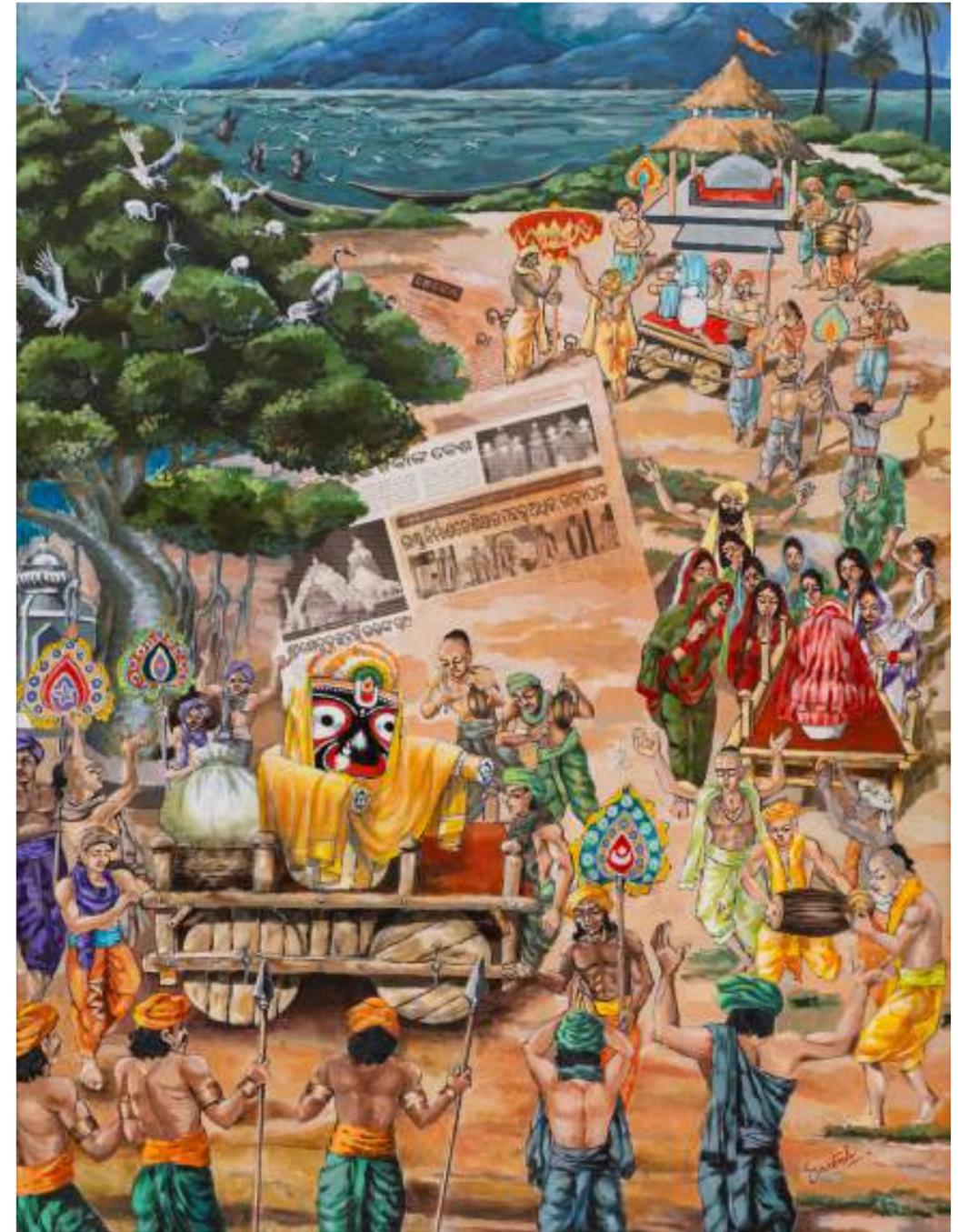
On hearing of the Deities being taken to Nairi, Taqi Khan planned to attack the village. Gajapati Ramachandra Deva II however pre-empted the attack by shifting the divine idols to Chikili, on the Khallikote border. Soon after this, Taqi Khan left for Murshidabad. Seizing this opportunity, the Gajapati King transported Shree Chaturdha Murti to Puri and thereafter organized the Gundicha Jatra (Rath Yatra) on 2nd July 1733 AD. The news of the celebration of Gundicha Jatra reached Nawah Khan and Rusad Khan, who launched an attack on Khordha. Gajapati Ramachandra Deva II, therefore, again had the divine idols moved to Harihareshwara Mandapa in Nairi village, on 30th November 1733 AD.

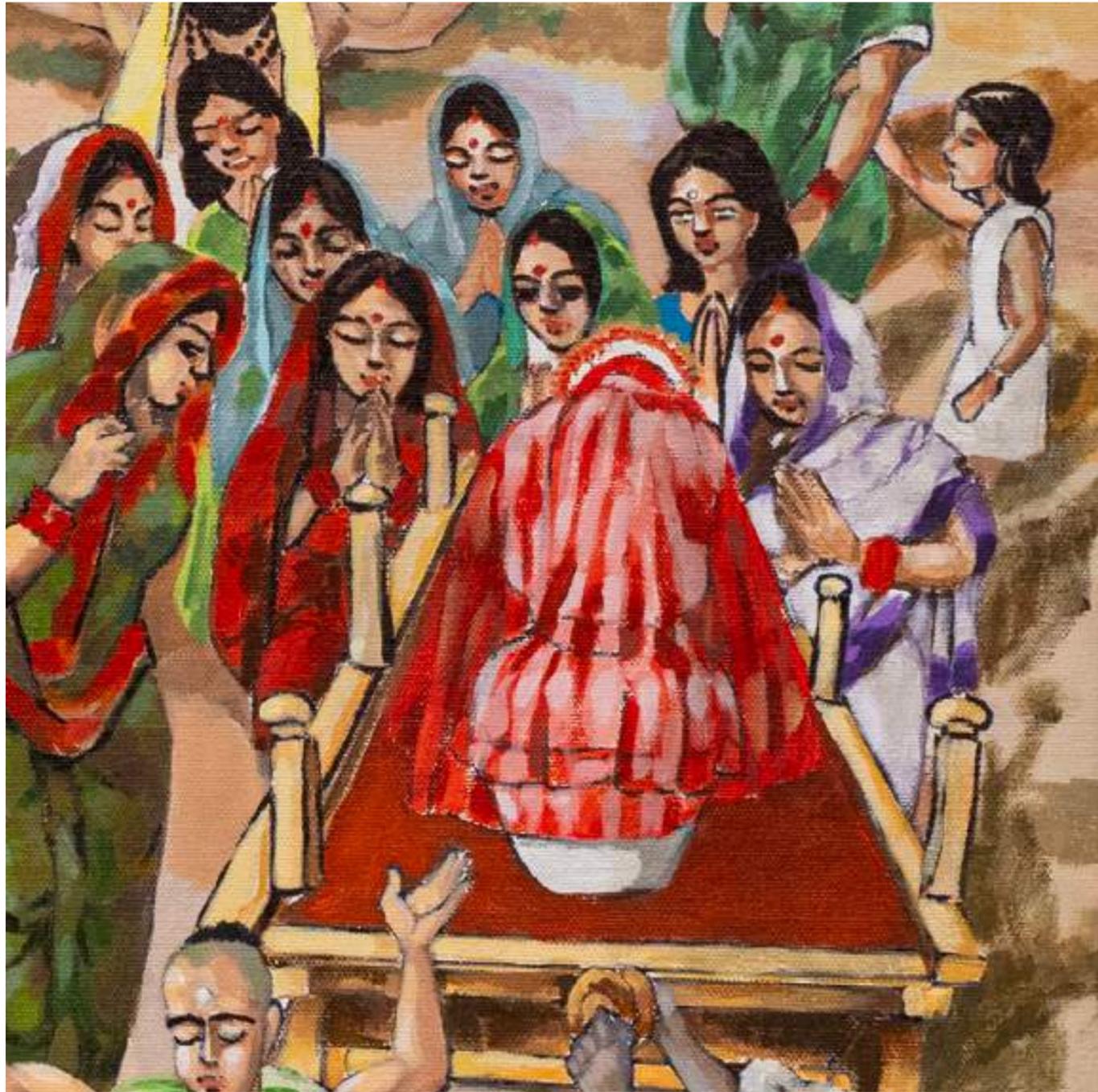
The village of Nairi is not only of great historical significance but also finds mention in oral traditions - 'jana shruti'. This village is situated on the banks of Chilika Lake, seven kilometres from the Neelakantheshwara temple at Kaudi Khani Chhak of Nachuni on National Highway 16, and, two kilometres from the Gangadharpur Railway Station of Khordha division. According to researchers, one of the important seats of administration during the reign of the Shailodbhava dynasty was Thorana, which subsequently was known as Sorana. Nairi is said to have been a Janapada, a settlement, under Sorana. The inhabitants of Nairi are believed to have practiced Buddhist Tantrism during the rule of Bhaumakaras in the 8th to 10th century AD. At this time, the island of Kankana Shikhari and its nearby surroundings of Dakini and Bheeshana hills were great seats of Buddhist Tantrism.

The Harihareshwara temple of Nairi was constructed at the Dolamandapa Sahi. To its south stands the temple of Lord Shree Lakshmi-Nrusingha. The Radha Ramana temple stands in Bada Sahi of Nairi while the temple of Lord Shree Gopinath was also established in Bada Nairi. The presence of all these temples makes Nairi a spiritually relevant site for the devotees of the Lord.

The temple of Lord Shree Harihareshwara at Nairi is a perfect example of the artistry of the sculptors of Utkala. The uniqueness of the temple lies in the fact that the images of Lords Shree Hari (Vishnu) and Hara (Shiva) are being worshipped together in a pit. The temple follows the Kalingan style of architecture, evident in the presence of Bimana and Jagamohana. Both Lord Garuda and Lord

Nairi, Santosh Moharana, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

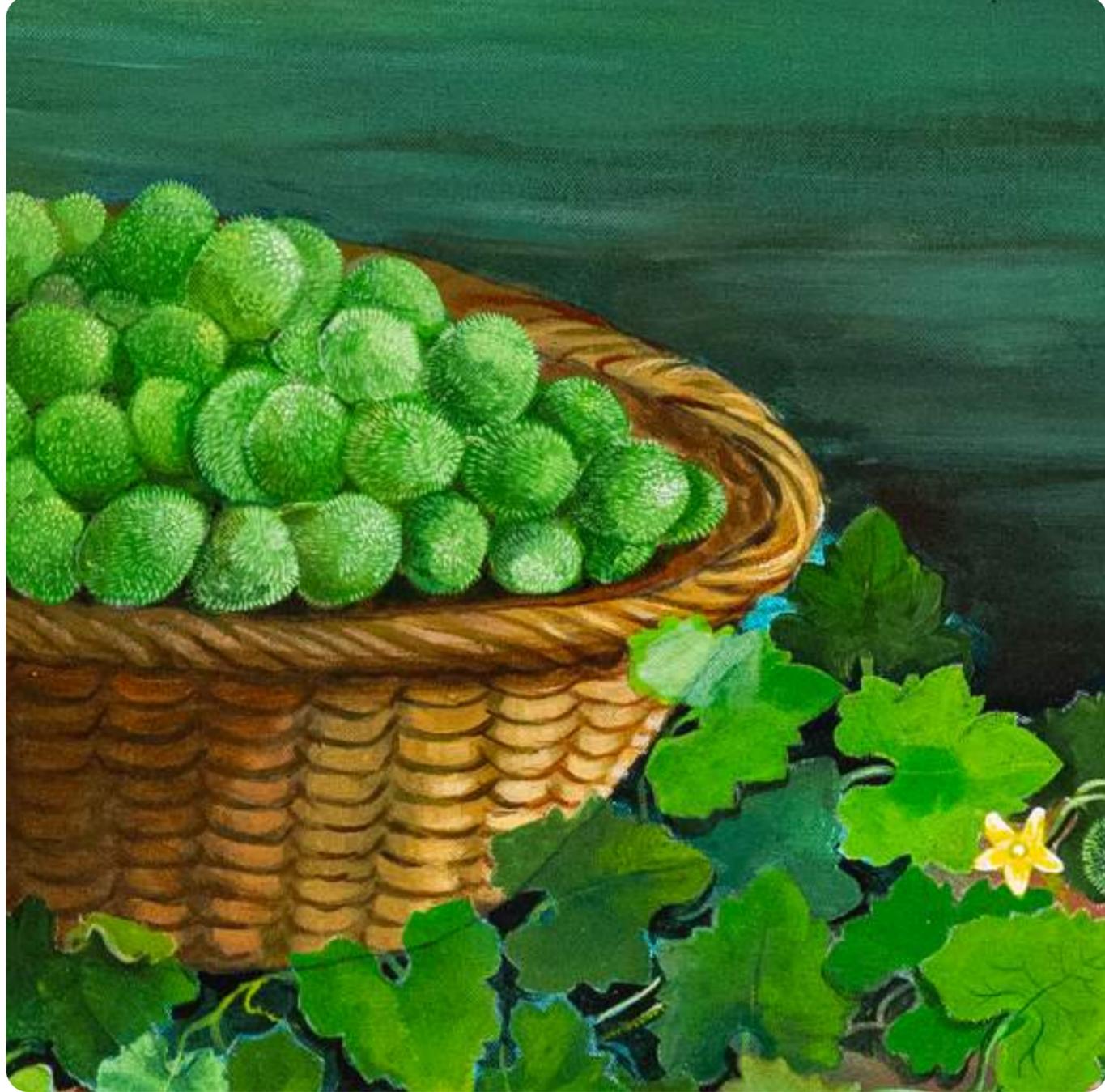




Vrushabha are present in the Mukhashala. On the left of the Mukhashala, there are three circular platforms on which the Deities had been enshrined around three hundred years ago and were offered ritual worship secretly for eight months, as per information from the Madala Panji, during the reign of Gajapati Ramachandra Deva II. While the Deities were being worshipped on the circular platforms, the idol of Lord Garuda had been installed in front, facing them.

There are five steps going down to the Bimana of the temple. In the Bimana, there is a water-filled pit that holds a Vishnu Shila on the left and a Shiva Linga on the right. The Vishnu Shila has an elongated top while the Shiva Linga has a rounded top (visible over the water). There is a Chakra atop the temple. To the right of the main temple is the temple of Lord Shree Lakshmi-Nrusingha. Twenty seven households of Mali (Rana) servitors have been assigned for ritual worship at this temple. In the past, twenty two Bati of agricultural land had been allotted as Amruta Manohi for the Deities. The Jagannatha Ballav Matha is situated close to this temple. During the stay of Shree Chaturdha Murti at Harihareshwara Mandapa, the Gundicha Jatra was held in utmost secrecy, without any fanfare. During this time, Taqi Khan had held Gajapati Ramachandra Deva II captive at Barabati fort in Cuttack. Therefore, his young son, Yuvaraja Krishnaraya had organized the Gundicha Jatra at this extremely tense moment. On his orders, a temporary Gundicha temple was erected on the eastern side of Nairi village, under an old Banyan tree. All the residents of the village had offered themselves in the service of the Lord to create this temporary structure out of bamboo, straw, and wood. Three new wheeled carts had been prepared on which the Deities had been seated and carried through the main road of Nairi. This road is known as Ratha Danda or Bada Danda even to this day. While the Deities were in residence at the Gundicha Ghara, a well was dug at the site in a single day, to provide water for the rituals of Shree Chaturdha Murti. This well remains in a dilapidated condition now, and is known as Gundicha Kua.

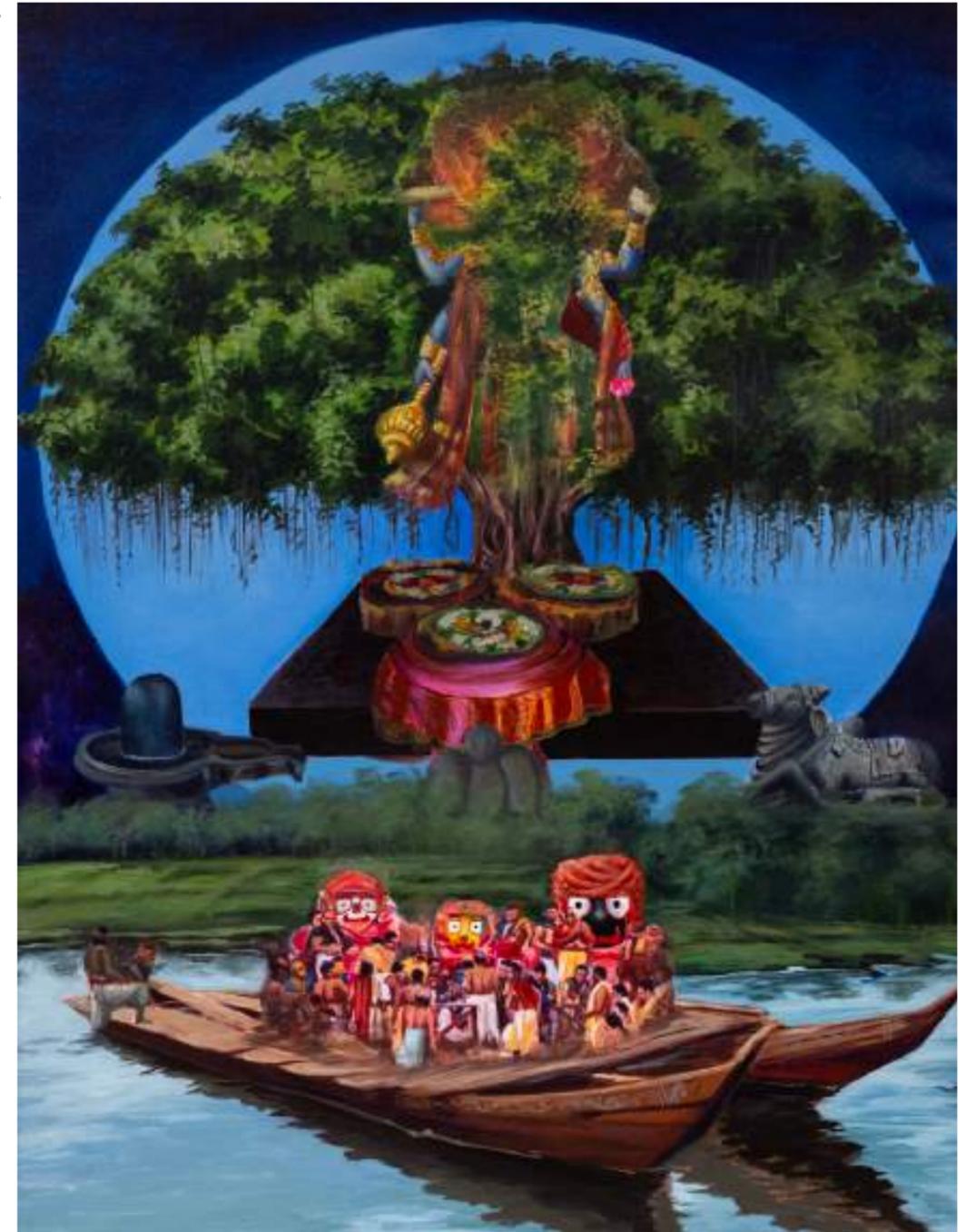
The Gundicha Ghara and Banyan Tree at Nairi were completely destroyed in the super-cyclone of 1999. However, the secret sojourn of the Deities at Harihareshwara Mandapa remains in the hearts and minds of the residents of Nairi as an event that has blessed their land and people. >>>



KANKANA SHIKHARI



Kankana Shikhari, Pradeep Pandey, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft



Kankana Shikhari, Ashok Behera, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft



Kankana Shikhari, Baladev Maharatha, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

Kankana Shikhari is again known as one of the unique secret hideouts of Shree Chaturdha Murti. On 18th March 1732 AD, when Taqi Khan invaded Banapur, the Deities were shifted out from their pedestals at Harihareshwara Mandapa and were taken to the forest on Kankana Shikhari island, which is about one kilometre away from the banks of Chilika Lake. The Deities were worshipped in this secret abode for three months and eighteen days. The island of Kankana Shikhari is about ten kilometres from Kalijai temple and the same from Satapada as well. The Deities were carried to Kankana Shikhari by boat and were kept well hidden inside the forest. The servitors would go to the nearby sweet water spring called Yamuna Nirjhara by boat to collect sweet water for the rituals of Shree Chaturdha Murti. The presence of the sweet water spring amidst the vast brackish waters of Chilika Lake is by itself considered to be a great mystery and miracle of the Lord.

The fruit locally called 'Kankana' or spiny gourd, grew in abundance at Kankana Shikhari. In those times Kankana or Kankada was known as a wild fruit. It was discovered during the stay of Shree Chaturdha Murti at Kankana Shikhari. Until then, no one had ever eaten this fruit. Since it was not possible to serve rice or Anna Bhoga to the Deities at Kankana Shikhari, the servitors began to pluck the wild-growing Kankana and served it to the Deities as food offering. At this tiny, far flung, solitary island, all that the Deities were offered as Shital Manohi was this Kankana fruit. To honour the memory of offering Kankana as Shitala Manohi at Kankana Shikhari, later it became a practice to offer Kankana as part of the daily Bhoga to the Deities at Shree Mandira, in Puri. The duty of sending Kankana from Kankana Shikhari to Puri was vested in the branch of Jagannatha Ballav Matha located at Boulabandha village, near Nairi. In this regard, the famous poet Radhanath Ray writes in his iconic poem Chilika –

Taranga Beshtita Kankana Shikhari  
 Aadya Phale Jaara Tari Purna Kari  
 Barse Barse Hrada Bihari Dheebare  
 Aadare Preranti Lakshmi Rosha Ghare

The Kankana from Kankana Shikhari was freshly plucked every day and sent by boat to Satapada, from where it was sent to Shree Mandira at Puri. This Kankana was offered as Kankana Bhaja to the Deities as Kotha Bhoga in the Sakala Dhupa, and was used in Dalma, Besara, Mahura, etc., in the Anna Bhoga offered to the divinities in the Bhoga Mandapa. However, with the gradual disappearance of the Kankana fruit from the island, the practice of offering Kankana to the Deities in Shree Mandira has been discontinued.

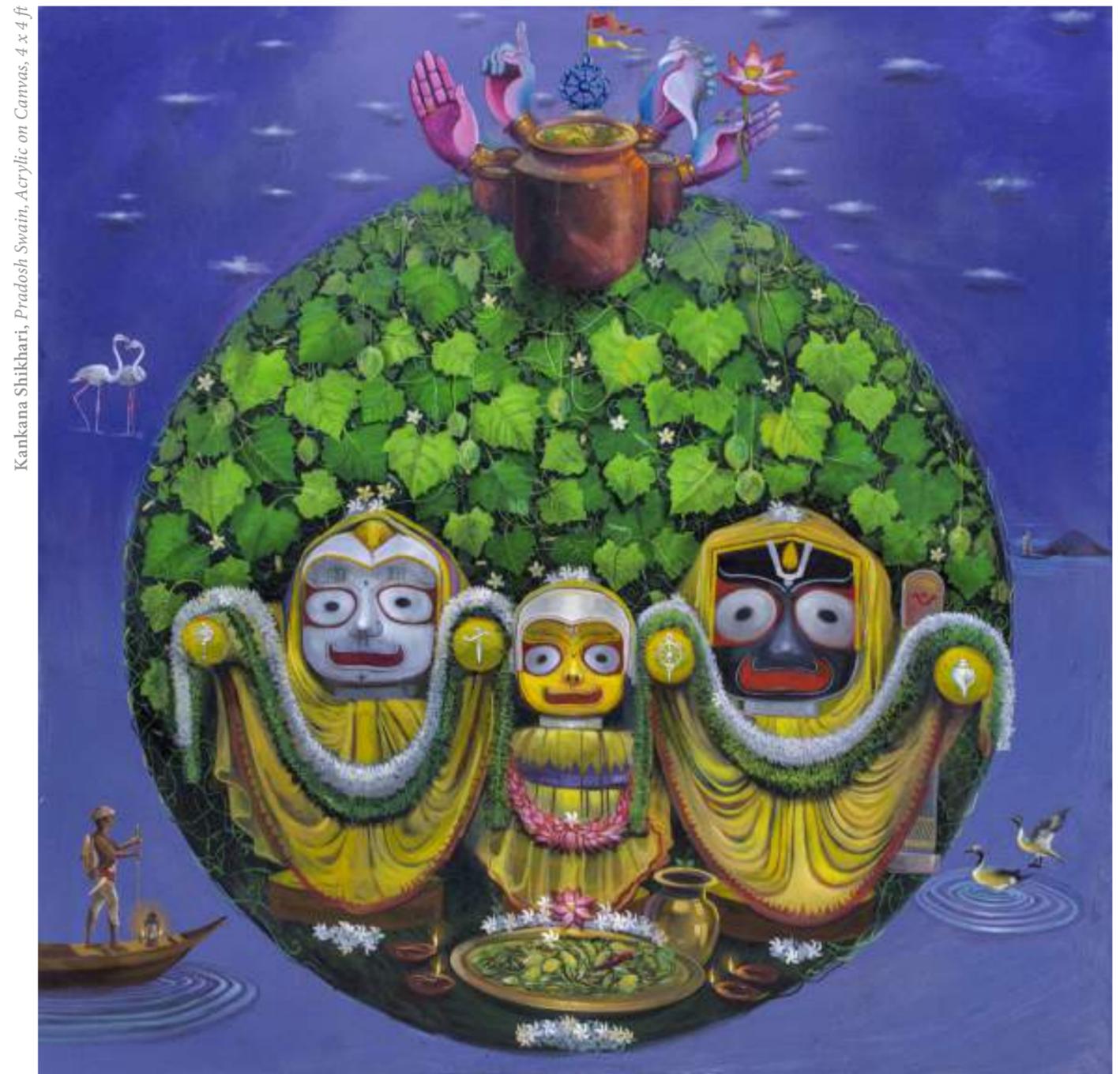
Local devotees have set up the Shree Jagannatha Leelakshetra Trust with the objective of preserving and developing the holy site of Kankana Shikhari. In 2016, on behalf of the Shree Mandira Administration, a wheel of Lord Jagannatha's Nandighosha chariot has been installed at Kankana Shikhari. With the cooperation and assistance of local devotees, a roofed hall was constructed in 2017,



Kankana Shikhari, Janardan Paramguru, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

in which this sacred wheel is kept and offered ritual worship. The idols of Shree Chaturdha Murti have also been placed in this Mandapa. With the assistance of Chilika Development Authority, a park, walking track, jetty, meditation hall, guest house and other facilities have also been set up at Kankana Shikhari.

In total, the Deities resided at Nairi and Kankana Shikhari for eleven months and fifteen days, and were worshipped in utmost secrecy by loyal servitors. However, as soon as there was information of an impending attack, Shree Chaturdha Murti were moved again, this time to Chikili, near the Samalanasi hill range. >>>



Kankana Shikhari, Pradosh Swaini, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 x 4 ft



CHIKILI

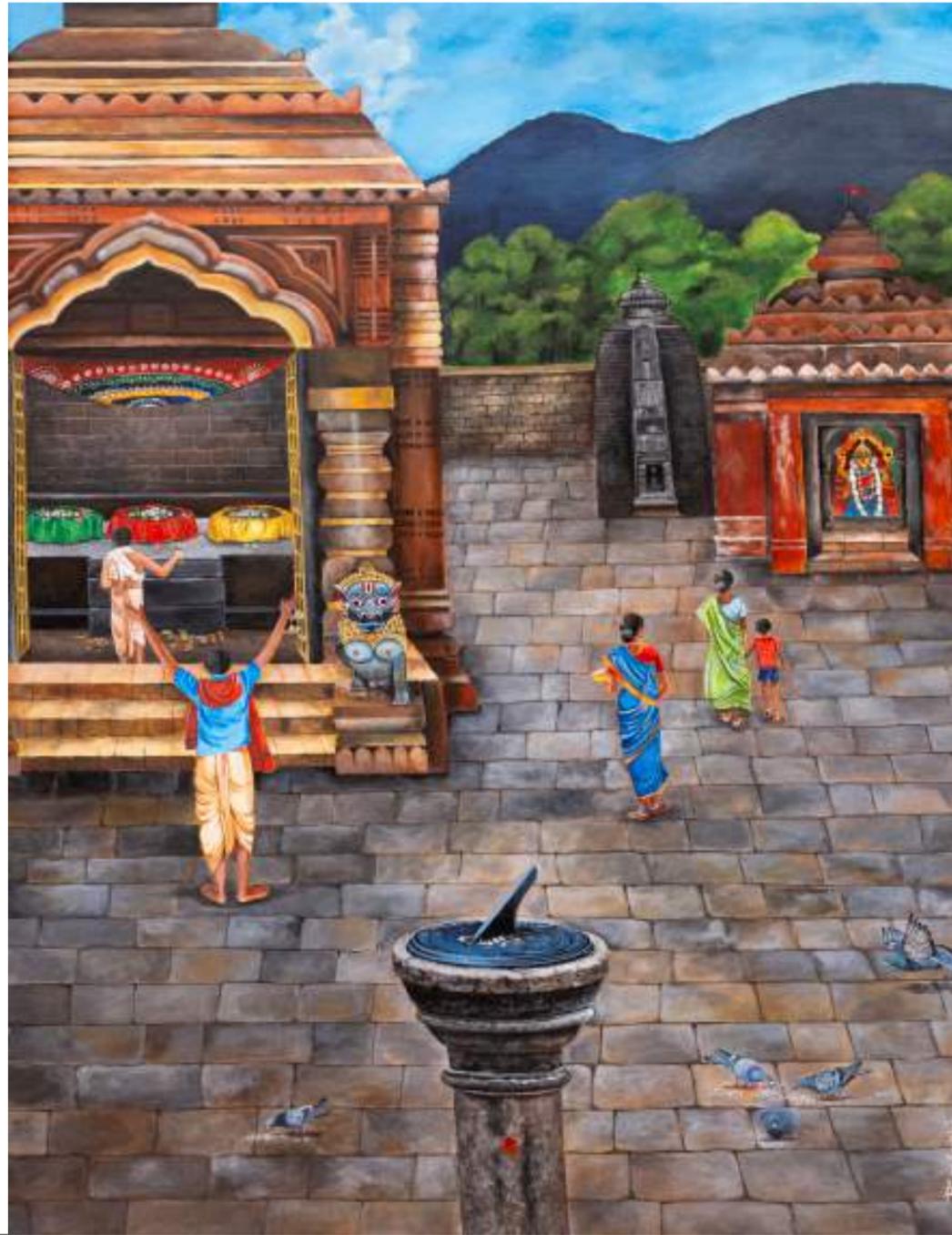


Chikili, Ashok Behera, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

The Shree Chaturdha Murti's secret abode of Chikili is about twelve kilometres away from Nirmal Jhara, near Khallikote in Ganjam district. In 1731AD, during the first invasion by Taqi Khan, Shree Chaturdha Murti were moved to Nairi's Harihareshwara Mandapa under orders of Gajapati Ramachandra Deva II. On hearing of an impending second attack, the Deities were moved to the Chakabali jungles in the Chakadimbiri hill range, after crossing the Samalanasi hills. At Chakabali, the Deities were first seated on circular stone platforms or pedestals (Chakaa) deep inside the forest. Hence, the place came to be known as Chikili. The Shree Chaturdha Murti were taken from Chikili back to Puri in 1733 AD, after which the Nabakalebara ritual of the Deities was held.

Chikili, Arun Jena, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft





Chikili, Priyadarshini Mohanty, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

The high-level delegation from the Shree Jagannatha Temple Administration was able to see the three circular pedestals on which the Deities had been seated and worshipped. These sacred platforms are now on a Simhasana (throne structure) in the premises of a temple where they are worshipped with due rituals. The length of the Simhasana is about ten feet and the width is about four feet. The Simhasana is raised to about three feet above the ground. The rounded platforms of Lord Shree Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra are slightly smaller than the platform of Lord Shree Jagannatha. The temple faces east, and to the right of the temple, a Surya Yantra is being worshipped. Nearby is a temple in which Lord Shree Neelakantheshwara Mahadeva is being worshipped. Facing the temple of Lord Shree Neelakantheshwara Mahadeva, a four armed idol of Goddess Bimala is being worshipped. About twelve acres of land has been allotted for the maintenance of these temples, while nine households/families of servitors are engaged in performing the daily rituals of the deities. >>>





MARDA

During the reign of Gajapati Ramachandra Deva II (1726-1736 AD), the dreaded and cruel iconoclast-invader Taqi Khan was appointed Naib of Cuttack. In 1733 AD, Taqi Khan launched his second attack on Puri. At this time, the Shree Chaturdha Murti were secretly transported to the dense jungles in the Hatibari hill range near Polasara (previously known as Phulasara) in Ganjam district.

The Marda temple is situated close to the Hatibari hill range, between Budhamba and Polasara in Ganjam district. Shree Chaturdha Murti arrived at this site on 29th December 1733 AD, and stayed here until 19th May 1736 AD.

According to essayist K. Sumitra Patra, in 1733 AD, the auspicious calendar event of Joda Ashadha (double Ashadha month) had occurred due to which Gajapati Ramachandra Deva had managed to slip out of confinement and had successfully conducted the



Marda, Jyotirmaya Pattnayak, Oil on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft



Marda, Ashok Behera, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

Nabakalebara. Fearing an attack by Taqi Khan, the servitors then carried Shree Chaturdha Murti in the dead of night by boat into Chilika Lake, docking at Pathara Ghata, from where the idols were carried in wheeled carts through Keshapur and Khallikote Gada to Dhaumala, Hatibari, in Athagada Patna taluka. This was a dense forest in the foothills, infested with the fiercest wild animals. At this place, the deities were worshipped with all rituals in utmost secrecy.

On instructions from Gajapati Ramachandra Deva II and with the wholehearted support of King Jagannatha Harichandan of Athagada, a new temple was constructed for the Deities inside the jungle of Marda. Seventy five of the best skilled sculptors from the nearby village of Mathura were employed to construct the temple. This temple was made of Baulamala or Kunda stone and was miraculously completed within a span of only two months by the artisans who worked day

and night to complete the task. The temple was designed and constructed according to the rules laid down in Shilpa Shastra. After the temple was completed, the Deities were brought from Dhaumala in Hatibari and were installed in the temple.

After the temple was complete, stringent security measures were put in place to protect Shree Chaturdha Murti from any attacks. A deep trench was dug around the temple, starting from the western side, through the southern side, expanding up to the eastern boundary. The trench was filled with water. Deadly water creatures like crocodiles were put in the trench.

The Kodala Athagada Rajabanshabali states that after receiving directions in a dream, Gajapati Ramachandra Deva had already reached the forests of Rumagarh and had concealed himself there. According to essayist Debendra Nath Maharana, along with the attack on Shree Mandira, Taqi Khan had also attacked the royal palace. Due to this, the Gajapati King, and the royal family, along with

a few loyal courtiers, had escaped from Puri, travelling through dense forests, crossing through Banapur as well as the Athagada territory. The King of Athagada had then brought the Gajapati and the royal family to the Pandiripada fort with all due respect, and had then moved them to Rumagarh fort. To further safeguard the Gajapati and the royal family, the fort residence was completely covered with trees to give the impression of a jungle. Three hundred of the most gallant and heroic Paika warriors were kept in charge of round-the-clock security of the fort.

The Marda temple is situated about one and half kilometres from Mathura village, between Budhamba Chhak and Polasara. The temple is surrounded by Hatibari hill range in the north, Asureyi hill range in the east, Kukudiya hill range in the west, and a deep, water-filled trench in the south. According to historian Kedarnath Mohapatra, Shree Chaturdha Murti remained in the Marda temple for two years and four months.

The Marda temple is designed in the Pidha Deula style of Kalingan architecture. The Bimana and Jagamohana are square shaped while the upper part is shaped like a pyramid.

The temple faces eastwards. The niches in the Bimana hold the Parshva Debatas, namely Lord Shree Bamana, Lord Shree Nrusingha and Lord Shree Baraha. The top of the Deula (temple) is adorned with Amalaka, Khapuri, Kalasha, and Neelachakra. In the centre of the Jagamohana stands the eight-feet tall idol of Lord Shree Garuda. The Ratna Simhasana is seen between the Bimana and the Deula, on which are placed the three circular pedestals on which the Deities were seated during their stay at the temple. There are three doorways in the Jagamohana – on the east, south and north. The main doorway or Singhadwara is on the east. On both sides of the Singhadwara are Dwarapalas Jaya and Bijaya as well as two lions. Goddess Mahalakshmi is seated on the Torana or top frame of the doorway. It is said that the first rays of the morning sun fall on the Ratna Simhasana.

The Deities were worshipped in this temple, in utmost secrecy and silence. Bells and gongs were not used in the rituals. The Pujapanda and Khuntia servitors were in charge of ritual worship. The King of Athagada had endowed nine hundred Bharana of fertile land for the maintenance of the temple. King Jagannatha Harichandan Jagadev also gave five thousand rupees every month for the Bhoga (food offerings) and festive rituals of the temple. During the stay of Shree Chaturdha Murti at Marda, the pontiffs of all the important Mathas (monasteries) would visit periodically to offer their reverence and worship to the Deities. The King of Athagada appointed Chintamani Pattanaik as the manager of the Marda temple and granted an endowment of four hundred and forty acres of land for the smooth functioning of the temple.

The contribution of the Athagada royal family led by King Jagannatha Harichandan Jagadev is inscribed in golden letters in the history of the Shree Mandira, Shree Chaturdha Murti, and the Shree Jagannatha tradition. While the Deities remained inside the forest at



Marda, Rajesh Nayak, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

Hatibari, all ritual worship (Nitis and Bhogas) of Shree Mandira were being offered to them. The King of Athagada offered five Nautis of Arua rice, dal, ghee, vegetables, etc., for the Bhogas of Shree Chaturdha Murti. One hundred vessels of Khaja were being offered to the Deities every day.

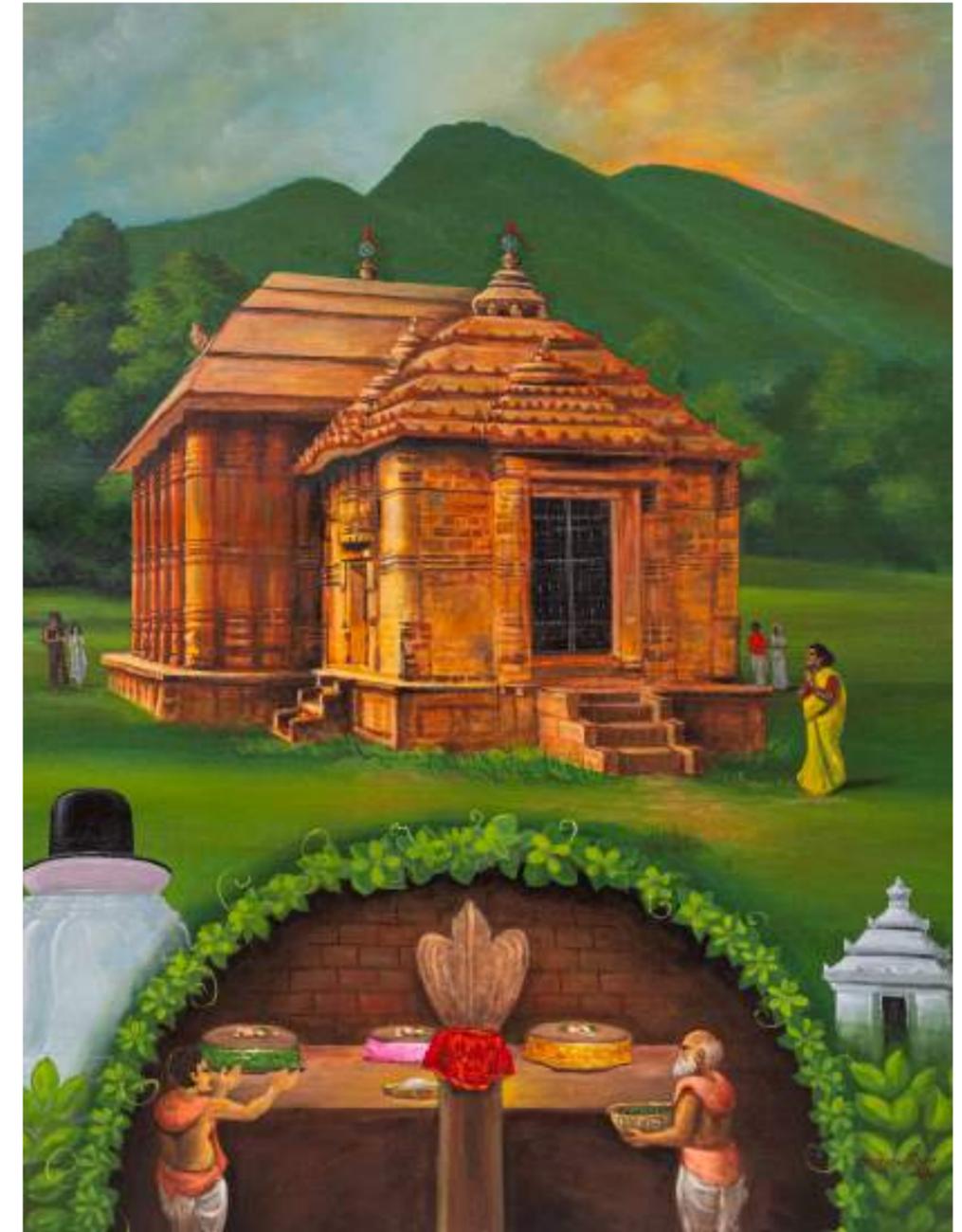
After the Shree Chaturdha Murti returned to Puri, the practice of ritual worship continued in the same manner until the dissolution of the princely states, when it was discontinued. The three pedestals on the Ratna Simhasana continue to be worshipped as Chaka Thakura, with due rituals.



Marda, Chitrasena Bisoyee, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft

In recognition of the immeasurable contributions of the King of Athagada, the Gajapati King of Khordha conferred on him the title of Bhai Jagadev. On every Ekadashi, when the Mahadeepa is lit atop the Shree Mandira at Puri, along with proclaiming the glories of the King of Puri, the glory and greatness of the King of Athagada is also proclaimed. In honour of the Queen of Athagada, a tray of special Khichdi called Mahadei Khechudi is offered to Shree Chaturdha Murti by a special class of servitors called Mahadei Suara who were appointed for this particular ritual.

Marda happens to be the last relocation (Shesha Sthanantarana) site of the Shree Chaturdha Murti. >>>



Marda, Dr. Stitadhi Rath, Acrylic on Canvas, 4 X 3 ft





## ARTISTS' PROFILES



**Arun Kumar Jena** is a contemporary visual artist, born on 18th February 1970, in Hiranandapur, Balasore district, Odisha. He completed his Master of Fine Arts (MFA) from Kala Bhavana, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan, in 1993. His paintings are based on Odisha's rich culture, especially on the Lord Jagannatha cult. He has been awarded by the South Zone Culture Centre, Nagpur, in 1992, Karnataka Lalit Kala Akademi in 1993, Bharat Kala Parishad, Hyderabad, in 1993, and Odisha Lalit Kala Akademi in 1994. Currently, he teaches art at Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, Balasore. >>>



**Ashok Kumar Behera**, born on 8th June 1970, in Chikiti, Ganjam district, Odisha, completed his Bachelors of Arts (BFA) from Utkal University in 1995. Currently, he focuses on contemporary art practice in Bhubaneswar. His paintings reflect Odisha's cultural legacy, especially the Lord Jagannatha cult. He has been honoured by different organisations like Lalit Kala Akademi, and the Commissionerate of Police, Bhubaneswar. >>>



**Baladev Prasad Maharatha (Chitradev)** completed his BFA from Government College of Arts and Crafts, Khallikote. He taught at BK College of Art and Crafts, Bhubaneswar, from where he retired as Principal. With works exhibited all over India, he continues to be an active participant at seminars, workshops, and art camps across the country. Recipient of Odisha's Lalit Kala Akademi Award among many others, Baladev Maharatha is credited with pioneering 'jugalbandi' – live painting with classical dance and music, in Odisha. Notable performances include 'jugalbandi' with Pandit Birju Maharaj, Datuk Ramli Ibrahim, Smt. Sonal Mansingh, and Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia. >>>



**Bhanu Pratap Maharatha** is a graduate of the Government College of Art, Kolkata, specializing in Graphic Design and Applied Arts, and holds a postgraduate degree in Visual Communication from the College of Art, Delhi. Over the years, he has actively participated in numerous art exhibitions and has been recognized with several awards for his creative contributions. He is pursuing a PhD in Visual Arts, from the World University of Design. He has worked for the Ministry of Culture, Indian Railways, and many ad agencies. >>>



**Chitrasena Bisoyee**, an emerging visual artist of Odisha, was born in 2000 at Raghunathpur in Ganjam district. He completed his Bachelors in Fine Arts (Painting) from the Government College of Arts and Craft, Khallikote, Ganjam. He has participated in several art camps and exhibitions including National Art Camp and Exhibition, Mumbai, organized by Camlin Art Foundation in 2022, Young Artists Camp organized by Odisha Lalit Kala Akademi in 2023, Student Painting Camp organised by Odisha Lalit Kala Akademi in 2022. >>>



**Dr. Stitadhi Rath** is widely known for his unique art style. Born in 1977 in Buguda, Odisha, he earned his Ph.D. in Visual Arts from Utkal University of Culture. Dr. Rath has participated in several international events including the International Symposium in Penza, Russia, in 2014, and in 2016, he travelled to London, where he engaged in various art activities. Over the course of his career, Dr. Rath has received many national and international awards for his artistic achievements. >>>



**Janardan Paramaguru** is a well-known artist from Odisha, with a career spanning over twenty six years. He holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from BK College of Art and Crafts, Bhubaneswar, and a Master of Fine Arts from Nagpur University, Maharashtra. Founder of Shakuntala Palace Art Gallery, he has a diverse portfolio of accomplishments, including exhibitions, referenced articles, and academic achievements. Janardan delivers bespoke art pieces to clients, and curates exhibitions for Indian and international artists. He teaches art as visiting faculty at local art institutions. He has been honoured with awards from Odisha Lalit Kala Akademi, BK College of Art and Crafts, Bhubaneswar, and Odisha Youth and Culture. >>>



**Jyotirmaya Pattnayak**, born in 1983 in Kanjiapalli, Odisha, completed his Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) from Utkal University of Culture. His signature style is blending realistic figures with dreamlike, abstract backgrounds. Known for live portrait-making at Shilparamam, his artwork, inspired by Odisha's Jagannatha culture, reflects humanity, spirituality, and tradition. Jyotirmaya is a recipient of the National Award, Telangana State Award, and Bathukamma Award for his contribution to visual arts. Recently, in 2024, he was recognized with the All India Art Competition Award at Hyderabad. >>>



**Laxman Kumar Nayak**, born on June 4, 1979, in Sarada, Mayurbhanj district, completed his Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Traditional Art from Utkal University of Culture in 2006. He has participated in several art camps and exhibitions organized by BK College of Art & Crafts, State Lalit Kala Akademi, All India Fine Art & Crafts Society, Dept. of Tourism & Culture, and Jeypore Art School. His artworks have found place in different collections including the Gopabandhu Museum, Odisha State Museum, Odisha Tourism Development Corporation, and Odisha Raj Bhavan. books. Currently, he is working as a freelance artist. >>>



**Lipishree Nayak**, born in 1973 in Odisha, completed her bachelor's degree from BK College of Art and Crafts, Bhubaneswar, and Master's from Kalakshetra. She has attended many camps organized by Lalit Kala Akademi, EZCC and NZCC, and the National Gallery of Modern Art. She has participated in international exhibitions including one at Dubai International Art Centre and a group show in South Korea. She has received awards from BK College of Art and Crafts, Bhubaneswar, and Bible Quest, Bangalore. Lipishree has worked as a teacher at DAV Public School and as a guest faculty at SIDAC, Bhubaneswar.



**Mamata Samantaray**, a contemporary artist, was born in 1970 in Cuttack, Odisha. Her alma mater is BK College of Art and Crafts, Bhubaneswar. Her paintings have been exhibited in national and international exhibitions including Dubai International Art Centre, Group Show in South Korea, at Lalit Kala Akademi, Arpana Art Gallery, Rashtriya Kala Mela, and Constitution Club in New Delhi, Khajuraho Art Mart, Madhya Pradesh, India Art Meet, Nehru Centre, Mumbai, and Gallery IIWC, Bengaluru. Mamata has participated in camps organized by Lalit Kala Akademi, EZCC, SCZCC, National Camp at NGMA, New Delhi. She has been awarded by BK College of Art and Crafts, Bhubaneswar, in Sketch and Painting. >>>



**Nibedita Pattanaik**, born in 1973 in Bhubaneswar, completed her Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in Painting in 1994. She then moved to New Delhi to pursue fine art on a global scale. Her dedication to painting earned her a Senior Fellowship in 2023. Through her work, Nibedita highlights women as key figures in society. Last year, she held a solo exhibition at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. >>>



**Padmashree Binod Moharana** is a renowned artist of Odisha, born in 1945, in a traditional artist family of Chitrakara Sahi in Puri. He received intensive coaching in traditional Patta painting from his maternal grandfather Shri Markananda Maharana and fine art training from Guru Shri Asit Mukherjee. For over fifty years, Shri Maharana has studied the art forms of ancient temples and palm leaf manuscripts of Odisha in detail, and he applies the essence of those ancient art forms to his Pattachitra style. Shri Binod Moharana has been awarded and honoured by many state and national organizations, and is a recipient of the prestigious Padmashree Award from Government of India in 2024. >>>



**Pradeep Kumar Pandey**, born in 1968, at Cuttack, Odisha, graduated from BK College of Arts & Crafts, Bhubaneswar, in 1992. His works bridge the rich cultural heritage of India with the pressing concerns of contemporary society. Working primarily in acrylic and watercolour, Pandey's practice spans painting, mixed media, and spatial design. As an undergraduate, he designed the first Odia digital font for the Government of Odisha. His organisation of numerous art camps has fostered a vibrant network of artists, encouraging dialogue and collaboration. He continues to mentor emerging artists, where he shares his expertise and passion for pushing the boundaries of painting techniques. >>>



**Pradosh Swain**, born on June 4, 1972, in Tangi, Cuttack district, completed his Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) from Utkal University in 1994. Currently, he practices contemporary art in New Delhi and is widely recognized nationally and internationally for his theme-based surrealistic paintings. He is a recipient of APJ Abdul Kalam Award 2023, and recently, he was honoured with the Odisha Citizen Award 2025. >>>



**Priyadarsini Mohanty**, born in 1968 in Cuttack, Odisha, completed her Bachelor's degree from BK College of Art and Crafts, Bhubaneswar and her Master's from Utkal University of Culture, Bhubaneswar. She has attended many camps organized by Lalit Kala Akademi, and has participated in various national and international exhibitions, workshops, and art camps. Over the course of her thirty year journey as a freelance artist, she has received several awards and felicitations, showcasing her exceptional contributions to the field of art. >>>



**Raja Kishor Moharana** is a contemporary visual artist, born on 20th October 1971, in Puri. He completed his Master of Fine Arts from Raja Mansingh Tomar Music & Arts University, Gwalior; Madhya Pradesh, in 2023. His art practice is focused on Odisha's culture and tradition, especially on the Lord Jagannatha cult. He has been awarded by Sanskar Bharati, Bhopal, in 1991, and has been honoured by different organizations of Odisha. Currently he is an art teacher (Fashion and Textile) at KIIT School of Fashion Technology. >>>



**Rajesh Nayak** is a contemporary visual artist of Odisha, born on 7th May 1969, in Rourkela, Sundargarh district. He completed his Bachelors of Arts (BFA) from Utkal University in 1992. Currently, he is engaged in contemporary art practice in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. His paintings showcase Odisha's culture and heritage, especially the Lord Jagannatha cult. He has been awarded and honoured by different organisations of Odisha. Currently, he works as a designer at The Samaj newspaper. >>>



**Santosh Kumar Moharana** is a contemporary visual artist from Odisha, born on 1st August 1970, in Rourkela, Sundargarh district. He completed his Bachelors of Arts (BFA) from Utkal University in 1992. His work focuses on contemporary art in Odisha. His paintings are based on Odisha's rich culture, with a special focus on the Lord Jagannatha cult. He has been awarded by AIFACS in 2022 and honoured by different organisations of Odisha. Currently he is a designer at The Samaj newspaper, in Balasore. >>>



**Subash Chandra Pujahari** is a contemporary visual artist, born in 1973, at Harinapali, Sonepur district, Odisha. He completed his Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) from Utkal University, Bhubaneswar in 1996. He focuses on creating artworks based on Odisha's rich cultural heritage, especially on Lord Jagannatha cult. He has been awarded by the State Lalit Kala Akademi and honoured by different organisations of Odisha. >>>

The worship of Lord Shree Jagannatha has developed into a unique consciousness over the centuries. It exercises a profound influence on the social, cultural and spiritual fabric of the Odia race. The "Gopana Leela" of Lord Shree Jagannatha over the centuries, is integral to Shree Jagannatha culture, but, not much is known about this aspect.

I am very happy to note that Ila Panda Centre for Arts (IPCA) is organising an exhibition of visual art titled "Mahagopanare Mahabahu", based on the theme of "Gopana Leela" along with a publication that would document these stories and artworks. Falcon Charity Foundation is delighted to collaborate with IPCA for this initiative towards documentation of our rich spiritual and cultural heritage. I am sure that this book will be a rich source of information for devotees, as well as, for researchers on this subject. I wish the exhibition all success.

May Lord Shree Jagannatha bless us all!

**Priyanka Mohanty**

Director  
Falcon Marine Exports  
Bhubaneswar



MESSAGES FROM MENTORS

Since time immemorial, Lord Shree Jagannatha, the very embodiment of divine form, and his permanent seat, the Shree Mandira in Puri, have been world famous. The pivotal role played by Lord Shree Jagannatha in numerous events in the historical context of Odisha is undeniable, demonstrating the antiquity, greatness, and pre-eminence of Lord Shree Jagannatha. In the past, this world renowned Hindu temple in India has been attacked many times by pagan rulers and infidels. There is evidence that during that time, the Gajapati Maharaja, Paika warriors, servitors, heads of monasteries, and local residents, transferred the Deities from the Ratna Simhasana in order to protect them, to different locations in Odisha, and performed their worship in great secrecy.

For the first time in 2007, the Shree Jagannatha Chetana Prachar Prasar Sub-Committee, formed by the Temple Administration, collected information related to the relocations of Shree Chaturdha Murti, from the Madala Panji (Rajabhoga Itihasa), Khordha History (Khurudha Itihasa), Chayani Chakada and other texts, and presented detailed information to the management committee of the temple. Thereafter, with the approval of the committee, a 12-member high-level delegation led by the Chief Administrator of Shree Mandira left for Sonepur, on an official visit from the office of Shree Mandira, Puri on 19th February 2007. It was my good fortune that I was appointed as the Convenor of this high level delegation. The delegation visited Kot Samalai also known as Patali Shreeekshetra and ascertained the exact location where the Deities had been worshipped in hiding.

The narratives of the secret abodes of Lord Shree Jagannatha are intertwined with religious and historical memories, and since the temple administration was personally involved in the visits undertaken by the high-level delegation, it was possible to collect information by directly visiting the holy places. Thus, many facts about the secret sojourns of Lord Shree Jagannatha and His Siblings were revealed to the public.

I am very happy and proud that the premier art foundation, Ila Panda Centre for Arts (IPCA) has come forward to enable this unique initiative in the form of conceiving, curating, and organizing the first-of-its-kind exhibition of paintings that visually narrate the stories of the little known Gopana Leela (secret play) of Lord Shree Jagannatha. I hope this rare exhibition will reach audiences all over the world.

**Dr. Bhaskar Mishra**

Senior Researcher on Shree Jagannatha Culture, Puri

It is truly inspiring to witness how the timeless consciousness of Lord Shree Jagannatha continues to flourish amidst a world increasingly dominated by consumerism and materialism. This enduring essence has found new expressions, rejuvenating places and events once dismissed as dry, unremarkable fragments of history into vibrant symbols of spiritual renaissance. These places, deeply intertwined with Lord Shree Jagannatha's divine play, are now being recognized, and developed as Leela-Kshetras.

Approximately fifteen years ago, a delegation from the Shree Jagannatha Temple Administration, led by its chief administrator and accompanied by servitors and researchers, undertook a journey to the locations where the deities were sheltered during times of crisis. Their findings on the ground aligned remarkably with the records in the Madala Panji, sparking a profound realization: the journeys and temporary abodes of Lord Jagannatha during times of peril must surely be regarded as sacred Leelas.

It is heartening that some of these forgotten episodes have been brought back to life by the remarkable efforts of Odisha's visionary artists. Through their creativity, they have painted forgotten history into vibrant forms, breathing life into canvas and colour. Centuries ago, it was an artist's imagination that manifested the formless Brahma as a tangible deity, giving rise to the divine form of Lord Shree Jagannatha. Today, the same Lord continues to inspire artists, enabling them to recreate and preserve these lost chapters of history through their art.

I commend Ila Panda Centre for Arts (IPCA) for being at the forefront of this unique initiative, and for conceptualizing, curating, and organizing the Mahagopanare Mahabahu art exhibition. I sincerely hope that it will have notable impact, adding value to and carrying the spirit of the Shree Jagannatha consciousness to a wider audience in India and abroad.

On this sacred occasion, I offer my heartfelt homage to Lord Shree Jagannatha, whose omnipresence illuminates the minds and hearts of these artists, guiding them to uphold and celebrate his eternal legacy.

**Dr. Asit Mohanty**

Author, Editor - Paurusha

Lord Shree Jagannatha, the Lord of the Universe, is shrouded in mystery. His origin, concept, and image are beyond one's imagination. When I started compiling and editing books relating to real-life experiences of people from various cross-sections of society, about their bond with their beloved Lord of the Universe, little did I know that I was entering a fathomless abyss from which it would be impossible to emerge.

In 2016, by the grace of Lord Shree Jagannatha, I was inspired to cover the secret locations where the Lord of the Universe, along with His siblings, was taken, when the Shree Mandira was attacked by invaders who sought to plunder its wealth. The Deities were hidden in various places: sometimes in mountain caverns, sometimes on islands surrounded by water, and at other times in rural temples tucked away in thick forests. In 2007, a team of research scholars, temple officials, and servitors, led by the then Administrator Shri Suresh Kumar Mohapatra, visited some of these places. They were amazed to find that even after centuries, the local people had preserved the sanctity of these sacred sites.

In September 2024, the reputed art foundation – Ila Panda Centre for Arts (IPCA), invited research scholars like Dr. Bhaskar Mishra and Dr. Asit Mohanty to provide insight into the secret divine journeys of the Deities from 670 AD to 1734 AD. IPCA then invited artists to create paintings based on the secret journeys of the Deities, their residencies, and the rituals performed at the time. Under the guidance and mentorship of master artist Shri Baldev Maharatha, the participating artists have captured the essence of those secret sojourns. The inaugural exhibition of these paintings titled 'Mahagopanare Mahabahu' – the Secret Sojourns of Lord Shree Jagannatha, is being unveiled at Bikaner House in New Delhi and will be presented in various locations subsequently. These artworks, along with the narrative of each painting, are featured here in this art book.

I feel incredibly blessed to be a part of this entire journey, from the first publications of the secret journeys to the creation and display of these paintings for the world to see. I pray to Lord Shree Jagannatha to shower His choicest blessings on the artists and the organizers for accomplishing such a herculean task.

JAY JAGANNATH

**Pitabas Rautaray**

Secretary, Ananya Shri Jagannatha Sansthan

As an artist, and as a believer, I have always wondered - is it possible to limit the infinite, to capture the all-pervading One in a few frames, with a few strokes of the brush? For our beloved Lord of the Universe, Shree Jagannatha is the Supreme Self, the ultimate reality beyond description; omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient, all at once. How do we even measure or depict the essence of this supreme consciousness with our limited human understanding and skills? Can the artist grasp that which is beyond all description and conceptualisation, the seen and the unseen, the visible and the invisible? Such is the magic and mystery of Lord Shree Jagannatha. And immersed in the loving surrender of devotion, we set out to explore the eternal Divine essence, to give it a visual form, to narrate the stories of His bond with the devout and tell the tales of serendipity and miracles that the Lord of the Universe bestows on us as blessings.

Enchanted by the divine play of Lord Shree Jagannatha, the anchor of our spiritual life, and inspired by the inimitable narrative of His magical mysteries, a few of us artists from Odisha got together to try and narrate the historical Gopana Leela of the Lord of the Universe, as our creative offering. Through centuries, during times of invasion and attack, the Lord and His Siblings were removed to secret locations deep in the interiors of Odisha and were worshipped in seclusion and concealment. These secret sojourns of the Lord are a critical element of the history of Shree Mandira and of Odisha.

Guided and mentored by renowned researchers and authors, Dr. Bhaskar Mishra, Dr. Asit Mohanty and Shri Pitabas Rautaray, and led by Ila Panda Centre for Arts (IPCA) the premier art foundation of Odisha, 'Mahagopanare Mahabahu' has taken shape over the last six months. This exhibition of paintings is unique and the very first of its kind to have ever been put together. As an artist, I feel blessed to have been given this opportunity to depict the divine narrative, and to mentor my colleagues and associate artists. I would like to place on record my heartfelt gratitude to IPCA for having come forward to conceptualize, curate and organize this rare initiative. So also, my grateful thanks to our three mentors who have informed this body of work with their research and findings.

The art exhibition Mahagopanare Mahabahu replete with fifty three artworks is being inaugurated at Bikaner House, New Delhi. I hope that it will be a cause for elation and enchantment for devotees of Lord Shree Jagannatha, and for art lovers, art collectors, art critics, art researchers and art historians, here and around the world.

Jai Jagannath!

**Baladev Maharatha**

Artist and Mentor

Almost everyone loves and shares a strong devotion towards our beloved Lord Shree Jagannatha. Since my childhood days, I have also known the Lord by way of listening and watching various rituals and pujas in my home, neighbourhood, and in the temples of my village. Moreover, I feel that I have a unique connection with the Lord as my birthday also arrives on the day of Ratha Yatra, hence the fondness.

In 2015, during the celebrations of Nabakalebara, my dearest friend and a great artist, Shri Ashok Kumar Behera put forth a proposal to do a painting exhibition on the Lord and his Leelas. The idea sounded just the right thing to do! But the theme had already been covered by many artists. So, I told him that if we were to do this Art Camp, we should find a unique and interesting way to showcase our love and devotion, through our artworks. The next day, he called again and insisted that we must proceed with the camp. This time he had an idea. He told me that he had a big Neem tree log in his garden and asked me, can we paint on that? At that very moment, I visualised the Lord's images on sliced neem logs, and told him it was really a great and unique idea. I also informed our Guru, master artist Shri Baladev Maharatha, and without any hesitation he directed us to proceed without delay. Hence, the creation of the camp Bahuda Bramha, in 2015. Since then, we have not looked back, and have successfully accomplished many art camps at places of great interest related to Shree Jagannatha Leela.

Marked by the devotion of twenty leading artists of Odisha, and the blessings of Lord of the Universe, Shri Jagannatha Mahaprabhu, we have now received support from Ila Panda Centre for Arts (IPCA), the biggest art promoter in Odisha, for giving visual form to this little known narrative of the secret sojourns of the Lord through our creativity. We are truly honoured and really want to thank the entire team of IPCA who helped us and showed their devotion by adding a few more wings to our team's dream!

Mahagopanare Mahabahu is set to be a historic exhibition, a landmark event, and we are hopeful that it will provide inspiration and information to newer generations and to society about the Lord's Leelas. Jai Jagannatha!

**Pradosh Swain**

Artist and Mentor



END NOTE

The Ila Panda Centre for Arts (IPCA) has always been dedicated to nurturing and celebrating the rich artistic heritage of Odisha while providing a platform for contemporary creativity to thrive. As a non-profit organization, we aim to inspire, promote, and support artists by organizing exhibitions, workshops, and art festivals, and through initiatives like scholarships and art residencies. Our mission is to preserve traditional art forms while encouraging innovation and artistic exploration.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the artists who have contributed their incredible talents to this exhibition based on the theme of Lord Shree Jagannatha's secret sojourns. Each artwork is a profound reflection of devotion, creativity, and cultural richness, making this event a truly special celebration of art and spirituality. Your dedication and artistic brilliance have brought this concept to life in ways that are both mesmerizing and deeply meaningful.

Being a part of this project has been an enriching and humbling journey. Exploring the mysteries and sacred essence of Lord Shree Jagannatha through art has not only deepened our understanding of this divine narrative but has also strengthened our resolve to continue fostering artistic excellence. The process of curating this exhibition and compiling the accompanying book has been a collaborative effort filled with inspiration, learning, and immense joy.

We hope this exhibition and the book serve as a testament to the timeless beauty of Odisha's culture and the boundless creativity of its artists. To everyone involved, thank you for making this vision a reality. It is our privilege to share this extraordinary journey with the world.

**Sunita Mohapatra**  
Executive Director  
Ila Panda Centre for Arts  
Bhubaneswar

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