

# Nilamadhava Temple: A Legacy of History and Spirituality

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## The Religious Landscape of Odisha: The Role of Vaishnavism

Odisha is home to numerous religious sects including Buddhism, Jainism, Saivism, Saktism, Vaishnavism, and many more. But since the fourth century A.D., under the royal patronage of the various ruling dynasties, Vaishnavism has visibly dominated the religious life of the people of Odisha. Twenty-four of the thousand major names of praise given to Lord Vishnu, the protecting God in Hinduism, are regarded as being the most significant. The Patalakhanda of PadmaPurana has a list of Vishnu's twenty-four forms. The Rupamandana lists Vishnu's twenty-four names. The Bhagabata also specifies Vishnu's twenty-four names, including Keshava, Narayan, Madhava, Govinda, Trivikram, Madhusudan, Sridhara, Hrusikesh, Padmanabha, Damodara, and Sankarsana (Ziegenbalg 1869).

The first evidence of Vaishnavism in Orissa comes from a Gupta-era dynasty of kings who identified as followers of Vishnu-Narayana or referred to themselves as parama-bhagavata. There are no records of endowments made to Vaishnavas during this time, however, because the monarchs were Saiva for more than five hundred years starting in the middle of the sixth century. There have been references to a famous Purushottama temple at Puri from the 11th century onwards, and the region is referred to as Purusottama-ksetra in medieval manuscripts. In Orissa, carvings of a four-armed standing Vishnu in a bluish stone, known as Nila-madhava, have been discovered. This discovery suggests that between the 11th and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries (Eschmann et.al. 1978).

Numerous stories centre on the Jagannath idol's beginnings. My favourite rendition of the Mahabharata is by Sarala Dasa, an Odia poet who lived in the

Sarala Das, a poet who lived in the fifteenth century imagines Krishna's demise in a quite benign manner. Krishna is killed by an arrow shot by a hunter named Jara who saw Krishna's foot poking out from behind a tree and mistook it for a deer's ears. Arjuna, who is dejected, approaches and tries to cremate his companion.

Krishna's heart doesn't, however, burn. A celestial voice resonates from the heavens as usual. It instructs Arjuna to drop Krishna's heart, which is affixed to a plank, into the water. This log slowly circles the globe over aeons, travelling from Dwarka's west coast to Puri's east shore.

## Krishna's Heart and the Legend of Biswa Basu

Jara, the hunter who had killed Krishna, had a second chance at life as Biswa Basu, a member of the Shabara tribe (Holt 2008). He finds Krishna's heart, a congealed blue stone, in the Puri area's jungles and worships it as Nila Madhava. Indradyumna, a local ruler, learns of the magical blue rock that the tribes are worshipping. As is customary for rulers, he wants it for himself. In order to find this blue statue, King sends a Brahmin priest named Vidyapati into the woods. The tribal hunter's refusal to disclose the location

is the sole issue. Whether on purpose or not, the Brahmin "falls" in love with the tribal man's daughter. He begs his tribal father-in-law to take him to see the blue idol as the new son-in-law. The Brahmin is taken deep into the jungle by the tribesman while wearing a blindfold. Thoughtful Brahmins, however. The track is covered in black mustard seeds that he scatters. He returns back into the forest to where the idol is hidden after waiting a few days for the yellow mustard blossoms to appear.

When he finds the site, he immediately runs to inform King Indradyumna the tale and where it is. The monarch marshals his troops and marches towards Nilachala, also known as Blue Mountain. He enters the cave, but the blue stone idol is nowhere to be found. A dejected king declares that he will fast till he dies, creates a bed of Kusha grass, and sleeps down on it.

The blue lord shows up as he is sleeping that night. The Lord says, "Build me a big temple." "Visit the beach. You will discover a sizable piece of wood marked with the four objects that Lord Vishnu carries, the conch, chakra, mace, and lotus (shankha-chakra-gada-padma) (Wilkins 1882). Install these four idols in your temple after carving them out of this log.

### **Nilamadhava in Odisha: A Historical Overview**

Nilamadhava. In this perspective, the Nilamadhava narrative from the Utkalakhanda of the Skandapurana is quite pertinent (Mishra 1971).

According to the legend, the Nilamadhava that Viswavasus Sabara worshipped on the Blue Mountain eventually changed his name to Darurupi Purusottama Jagannatha. Not just in Srikshetra, but throughout all of Odisha, the legend has grown significantly in fame and popularity. Because of the renown of the Nilamadhava mythology, Vishnu acquired the name Madhava in Odisha.

From the early 12th century, Vaishnavism flourished under the Ganga dynasty and Choda-ganga, who were both Hindu monarchs. This is the first trace of Vaishnavism in Orissa (Aiyanger 2004). Chodaganga died around 1147; on the site of an earlier temple that may have been from the 10th century, he erected a new one for Purusottama/Nilamadhava. The goal of the temple was to showcase his authority and prestige. The entire state of Orissa was devoted to Purushottama in 1230, and the monarchs feigned that the deity was in charge while doing so. The promotion of the veneration of a ferocious Narasimha in combination with the cult of Purushottama, a form of Vishnu erotically related with Lakshmi or a moniker given to Krsna as a lover of the gopis.

### **Purusottama's Deities and Their Evolution**

Purusottama acquired the following names before the end of the 13th century: Jagannatha is a name that had formerly been connected to tantric and esoteric beliefs. Jagannatha eventually gained acceptance as the primary name of the deity at Puri and was used to refer to other images sculpted in the same style that were worshipped in other parts of Orissa. It appears that the Ganga dynasty attempted to legitimise its rule and unite its Hindu and tribal subjects by fusing brahmanical and tribal cults in order to give the social hierarchy a common identity through the worship of purushottama Jaganath as a patron deity of the state. Currently, the great temple in Puri is home to three crudely carved wooden statues representing Krsna (Jagannatha), Balarama, and their sister Subhadra (who was used to represent the infant Krsna and was knocked against a stone by Kamsa but then manifested in a terrifying form to foretell his death at the hands of Krsna). Although there is no proof that this wooden trinity existed before the 13th century, it's possible that only one or two of them were initially worshipped there. However, the origin of the figures can be traced back to the Orissan tribal people's veneration of deities that were represented by wooden posts

(Entwistle 1981). To explain how the wooden Vaishnava trio came to be, various local tales have been created.

At first, both Saivas and Vaishnavas worshipped them in the Puri temple, but Saiva elements were repressed, and Vaishnava worship took over. Two teams of priests direct the worship of the deities, one of which is performed by the Daitas, a historically non-Brahmin group whose primary duty is to regularly renew and dedicate the wooden triad, and the other consisting of Brahmins first. appointed in the late 13th century, maybe in response to the need for a more traditional or Sanskritic mode of worship as the temple started to draw more and more visitors from all over India (Mahanti 2014). The ratha-yatri, an annual procession of the gods in three 29 enormous wooden carriages, and their 'new embodiment' (nava-kalevara), which usually takes place every twelve years, both attracted exceptionally sizable groups of pilgrims.

### **Madhab: Avatar of Vishnu**

"Maunadhyanascha yogascha biddhi bharat Madhabh." Because of His lack of response. He is the name of Madhab, who practises yoga, meditation (mouna), and prayer (dhyna). Keshab, Narayan, and Madhab are three of the primary 24 avatars of Vishnu that descended from Para-Vasudev, the absolute Brahman who has neither beginning or end. Chakra-Sankha-Padma-Gada-Dhari is Chaturbhuja Madhab (Neog 1965).

Before beginning any good deed, the following Madhab Mangalastak is performed in Orissa: "Madhabo Madhabo Vishnuh Madhabo Madhabo Harih / Smaranti Sadhabo Nityam Sarbakaryeshu Madhabam" // Madhab is Laxmikanta, Sarba-SubhaPhal-Pradayak, and before beginning any job, His name is recited five times. In all areas, Maa is Laxmi, SarbaSubha-Phal-Pradayini; Khirabdh-tanaya, Lokamata; and Ramaa, Agra-pujya.

Out of Lord Vishnu's twenty-four names, Madhava is named third. The Markandeya Purana makes mention of Madhava.

The name "Ma" refers to Brahmarupini, the original Prakriti, Narayani, Sanatani, Visnumaya, Mahalaxmi, Vedamata, Saraswati, Radha, Vasundhara, and Ganga, as well as to their spouse, Madhava.

For the first time, Madhava is mentioned in the Sruti section. of the Sukla Yajurveda and Kanva Sakha's Brihadaranayaka sruti of the Satapatha Brahman. It should be emphasised that the God, who is known as Madhava, is realised in the lesson of Madhu. A different name for Madhava is claimed to have come from the words Ma, which means knowledge (vidya), and Dhava, which means Prabhu. The Skanda Purana's Utkal Khanda makes mention of the prominence of Madhava devotion in a temple at Neelachala. The famous poet Jayadev increased the popularity of Madhava Upasana. Madhava, who has received widespread acclaim, became the God he loved and admired. He increased awareness of the Radha-Madhava cult in the Prachi valley and throughout Odisha through his beautiful lyrics (Sinha 1950). In actuality, he created Madhava as Krishna and Radha.

The popularity of Madhava worship in Odisha. The historical records indicate its existed since the Matharas' era, which was the Guptas' historical period. The rulers of Mathara The Vaisnavite tenants were accepted, and monuments to Vishnu were built. According to Pravanjan Varma's gift on a copper plate from Ningondi, he was a follower of Lord Narayana, and the other members of the dynasty referred to themselves as Parama Bhagavata. This dynasty's first ruler built a temple to Vishnu on the Mahendra Mountain, where a stunning image of four-armed Vishnu carved out of chlorite stone may be seen among the ruins. This temple could be related to documented on the Ningodi copper plate is the temple.

### Vedic Culture and Madhab Worship

Over time, the Vedic Culture adopted the primitive Sabars' idol worship, and jointly, the worship of Madhab was also introduced. The Nilamadhab shrine in Puri appears to have started during the Sailodbhaba monarchs of Kalinga, the former Kangoda, empire. The first mention of Madhab worship in Kalinga - Prabrattha-Chakra-Chakradhar eba Bhagaban, Madhab Raja Kushali - is on a copper plate grant made by Madhabaraja of the Sailodbhaba dynasty. According to their names, the Madhabaraja and Madhaba Barman named Sailodbhaba rulers were tribal people who resided on the "Saila" or mountains and had Sabars or their cognates as forebears (Eschmann et.al. 1978). The Sevapuja of Nilamadhab must have been given to the Sabar chieftain Biswabasu during their rule. The Maharaja's envoy, Vidyapati Following Skanda Puran's return from Vidyapati tells Indradyumna about Nilasaila: "On the top of Nilagiri, there is a perennial Bata." (Eschmann et.al. 1978)

Brikhya has Rohini Kunda to the west of it, which is surrounded by a Sphatik-manimaya Vedi.

Indra-nila-manimaya, Nilamadhab, also known as Gada-Padma-Sankha-Chakradhari, is sitting on a golden lotus on this Vedi in the cool shade of a Banyan tree. His lotus-like hands are encircling Laxmi, who is sitting on His left thigh and playing the flute, and Ananta Nag's backside is covering Him in the shape of an umbrella. Garuda is seated in front of Him with his hands folded, and Sudarshan is visible in front of Him. This image of Nilamadhab and the Rohini Kunda are stated to have vanished (buried under the sands) due to a severe cyclone, in between the periods when Vidyapati saw Nilamadhab and Indradyumna arrived the holy place. However, Sri Narasimha, enshrined on the Nilasaila under an 'Aguru' tree, was all along present before and after the disappearance of Nilamadhab.

During this time, Acharya Sankar arrived in Srikhetra with the goal of restoring the Vedic system of worship for all of the Indian deities and eradicating Buddhist influence on Hindu rites. In his Gita Vasya, Acharya Sankar, the founder Acharya of the Purusottam Tatwa, argued that the Nilamadhab worshipped in Sri Khetra was the Gita's Purusottam (Neog 1965). This was done in the ninth century.

*Toasmiloke Bedecha prathitah Purusottamah*, in other words. As a result of the construction of a new temple and the dedication of Parameswar constructed of blue stone therein during the reign of Jajati Keshari, he reestablished the cult of Purusottam in the holy region of Srikhetra throughout this procedure. However, there was no fundamental distinction between Nilamadhab, who had long since disappeared, and Purusottam, who was later adored.

Sri Nilamadhaba's Deity manifestation as the Supreme Lord Vishnu is evident from this. Arca-Bigraha are the names of the god manifestations. For the benefit of His followers, especially the less developed ones, the Lord takes on the forms of Deities. The Lord appears as the Deity to accept adoration because all but the most accomplished devotees are unable to see Him.

In Bhagavad-gita (9.34), Krishna states, Mad-Yaji Mam Namaskuru Man-Mana Bhava Mad-Bhakto "Always remember Me, become My follower, worship Me, and prostrate before Me (Gupta 2016)."

### Vidyapati's Visit to Lord Nilamadhaba

As a result, He assumes the form of a Deity to receive the worship and prostrations of His followers. He offers Himself to His followers in order to receive their service and foster their love for Him. This reflects a facet of Krishna's immense mercy and His desire to release all conditioned souls from their shackles in the physical realm. Thus, Sri Nilamadhaba's mercy was seen by Vidyapati firsthand.

The Sabara held Vidyapati close to the Deity after he had concluded his prayers while they went out to gather roots and wild flowers for worship. While the Sabara was gone, Vidyapati saw something amazing.

A sleeping crow drowned after falling from a tree branch into a nearby lake. As soon as possible, it assumed a four-armed Vaikuntha (spiritual) form and

As a result, He assumes the form of a Deity to receive the worship and prostrations of His followers. He offers Himself to His followers in order to receive their service and foster their love for Him. As he was about to jump, however, a voice in the sky said, "O brahmana, since you have been able to see Sri Nilamadhava you should before all else inform King Indradyumna." (Kent 2007) This is a part of Krishna's immense mercy and His desire to rescue all the conditioned souls from slavery in p i. In order to wait, the brahmana descended down the tree. The Sabara soon returned with flowers and roots from the forest, and he began to worship Lord Nilamadhava every day. He was working in the Lord's service, The Lord spoke to him, "I have received the humble wild flowers and roots you have offered Me for so many days. I now want the regal assistance that My devotee King Indradyumna has provided to Me.

The Sabara believed that he would be defrauded of Sri Nilamadhava's service when he heard this. In order to confine Vidyapati to his home, he shackled his son-in-law. After some time, at his daughter's repeated requests, he released the brahmana and let him leave. The brahmana told King Indradyumna about the discovery and left right away. But when they got there, they couldn't find Him.

King Indradyumna attacked the Sabara village and imprisoned Vishwavasudeva the Sabara because he was unable to discern the divine form. However, the King was abruptly commanded by a voice in the heavens to release Sabara. You should build a temple atop Nila Hill (Mahanti 2014). You will see Me there as Daru-Brahma, or the Absolute Truth manifest in a wooden body. I won't appear to you as Nilamadhava.

In order to get the stone for the temple, King Indradyumna built a route from a site named Baulamala to the Nila-Kandara Hill. Puri, the sacred residence of Sri Kshetra, is shaped like a conch.

Additionally, he had gilded decorations added to the temple. Then, King Indradyumna travelled to Brahmaloaka and waited there for a while, hoping that Lord Brahma would dedicate the temple. The temple, which is extremely close to the sea, was buried in sand from the shore during that time (Sachau 2013).

Initially Suradeva and subsequently Galamadhava assumed control of that region as kings when King Indradyumna was absent. Galamadhava was responsible for bringing the temple out of the dunes, where it had been buried for a considerable amount of time. But soon after the temple was discovered, King Indradyumna left for the home of Lord Brahma. Galamadhava asserted that he built the temple, contrary to Indradyumna's allegation that he had done so.

### **Hindu Folklore and Madhava Worship**

As per the Hindu folktales and folklore Lord Nilamadhava or Madhava is usually beheld as one amongst the embodiment of Lord Vishnu. The Hindu sovereigns of Odisha fabricated multifold Madhava shrines from which it is being proved that from primeval period in Odisha Madhava worship has achieved prominence and the domination of Brahmanic vaishnavism religion upon the kings was prevailing during that phase (Chatterji 1994). Distinct forms of Madhava alike Radha Madhava, Durga Madhava and Nila Madhava were being worshipped at that point of time. There are thirty three crores manifold Gods and Goddesses in the religious symbolism of the Hindus and Lord Nilamadhava was extremely favoured in the primordial medieval period. The four supereminent and at hand domains of Odisha like the Prachi valley, Mahanadi valley, Baitarani valley and Rushikulya valley has manifested the worship of Lord Nilamadhava. The adoration of Madhava worship on the Mahanadi valley is an inquisitive chapter in the medieval vaishnavism, history and cultural heritage of Odisha (Donaldson 2002).



### Kantilo Village Overview

Kantilo is a large village in the former state of Khandapara. It is located on the south bank of the Mahanadi River and along the old Jagannath Sadak path, which was a crucial water and land route connecting Cuttack and Sambalpur.

There are 25 wards in the Khandapara Assembly and Cuttack Lok Sabha constituencies that make up the Kantilo Panchayat. The names of these wards are Majhisahi Patna (Deula sahi), Fakir Atibuddhi Patna (Keuta Sahi), Chhamun Patna (Tanti Sahi), Hatmunda Patna, Baurisubuddhi Patna (Gauda Sahi), Krishneswar Patna (Thodia Sahi), Khuda Behera Patna (Kansari sahi), Madhaba Chaudhury Patna (Uppar Sahi), Bapuji Nagar (Andhar Munda), Hadi sahi, Krushna Chandrapur Patna (Marei Kana), Narendrapur Patna (Tiara Sahi, Tala Sahi), Majhi Sahi, Panu Sahoo Patna, and Mundiasahi Patna.

The Charaka Sanhita, which was written in 400 A.D., mentions bell-metal, an alloyed form. The procedure involved utilising heat and a beater on a platform made of white stone. The artisans of Kantilo became experts in the production of Bell-Metal utensils through time, following the recipe created by Charaka, a renowned Ayurvedic scientist in Indian culture who specified the ratio of copper and tin to be combined in order to create the Bell-Metal alloy. During the 11th century in Odisha, metal crafts were supported and fostered by the monarchs for decorative purposes in their palaces, temples, and social rites.

Bell in hand Bell Metal Items Utensils from Bell Metal Products Bell-metal has a velvety surface and a golden colour, making it very beautiful. It is a very old metal.

The alloy, containing 85% copper and 15% tin, is heated and beaten into shape. The inside is then scraped to give it a golden glow, the outside is left dark. Ayurveda recommends serving and eating in Kansa (Bell metal as it is called in local Odia language) for nutritional values. A small, select group of gifted Puri craftsmen also persevere with the traditional craft of making brass icons. Elsewhere in the state, in small places such as Behrampur and Belguntha (in Ganjam district), Tarva (Bolangir district), Chandanpur, Phulbani, and Kantilo are scattered some 15,000 families who specialise in producing a variety of brass and bell metal craft objects, which exhibit extraordinary craftsmanship. In Kantilo, the craftsmen fashion beautiful utilitarian and decorative objects such as plates (Oonk 2007).

Frequent long route Bus services are there from Cuttack, Puri, Bhubaneswar, Nayagarh and Brahmapur, Narasinghpur etc. The nearest international airport as well as Railway Station is Bhubaneswar. Recently, in July/August 2017, Nayagarh Town Railway Station is in function for local trains from Khurdha Junction. Kantilo is now well connected by a double lane State Highway to State Capital Bhubaneswar, Narsinghpur, Bolangir, Boudh etc.

As of 2001 India census, Kantilo had a population of 8728. Males constitute 51% of the population and females 49%. Kantilo has an average literacy rate of 72%, higher than the national average of 59.5%: male literacy is 80%, and female literacy is 64%. In Kantilo, 11% of the population is under 6 years of age.

Due to its unique geographic location, the area serves as a hub for traders. In addition to common trade items like salt, spices, tobacco, cotton, oil seeds, and molasses, Kantilo also deals in native products like brass and bell metal kitchenware. Over the years, a number of explanations have emerged to explain the origin of the name Kantilo. 'Lo', the final letter of the word, might be a shortened version of the Sanskrit word 'Lava'. The term "lava" describes a low, deep riverbed that aids in navigation.

Typically, this is expressed as "Lo." Other place names that end in "Lo" include Sailo, Sarilo, Jharilo, etc. The ancient and damaged bell metal is described by the other half of the term "Kanti." Production of bell metal products is crucial to Kantilo's local trade. Other theories mention the abundance of thorny plants (Kanta) and thorny fruits (Kantei Koli) in the Kantilo hills and mountains nearby. This hypothesis,

however, doesn't seem to be very compelling. They belonged to the trading class (Vaishya Vanika), formerly referred to as "Sadhavas." They were given the responsibility of collecting taxes from the traders and navigators who travelled down the river Mahanadi and passed through Kantilo (Eschmann 1978). Additionally, they were serving as the Ghat's administrative head. The term "Kanti" is a shortened version of their official name, "Kanta Adhikari." The term "Kanta" refers to the measuring device. These Kanta Adhikaris employed a weighing balance known as "Kanti."

Sanskrit puranas mentioned that the first and foremost worshipper of Jaganatha as Neelamadhaba incarnation was a tribal. The traditional story of Jaganath is a reflection of the inner facts and truths of the society as a whole, and as such, it merits to be examined (though cautiously) as a pertinent source of our study (Eschmann 1978). Despite the fact that there are multiple "traditional accounts". We are more interested in understanding the deeper goals these accounts serve than in the historical accuracy or the establishment of a canonical version of events (Pollock 2003).

### **Jaganatha Cult Origin and Mythology**

To bridge the gap between the tribal priests and the sizeable Hindu society in Odisha and boundless and to assist the freshly Hinduized tribal priests in their ride to go above the Jati ladder was the distinct aim of the origin of the cult of Jaganatha. Thus the sthala purana or the kshetra Mahatmya aids in our comprehension of the growth and evolution of the deity and his followers. There are essentially two categories of myths surrounding Nilamadhaba Jaganath. The first category includes traditional Sanskrit works like the Niladrimahodaya, Purushottama Mahatmya of the Skanda purana and the Brahma purana. The second corpus consists of Oriya manuscript that describes the legend surrounding the God's entrance at Puri, such as Sarala Das Mahabharata and Sisu Krishna Das' Deula Tola scriptures (Holt 2008). is Odisha's official mascot. The history, mythology, and tales that have shaped the Jagannath religion span hundreds of years. According to mythology, Kantilo's Nilamdhaba is where Lord Jagannath first appeared. The Sabaras, a Pre-Aryan and Pre-Dravidian tribe of the Austric language family, worshipped at Kantilo, the primal God, as the reigning deity of Orissa in this original form.

### **"Nilamadhaba's Journey in Odia"**

It all began in a little cave in the Brahmadri hills, on the banks of the Mahanadi, presently referred to as Kantilo in the Nayagarh district. Here, Kitung, as the God was referred to in the Sabara language, was worshipped by Biswabasu, the local Sabra chief. The Puranas claim that the deity was once worshipped as the "Nilamadhaba," a black tong figure. The wooden image known as Daru Murty appeared considerably later (Mishra 1971).

Every Odia person has heard the lovely fable of Nilamadhaba at some point in their lives. The fabled King of Malawa, Indradyumna, is said to have dreamed about Nilamadhaba. The Nilamadhaba was being worshipped somewhere in the Utkal jungle, according to the Pundits the king consulted before travelling to visit the God. It was up to Bidyapati to find the God. After traversing the dense forest of hill paths along the Mahanadi in bare feet for several days, Bidyapati finally arrived in the village of Kalipali, where Biswabasu—the tribal chief—played the ideal host to his visitor. Bidyapati fell head over heels for his host's gorgeous daughter, "Lalita." With Biswabasu's approval, the couple was hitched.

Lalita revealed to her husband one day that her father had a place of worship for Lord Nilamadhaba hidden deep within the jungle. As his task was about to be completed, Bidyapati begged her to take him there on the condition that he travel there while wearing a blindfold (Patra 2011).

He carried a few mustard seeds on the day of reckoning and kept scattering them along the path at regular intervals. The walkway leading directly up to the cave was formed by mustard plants as the monsoon season approached. Bidyapati returned to Malawa shortly after and told King Indradyumna about his ordeal. And they both promptly started their invasion on Utkal.

The king began his journey to Odra Desha with his army and Narada by his side. As soon as the king arrived at the Upon reaching the Odra country's border, he learned about Nilamadhaba's disappearance. The king broke down in tears (Mahanti 2014)

But Narad reassured him that the Lord will manifest as Daru (holy wood).

The king then travelled to Nilagiri and held a Yagyan there. In a dream, Lord Nilamadhab appeared to the monarch and told him that the Lord will show up on the shore in the shape of Daru (holy wood). The king learned of the floating of the body the following day. Daru with four branches by the sea. The king then brought it and carefully set it atop Maha Vedi. "The Lord Himself will construct His own image and will appear on Mahavedi after a fixed number of days, during which the door of the said room with Daru should be shut up, (Neog 1965) " a voice from above declared as Narada and the topic of building gods was being discussed. An ancient carpenter with his tool arrived as the king was considering making this news. He consented to start working on it on the condition that he be let to work alone and without interruption for 21 days inside the temple.

The divine picture floated there before acting like a plank of wood and touching down. That log was used to create the idols of Lord Jagannath and other deities, which were then set in a small temple. The current version first appeared somewhere in the 12th century. The cult of Jagannath has also changed through time to some extent. The temple building is similar to the Jagannath temple at Puri and is situated close to the meeting point of the three rivers, the Mahandi, Kuanria, and Kusumi. It is located on the Mahanadi's right bank. The hill ranges and the misty, grey horizon converge to the left. Religious and nature-loving travellers will find this place to be excellent.

### **Lord Nilamadhaba Temple in Odisha**

The temple of Lord Nilamadhaba is located atop the twin hills (Brahmadri and Niladri) of Kantilo, which stands gracefully on the banks of the river Mahanadi in the district of Nayagarh in the Indian state of Odisha (Raman 2003). The cult of Lord Jagannath places a lot of emphasis on Lord Nilamadhaba. Holy water perpetually flows from the feet of Lord Nilamadhaba. Other attractions of this gorgeous settlement are the peak Shulia, the Goddesses Narayani and Shwasha Chandi, and Lord Siddheswar's migration in line with the Sun's path from North to South. The most well-known picnic areas in Odisha are found in Kantilo, which is 33 kilometres from the state's largest city.

The Nandas ruled the Airavata Mandala on the Mahanadi River's northern bank. Airavata Mandala comprised the southern portion of Dhenkanal the western portion of Cuttack, and the westernmost point of Nayagarh. It is known that the Narasinghpur Raj family is a part of the Airavata Mandala through their family records. These Nandas were thought to be Bhaumakara feudatories. The recent discovery of copper plate grants made by the Bhanjas using the Bhaumakara era from a nearby town called "Dhan Changada" is evidence that "Kantilo" was under the control of the Bhanjas, who were feudatories of the Bhaumakaras (Tripathy 1997).

The temple is constructed during the princely rule of the former state of Khandapadagarh in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D on the basis of iconographic. At a later stage, the temple is plastered in lime mortar.



The name "Kantalanda" appears on the Talmul Plate of Dhruvananda Deva of the Nanda Dynasty (1029 A.D.). According to the description, Kantalanda is located along the Mahanadi River. It makes sense that over time, the village of Kantalanda would be shortened to Kantilo, along the lines of Sailo, Sarilo, etc., and that the influential Kanta Adhikaris would take this name as their race name to emphasise their superiority and domination in society.

The place's presiding deity is Sri Sri Nilamadhava Jew. A blue rock in a Sal grove (*Shorea Robusta*) is worshipped by the Savaras, according to historian Prof. N.K. Bose in Pal-lahara. 'Nil Madhava' is the name given to it. Mishra, page 5 Additionally, in Kantilo, we observe the existence of "Savaras" who claimed to be the offspring of Savar Viswa Vasu in a location nearby known as "Kalia Palli."

They said that Viswa Vasu was honouring "Kalia Madhava." Mallick, page 120 Pt. Binayak Mishra dates the temple to the ninth century A.D. based on its architecture (Tripathy 1997). According to Dr. Krushna Chandra Panigrahi, the shrine dates from a different period than the deity's temple.

A manifestation of Vishnu and Krishna that appears in Hindu literature, Nilamadhava (Odia:, Sanskrit:, romanized: Nlamdhava) has its roots in Odia culture.[1] According to ancient stories, this was the name of a sapphire-made deity who was revered by the indigenous Savara people, whose leader was known as Vishvavas, prior to his syncretism into Vaishnavism (Devi 2019).

Located on a small hill very adjacent to the flowing Mahanadi River, this great temple is the abode of Lord Nilmadhav. As legend goes, the tribal King Viswa Vasu was secretly worshipping Nilmadhav. Later on the idol vanished and subsequently appeared in the sea near Puri as a log. From this log the three idols consisting of Jagannath, Balbhadra and Subhadra were carved and placed in the famous temple of Sri Jagannath.

Later on a black stone idol of Nilmadhav was placed at the Kantilo temple and worshipped today. This temple has all the features of the Puri Temple.

This is small compared to the Puri Jagannath but the location is most picturesque. Being on a hill, one has to climb 36 steps to reach the temple level. The steps are high and so the climb is steep (Patra 2011).

In the Skanda Purana, a powerful storm had already buried the picture of Nilamadhava beneath the sand by the time Vidyapati had come back to tell the king of the shrine's location. The king looked everywhere but couldn't find the image. Indradyumna built a new temple and performed a thousand ashvamedha yajnas there on the advice of the wise god Narada. The three wooden images of the temple, those of Jagannatha, Balarama, and Subhadra, were made from a large tree that was floating in the sea after guidance in the shape of a holy dream. To ask Brahma to dedicate the temple, the king travelled to Brahmaloaka. As time went on, a monarch by the name of Gala claimed to have been An antidiluvian and consequential vaishnava temple throughout the length of the embankment of the Mahanadi temple, positioned the Nilamdhava temple of Kantilo. It was adjacent within earshot to the twin mount escorted by a green woodland. An irreversible whirl of consecrated water from the toe of the supreme being Nilamadhava and sidheswara are the cynosure of this place. Himadri's evening scenery is somewhat more enchanting and beautiful. You can take pleasure in the brisk riverside breeze and the west hilltop sundown. the boats in the river and the distant vista of the long bridge. It's worth observing and recording the sunset in images for your memory bank. You must do this near the Mahabir Hanuman Temple's flanks (Zeriffi 1876). The Main Shrine's bells sound as the sun sets. The opportunity to see Lord Nilamadhab and His Sandhya Alati has come. You can see the Bhattarika Temple, the Mahanadi River bank, and the Khaparmal Greenery from His Portico.

based on iconography and architectural design The temple dates to the 18th and 19th century AD based on the parsvadevata pictures.

### **Hindu Mythology and Madhava Worship**

The Hindus hold a firm belief and conviction that their cultural legacy has 33 crore Gods and Goddesses. Lord Nilamadhava is one of the Gods and Goddesses who is widely regarded in Hindu mythology as one of the manifestations of Lord Vishnu. From the fourth century A.D. till the end of the fourteenth century A.D.1, the worship of Madhava in the Mahanadi valley was particularly well-liked in Odisha. The four most important and nearby regions of Odisha, namely: 1. Prachi valley 2. Mahanadi valley 3. Baitarani valley, appear to be sites of Lord Nilamadhava or Madhava devotion. Fourth, Rushikulya Valley. The popularity of Madhava worship flourished in Mahanadi Valley (Sircar 1998).

There are three crucial areas near temples to Madhava in the Mahanadi valley. These are 1. Chhatisgarh's Bastar District's Rajib Lochan Temple. The Gandharadi 2. The Nilamadhava Temple in the Nayagarh District of Odisha.3 The Madhava Temple in Boudh.4 . Of all ancient sites, Kantilo, also known as Padmakshetra and Darubrahma Kshetra, holds a special place in the history of Odisha in particular and of India in general because of its proud artistic and architectural heritage and its long history as the primary site of Madhava worship.

The term "Madhava" basically designates a deity, a representation of Vishnu holding a discus. Visvavasu, the head of the Savara tribe, is reported to worship Nilamadhava. The Madhava temple in Naili, the Adaspur, and Salipur regions all house pictures of Madhava. Odisha had a constantly strong Madhava cult presence which is being confirmed from (Khurda Charter of Madhavraja of the Sailadbhava dynasty). In Kantilo, Lord Nilamadhava is revered. He is referred to as Madhava in its truest sense since he practises stillness (Mauna) and prayer. Additionally, Madhava is mentioned in the Markandeya Purana (Pande 1994). The Rupamandana lists the twenty-four names of Vishnu together with the placements of the four Ayudhas in each name's corresponding four hands. In the Madhava figure, it is holding Gada in the front right hand, Padma in the left hand, Sankha in the back right hand, and Chakra in the back right hand. After the plaster was removed from the Sri Jagannath temple, it was discovered.

### **Temple Design and Mythical Traditions**

The images in the temple show that the designers and builders were familiar with mythical traditions and took great effort to reflect all of his incarnations, including the image of Madhava in the design (Bhattacharya 1953).

#### **Temple Design and Mythical Traditions**

The Markandeya complex is approached by four gates facing the four directions, and there is also a reference to Madhava there. the compass direction. Each entrance is connected by a protracted night at masonry stairs. The north's stairs

side led to the Mahanadi River's water level. Besides the main shrine dedicated to God Nilamadhava, we can notice a series of modern structures within the premises dedicated to the worship of Jagannath, Lakshmi, Vimala, Saraswati, Raghunath, Kukachatur Bhuja, Sidhesvar Mahadeva, Nrusingha, Kshetrapal, Anantasayana, Suryanarayana, Vata Mangala, Vatesvara, Ganesh, Kasi Viswanath, Patitapavana, Rasabihari, Vedha Kalika and Hanuman. In addition, a pedestal for the worship of foot prints as well as Devasnana Mandapa, Roshaghara, Bhandarghara, Simhadvara, and Aruna Khamba have been built. The traditional belief that the Nilamadhava temple was constructed at the same time as the ancient Jagannath

temple of Puri during the pre-Ganga period makes sense given how many temples dedicated to Madhava worship were constructed at that time. Some people believe that Visvavasu, the Savara Chief, offered Nilamadhava reverence here. Most religiously inclined devotees view it as a highly sacred location that they must visit once in their lifetime.

A pyramidal Jagamohana stands in front of the main Nilamadhava temple, which is constructed in the rekha style. A second stage involves heavily plastering both structures with lime mortar. The outside of the shrine shows five-fold divisions in the bada and pancharatha projections (Mohapatra 1986). The projecting lions situated at the upper right corner of the gandi are the only ornate sculptures present. According to conventional wisdom, the centre raha pagas on each side of the Nilamadhava temple and the original Jagannath temple in Puri were both constructed during the pre-Ganga period at the same time. A mastaka comprises of the customary beki, amlakasila, khapuri, Dhvaja, Ayudha, and Kalasa. On the other side, the Jagamohan signifies similar characteristics or an Odisha's pidha deula. Varaha Vishnu, Trivikram, and Narasimha statues are placed in the raha paga niches of the shrine's exterior walls and are venerated as Parsvadevatas (Brighenti 2001).

Additionally, Saraswati and Krushna were maintained the altar's pedestal. picture of an eight-armed In a niche, Mahisamardini Durga has been kept. In a niche, Mahisamardini Durga has been kept. Additionally, Saraswati and Krushna were maintained at this place. At Kantilo we see two temples close to each other, one for Sri Nilamadhava and the other for Sri Siddheswara in the temple complex of Nilamadhava.

### **Temple Complex of Nilamadhava in Kantilo**

The place's presiding deity is Sri Sri Nilamadhava Jew. A blue rock in a Sal grove (Shorea Robusta) is worshipped by the Savaras, according to historian Prof. N.K. Bose in Pal-lahara. 'Nil Madhava' is the name given to it. Mishra, page 5 Additionally, in Kantilo, we observe the existence of "Savaras" who claimed to be the offspring of Savar Viswa Vasu in a location nearby known as "Kalia Palli."

They said that Viswa Vasu was honouring "Kalia Madhava." Mallick, page 120

based on iconography and architectural design The temple dates to the 18th and 19th century AD based on the parsvadevata pictures (Tripathy 1997).

Pt. Binayak Mishra dates the temple to the ninth century A.D. based on its architecture (Mishra, p. 242). According to Dr. Krushna Chandra Panigrahi, the temple dates back more than the On January 20, 2003, they had some copper plate. From the western side of the settlement of Dhanchangada, which encompasses Kalia, grants were discovered (Tripathy 1997).

Kantilo is fairly close to Palli and to itself. According to Miss Bharati Pal, the State Museum's epigraphist, who interpreted the plates, Satrubhanja (I), Silabhanja's son and Bidyadhara Bhanja's grandson, issued the plates in Vanjulabaka, the second capital of the Bhanjas. The persona of Satrubhanja is "Parama vaishnava." (Cunningham 1854)

the iconographic features of Sri Nilamadhava of Kantilo mentioned o the deity holds only two Ayudhas namely Sankha and Chakra in His upper two hands. The lower hands rests on the heads of His two consorts, Laxmi and Saraswati. Which mentions the unique feature of the deity of earlier origin (Goswami 2000).

as qualities. The Bhaumrakara era of Odisha history saw a proliferation of eight-armed Mahisamardini Durga images. The Bhaumakara rulers of Orissa appear to have some link to the month-long Bhauma Ekadasi observed here.

Odisha's pidha deula. Varaha Vishnu, Trivikram, and Narasimha statues are placed in the raha paga niches of the shirne's exterior walls and are venerated as Parsvadevatas (Mohapatra 1986). The dwelling deity, Nilamadhava, is securely fastened to the inner back wall of the sanctum and is made out of a chlorite slab. It depicts characteristics that are the same as those of the traditional Madhava worshipped form of Vishnu in Odisha. One can confront the Garuda Stambha at the main gate on the east side. The shrine and the later temples built inside the site also face east.

This location, known as Nilamadhava, sits atop a low hillock that traditionally goes by the name Brahmadri pahada and touches the Mahanadi on both the western and northern sides. The Simhanatha and Bhattarika temples of Baramba, the Banasvaranasi of Narasimhapur, and the Ramanatha hilltop in the Banki area of the Cuttack district may all be seen from the summit of this hill. According to rumours, the Nilamadhava temple in Kantilo is a duplicate of the well-known Jagannath temple in Puri (Raman 2003)

The name Madhava literally translates to "related to Madhu," which may refer to either the ancestor of Krishna's own Yadu clan or springtime honey. Govinda Madhu is a term used in the Gita to refer to both the demon Madhu and honey springtime. Madhava is pictured as Yaduputra in another literature. During the reign of Bhanudeva (1269–1278), Narahari Tirtha helped spread the Madhava cult. Additionally, it is one of the most important religious centres in Odisha, drawing thousands of tourists from around the globe every year.

Kantilo Nilamadhava temple bemused a protuberant function in the sect of Jaganath. The temple is diminutive kind of lord Jaganath temple at puri and witnessed analogous rites and rituals. Similar rites and rituals are observed in Nilamadhava temple of kantilo as well as jaganath temple at puri, which is also a miniature form of jaganath temple. Another attraction of the spot was a permanent flow of water from lord shidheswara. In the cult of jaganath, Lord Nilamadhava occupies a central position, now in puri jaganath temple, Lord Nilamadhava shrine is present on the right side of Lakshmi. The extensively acknowledged Nilamadhava temple for which the small town kantilo is far famed, is ascertained on a small mound Brahmadri pahada positioned on the right embankment of the river Mahanadi. A great deal of concurrence is exhibited allying the Jaganath temple at Puri and the Nilamadhava temple at Kantilo.

Of all the antique places, Kantilo labeled as padmakshetra and Darubrahma kshetra and it enwraps an outstanding role in the history of odisha for her disdainful engraving and architectonic heritage. Nilamadhava, cited as a deity, a form of visnu is said to be venerated by savara chief visvabasu. The marvelous attribute of Lord Nilamadhava is the etymological derivation of the denomination Nilamadhava connoted to the merger of three terms. The title Nilamadhava is emblem of three closest deities and those are NILA+MA+DHAVA, NILA-indicates Lord Jaganath creator of the blue (Nila sky), MA signifies Subhadra (mother subhadra) and the last title DHAVA stipulated Bhabadra, who always wears white or Dhabala dresses (Sircar 1998). As a protruding vaishnava cult and madhava cult of substantial notoriety the temple of Nilamadhava is very much estimable.

A very alluring providence of Lord Jaganath in blue colour is being venerated in shree Nilamadhava temple. The word NILA is there in the divinity and for that reason the Lord is called Nilamadhava. In the direction of the feet of Lord Nilamadhava, a stream of water flows perennially. And amplifying to it appealing river Mahanadi flows throughout the year nearby the temple. The reverence of Nilamadhava instituted in the small cave in the Brahmadri hills. In the sabara accent Kitung, the God was revered by the local sabara chief VISVABASU. The demiurge was primarily deified in the form of an Indranila gem and the embodier is known as Nilamadhava.

The Nilamadhava temple is an existing temple, enshrining Lord Nilamadhava, supplemental form of Vishnu over a substructure and the sanctuary is revered. In conformity with the architectural strategem and iconographical characteristics of the parsvadevata images, the completion of the temple can be dated back to the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The temple has Rekha Vimana, Pidha Vimana, Garuda Mandapa and an open Mandapa of dispossessed Kalingan order. The temple is compactly plastered in lime mortar eventually. It was a preserved memorial of Orissa State Archaeology and Endowment Department, Government of Odisha.

### **Nilamadhava Worship in Nayagarh District**

The worship of Nilamadhava started in the small cave in the brahmadrī hills in the kantilo of Nayagarh district, situated on the banks of the mahanadi river. In the sabara dialect kitung, the God was worshipped by the local sabara chief viswabasu (Raman 2003). The deity was originally worshipped in the form of indranila gem and the image is known as Nilamadhava. Later the daru murty came and the temple is located near the confluence of the 3 rivers Mahanadi, kuanria, and kusumi. On the right bank of Mahanadi river the temple is located and the structure is like the jaganath temple of puri. In Odisha it is called the triveni sangam of Odisha. The Nilamadhava temple of kantilo is equivalent to the Beni Madhav in Prayag (Kennedy 1925).

In the Hindu myth and mythology Lord Nilamadhava is popularly perceived as one of the incarnations of Vishnu. In the religious allegory of the Hindus, there are 33 crores of divergent Gods and Goddesses and in the early medieval period, Lord Nilamadhava was very much popular. In the four prime and proximate regions of Odisha the worship of Nilamadhava seems to be evident and those are Prachi valley, Mhanadi valley, Baitarani valley and Rushikulya valley. In the medieval Vaishnavism, the history and cultural heritage of Odisha the popularity of Madhava worship on the Mahanadi valley is a curious chapter.

The famous village kantilo is located at a distance of 35 kms from the district headquarters of Nayagarh. The widely acclaimed Nilamadhava temple for which the village kantilo is renowned, is located on a small hillock Brahmadrī pahada situated on the right bank of the river Mahanadi. Much resemblance is shown between the jaganath temple at puri and the Nilamadhava temple at kantilo. Four gateways on four cardinal directions are being approached by the temple complex. A flight of steps is led towards the gateway, the water level of the Mahanadi is being reached after stepping up the steps of the northern side. The Garuda stambha is in front of the eastern gate of the temple. Within the complex, most of the shrines along with the Nilamadhava temple face east.

As both the structures are thickly plastered in lime. However, it is of pancharatra type with five fold divisions in the deula is concluded from the project. The temple, the Deula of Rekha type and the Jagamohan of pidha type respectively consists of the main temple of Nilamadhava. The exact features of the temple could not be ascertained from the outer walls of the vimana. Except the udyota simhas placed on the centre of the rahapagas each side, the gandi is plain (Eschaman et.al. 1978). The usula elements like beki, amlaka, khapuri, kalasa and ayudha occupied the mastaka portion of the temple. Parsvadevatas like the weathered figure of Varaha Vishnu, Trivikram, and Narasimha images are placed and worshipped within the rahapaga niches of the outer wall of the shrine. The typical pidha temple known as the Jagmohan was also there which was thickly plastered.

The Bagha Akhada or Vaghra Gumphā was there in the eastern side of the temple. Several deities like Vimala, Saraswati, Vadhakali and Lakshmi are located on the western side. On the western side the Hanuman temple is located. There were Mathas and caves just below the Hanuman temple. Towards the northern side



of the main temple the patitapavana temple is there and the shrine of shanadevi is on the north-east corner of the Nilamadhava temple.

The kitchen of Goddess lakshmi and the shrine of padapadma was on the northside of the temple. The vahana mandapa, Tulasi chaura and the shrine of the Lord Jaganath are on the northern gate and in the southern part of the Rasa Akhada was there. The Raghunath Badamatha was on the side, the great manastery for Lord Raghunath and the temple can be assigned to the 14th century A.D. from the stylistic point of view.

The temple is located on the top of a low hillock, on the right bank of the river Mahanadi locally known as Brahmadri pahada in the village kantilo and around 15 kms away from khandapadagarh.

The temple has a Rekha Vimana, Pidha Jagamohana, Garuda Mandapa and an open Mandapa of impoverished kalingan order.

The Nilamadhava temple is a living temple enshrining Lord Nilamadhava, another form of Vishnu over a pedestal and the shrine is worshipped. The precise date construction completed during 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century A.D (Mishra 1971).

The temple is heavily plastered in lime mortar at a later stage. It was protected monument of Odisha state Archaeology and endowment department, Govt of Odisha.

The rituals associated with this Nilamadhava temple Magha Ekadasi, Chandan Yatra, Janmastami, Pausa Purnima, Bhauma Ekadasi etc are observed here. During the pre-Ganga period, it is believed to be contemporaneous with the old Jaganath temple of Puri. The savara chief Viswvasu, worshipped Nilamadhava at this place. Previously the ex-ruler family were its patrons, but currently the endowment department under Govt. of Odisha is its patron.

The temple can be dated back to the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century A.D. on the basis of architectural scheme and iconographic features of the parsvadevata images (Eschaman et.al. 1978).

The temple is facing towards the East. The vimana, Jagamohana, Garuda mandapa are square on plan whereas the frontal mandapa is rectangular on plan that stands over a platform of 0.56 metres high. Excepting the parsvadevata the niches which are housed with images of Trivikram, Varaha and Narasimha, the temple is devoid of sculptural embellishment.

The temple is pancharatra on plan and panchagabada in elevation. The Nilamadhava temple is architecturally plain, but painting of recent time are noticed on the inner walls and two Mahisasuramardini Durga images are kept near the entrance in the jagamohana.

The structural system of the temple includes Rekha vimana, pidha jagamohana, Garuda mandapa, and an open mandapa of impoverished kalingan order. The building techniques of the temple is ashlar masonry and the material for the construction of the temple used are stone and lime plaster.

### **Kantilo: The Abode of Nilamadhava**

Kantilo is the abode of Nilamadhava. Out of the 33 crores of Gods and Goddesses in their cultural tradition, Lord Nilamadhava is one of them who is popularly perceived as one of the incarnations of Vishnu in the Hindu mythology. In the study of medieval Vaishnavism and cultural tradition of Odisha the popularity of madhava worship seems important (Eschaman et.al. 1978).

Of all the ancient place Kantilo designated as Padmakshetra and Darubrahma kshetra occupies prominent place in the history of Odisha for her proud sculptural and architectural heritage. Nilamadhava, refers to a deity, a form of Vishnu is said to be worshipped by savara chief Viswabasu. Kantilo is also famous for Nilamadhava.

The distinguished feature of Lord Nilamadhava is the etymological derivation of the term Nilamadhava signifying to the amalgamation of 3 terms .As a prominent vaishnava cult and the madhava cult of great repute the temple of Nilamadhava is very much renowned (Mishra 1971).

The term Nilamadhava is insignia of three prominent deities, which the hindu heard as their sacred and significant Gods. These deities are Nila+ma+dhava, Nila indicates Lord Jaganath, (creator of the blue nila sky) and Ma signifies mata Subhadra and the last term Dhava indicates Balabhadra, who is having God put on dhavala dresses. The salient features of the odishan temple architecture is basically kalingan style of architecture which consists of the vimana and Jagamohana., The deula and the Garbhagriha are there in the main temple, which is of Rekha type and a curvilinear spire. The mukhasala is of pidha type, which is the frontal structure otherwise called Jagamohana or porch. These two structure are linked internally.

As time passed, two more structures such as the Natamandapa and the Bhogamandapa were constructed to cater the needs of the rituals. The temple structure is having a small gateway in the front and it was enclosed by the compound walls. The exterior portion of the temple is round in shape due to the projections but the interior plan of the temple is square. The later temples erected within the compound and the temple faces east. One can notice a series of modern structures within the temple preface besides the main shrine, i.e. Lord Nilamadhava like Jaganath, Lakshmi, vimala, saraswati, Raghunath, Sidheswara Mahadev, Nrusingha khetrpal, Ananta Sayana, Suryanarayan, Vata mangala, Ganesh, Kasiviswanath, Pattipavana, Rasavihari and Hanuman. Devasnana mandapa, Roshaghara, Bhandaraghara, Simhadvara, Aruna khamba and a pedestal for worship of foot prints have been assembled in inclusion to the temples.

### **Nilamadhava Temple and Jaganath Temple in Puri**

Traditionally the Nilamadhava temple is believed to be contemporaneous with the old Jaganath temple of Puri which was built during the pre Ganga period . At this place Viswabasu the savara chief, worshipped kitung ,as known in the sabara dialect. In the form of a black tong image known as Nilamadhava the deity was originally worshipped known as Nilamadhava as confirmed by puranic sources. At a much later stage the daru murthy came. Viswabasu the tribal chief in the hope of increasing the fertility of land was worshipping this stone, offering flowers and fruits to the trees and young ones. procreation was thought to be the function of the stone image worshipped by viswavas. In the history of different civilisations such types of cave worship have also been found out. In the new stone age the black or blue stone pieces or , known as salagrama was worshipped as Vishnu. In the capital of Nepal, Kathmandu worship of marble image is being carried out. Only a blue stone or Nilakantamani was being worshipped before the worship of Daru image which has been confirmed by the literary sources. Near the ROHINI KUNDA a blue stone or Nilakantamani worship was carried out, which has been narrated by UTKALA KHANDA of SKANDA PURANA. It is being believed that a BRAHMA meant, the black stone is being kept inside the wooden image of Jaganath. In different parts of odisha the black stones are also worshipped under the name of Nilamadhava. In the jungles of pallahara in the name of Nilamadhava, a black stone was still worshipping by the aborigines. One of the twin temples of Gandhardi in the district of Phulbani in the earliest 7<sup>th</sup> /8<sup>th</sup> century A.D, known as the Nilamadhava temple accredited to vishnu paramavaishnava Bhanjamala kulatilaka satru Bhanja, who had donated kurumkela village to Brahamachari Bhattamanoratha for the propagation and maintenance of Nilamadahava.

In the somavamsi period the investiture of the Lord Nilmadahav occurred in kantilo in the Nayagarh District of odisha.

### Kantilo's Historical Background

To justify the name of Kantilo several theories have been popped up. The Sanskrit word lava may have reduced the term LO and Lava, a low and deep river bed always helps in navigation. The old and broken part of the bell metal refers to the Kantilo. In the native trade of Kantilo production of bell metal commodities plays a pivotal role (Gorrick 2016). At Kantilo a race name 'kanti' is still existing and are a trading class, otherwise known as 'sadhavas', who are assigned the task of duty as taxes from the traders passing through the river Mahanadi. In peace time the ghat duties were performed by the 'kantis' and they have to act as second liners during war time. In return of their services they were getting jagirs (jagirs) from the rulers of Orissa. The Airavata mandala comprised of the southern bank of Dhenkanal, western part of Cuttack and the western end of Nayagarh was being ruled by the Nandas in the northern bank of the river Mahanadi. It is known from the annals of Narasinghapur Raj family that they were staying in Airavata Mandala and the Nandas were supposed to be the feudatories of the Bhaumakaras. The recent discovery of copper plate grants of the Bhanjas using the Bhaumakara era from an adjoining village called as 'Dhanchangada' proved that 'Kantilo' was under the Bhanjas who were the feudatories of the Bhaumakaras. On the banks of the river Mahanadi a village called 'Kantalanda' was mentioned in the Talmul plate of Dhruvananda Deva of Nanda dynasty (Chopra 1992).

By the passage of time it might have happened that 'Kantalanda' has been reduced in the pattern of Sailo, Sarilo etc to Kantilo which is situated on the banks of the river Mahanadi. The presiding deity of Kantilo is Sri Nilamadhava. Nil Madhava was being worshipped as a blue rock in a sal groove according to Prof. N. K. Bose. In a place adjoining to Kantilo, at 'Kaliapali' the savaras who claimed to be descendants of Viswabasu were living and they were worshipping 'Kalia Madhava'.

### Bhanja Temples and Iconographic Features

In the territory of the Bhanjas the twin temple of Nilamadhava and Sidheswara were there. In the temple complex of Nilamadhava, at Kantilo two temples stood close to each other one for Sri Nilamadhava and the other one for Sri Sidheswara. The iconographic features of Sri Nilamadhava differ from that of the deity of Gandhardi. Two Ayudhas namely sankha and chakra were there in the upper hands of the deity of Nilamadhava whereas four Ayudhas were there in the hands of the deity of the Gandhardi and those were Samkha, (conch) chakra, (wheel) Gada (mace) and Padma (lotus). The sankha and chakra in the upper two hands were held by the deity at Kantilo (Sircar 1998). His two consorts, Lakshmi and Saraswati were being rested by his lower hands. An earlier origin testified the unique feature of the deity at Kantilo. In the National Museum of Kolkata an image of Vishnu is being preserved now where his two hands rested on the heads of Laxmi and Saraswati. The anteriority of the idol along with its iconic feature has been proved by the roughness of its making.

From the western side of the village Dhanchangada, on 20<sup>th</sup> Jan 2003 some copper plate grants were unearthed from Kaliapalli, which was in close proximity with Kantilo. The epigraphist of the State Museum of Odisha, Bhubaneswar Miss Bharati Pal has read and concluded that those plates were being issued by Satrubhanja (1), son of Silabhanja and grandson of Bidyadhara Bhanja from Vanjulabaka, the second capital of the Bhanjas (Gorrick 2016). Although PARAMA VAISHNAVA was being depicted by Satrubhanja for himself still he had used invocatory verses in praise of Lord Shiva as usually used by the Bhanjas. However they were patrons of both the religions, Saivism as well as Vaishnavism.

Gandhat was the other name of Satrubhanja and from the Gandhapati the present Gandhardi is being reduced. According to D.C. Sircar, the Gandhardi mountain is named after Satrubhanja Gandhat and there

the twin temple of Nilamadhava and Sidheswara have been built on the bottom of the mountain. So it may be concluded that Satrubhanja who has constructed the town Gandhardi might have constructed the twin temple and the temple of Nilamadhava of Kantilo might also be the artistic work of the king Satrubhanja. The three probable architects for the construction of the said temple were the Bhaumakaras, Somavamsis and lastly the Bhanjas. The first three kings of the Bhaumakara dynasty were the Buddhists, excepting one queen Tribhuban Maheswari(1), who was a Saivite. The Saivite and the Shakta temples were being constructed by the Bhaumakaras and these temples were constructed by eighth century A.D. The royal house became highly unstable during ninth century A.D. Yayati (1) conquered Orissa in and around 931 A.D. by defeating their contenders Bhanjas and Bhaumakaras, Quoted by Panigrahi. It is very natural that they have taken years to consolidate their authority in the Orissa countries. Peace was not the order of the day during their initial years as they were facing stiff resistance from the Bhanjas as well as from the outside forces like the Kalachuris. During the period of Yayati Keasari(2) who had ruled during 1025 A.D. to 1040 A.D. and this period must be too late for the construction of the Neelamadhava temple of Kantilo. A sevak and also an employee of the local college of Kantilo, Sri R.N Mishra on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1999 had told the author Geeta Devi that KHANJAA (ration) in the form of Rice, Dal and Ghee were being provided by the Bhanjas to give offering to the deity and that has been stopped from some years.

These evidences proved that the Bhanjas and incidentally Satrubhanja(1) who himself was a PARAMA VAISHNAVA might have constructed the temple of Neelamadhava at Kantilo (Eschaman et.al. 1978). In Hinduism, it is persistently presumed that 33 crores of Gods and Goddesses are existing and three broad divisions of Gods and Goddesses are there which are Vaishnava, Saiva and Shakta.

### **Lord Nila Madhava: A Vaishnava Category Lord in Odisha**

Lord Nila Madhava was the Vaishnava category lord. In the four river valleys of Odisha the worship of Lord Nilamadhava was very much popular. Four rivers were Baitarani, Prachi Valley, Mahanadi and Rushikulya. Since the prevalence of Vaishnavism in Odisha the worship of Lord Nilamadhava seems to be evident. The history and culture of Odisha was being influenced in many ways by the emergence of Vaishnavism.

The manifestation of Vaishnavism can be seen in the worship of the Madhava cult. The close association of The Legend of Lord Nila Madhava with the Lord Purushottam was being confirmed from different sources. A close study of the puranic records revealed the theory that in the Daru Brahma kshetra at Kantilo Lord Nilamadhava was worshipped it is though it is believed that Vaishnavism became popular in Odisha during the period of the Guptas. On the river bank of the Mahanadi and on the Brahmadri Pahada (mountain) Lord Nilamadhava was worshipped. The popularity of Vaishnavism not only in Kalinga, Odisha but also in the whole country of India was attributed to the relentless effort of the Guptas. The latest major Indian religion was Vaishnavism. Prior to the Gita Govinda of Jayadeva the Madhava cult was very much popular in Orissa. However in the Vaishnava tradition Lord Nilamadhava stands as the first and the foremost. Being designated as the Kalpantara devata who had killed and Namasura and Kamasura in the age of Satya Yuga Lord Nilamadhava was worshipped by the Sabaras the Sauras of the ethnic tribe (Mishra 1971). Lord Nilamadhava has been adored by the people as Madhava is made of bluestone or Neela Prastara. The ethnic people the Savaras on the river bank of the Mahanadi at Kantilo worshipped Lord Nilamadhava and for this the Lord is held as the Sabar devata Nilamadhava and at a later stage the Lord God converted into Lord Jagannath who was worshipped at Srikhetra Puri.

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