

MEDIEVAL ODISHA

The Bhoi Dynasty of Khurda

By **Brajabandhu Mahanta** • August 26, 2022 • Updated September 17, 2022 • 16 min read



The Bhoi dynasty was a mediaeval Hindu dynasty that ruled from 1541 to 1560 CE. It began in the historical Odra region, which includes most of modern-day Odisha, northern coastal Andhra, and southeast portions of West Bengal. Govinda Vidyadhara had usurped the throne from the later, weaker Suryavamsa Gajapati Empire rulers as the kingdom began to wane, but he had a brief reign as the ruling chiefs of Odisha as the ensuing internal rivalries and constant invasion threats rendered him weak. He was eventually overthrown by Mukunda Deva of the Chalukya dynasty in 1560.

The dynasty moved its capital to Khurda under Ramachandra Deva I as Mukunda Deva lost his crown in 1568 to the Sultans of Bengal, who then lost it to the Mughal Empire in 1576. During that time, the feudal Garhjat states of Odisha and the Bhoi dynasty were independent states in their own right and fell under the control of the Mughal imperial government until 1717. They then became subjects of the Maratha Empire, which ruled Odisha from 1741 to 1803 when it was overthrown by the British East India Company. Following the King's failed uprising against the British in 1804 and subsequent exile to Puri, the kingdom was eventually captured by the British Empire. Later, the British gave him control over the Jagannath Temple, which the titular dynastic heads still hold today. In other words, the Jagannath Temple in Puri, one of the holiest sanctuaries in Hinduism, is still under the administrative jurisdiction of the Bhoi dynasty.

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Ramachandradeva I (1568-1607 CE)

Ramachandradeva's ascension to the throne of the Bhoi dynasty at Khurda ushers in a glorious era for that dynasty. What is Ramachandradeva's origin? As previously stated, Mukundadeva captured Danai Vidyadhara in Puri. When his son Ramai Routaray learned of this, he attempted to march towards Puri but was imprisoned at the fort of Rajahmundry by Mukunda Harichandana. Ramai Routaraya was released from the fort following the death of Mukunda Harichandana in 1568 CE. He returned to Odisha. As Cuttack was already under the Afghans' control at the time, Ramai chose Khurda as the focal point of his political activity. This he received as a token of gratitude from Vala Vikrama Singh, the Chaininka Chakada reports. In 1568 CE, Ramai Routaraya established himself as king in that location. This Ramai Routaraya is none other than Ramachandradeva I, commonly referred to as Ramachandradeva, who adopted this moniker following his coronation. Then, in 1568 CE, he declared himself the Gajapati of Odisha and instituted his own Anka (year).

His accomplishments

According to the Madala Panji, he is a Yadu Vamsi. Ramachandradeva desired to expand his territory in all directions following his accession—north, south, east, and west. That was the time of the Mughal-Afghan conflict over Odisha's possession. Mirza Raja Mansingh's visit to Odisha caused Ramachandradeva to fear for his position. It was only after Telenga

Mukundadeva and Chhakadi Bhramarabara, the deceased Mukundadeva's two sons, petitioned Mughal Emperor Akbar to recognise them as Odisha's legitimate rulers. Initially, Ramachandradeva fortified Sarangagarh and provided refuge for the Afghans within.

Mansingh waited at Sali on his way to Puri, and Raja Ramachandradeva desired to negotiate with him via his son Birabara. Mansingh, on the other hand, refused to listen to Birabara and insisted on meeting Ramachandradeva personally in his camp. Ramachandradeva was not present. Mansingh then marched towards Khurda with his son Jagat Singh, Abul Baqa, Shahabuddin Diwan, and others, capturing forts such as Sahajpala, Kharagarh, Kalupada, Bhumal, Konon, Lonagarh, and Bhumala. Ramachandradeva did not emerge from the Khurda fort. Akbar has now reversed his decision. To crush the Afghans in Odisha, he desired to appease both Ramachandradeva and the sons of Mukundadeva. As a result, Mansingh took the appropriate action. According to the Madala Panji, Mansingh travelled to Puri during Chandana Yatra with two rival claimants, Ramachandradeva and Telenga Mukundadeva. The priests of the Jagannath temple enquired as to whom Mansingh would offer his power and authority as Odisha's king. Mansingh collected Khadi prasada from the priests and presented it to Ramachandradeva, appointing him king of Odisha. He did, however, satisfy Mukundadeva's two sons. Telenga Mukundadeva was offered the fort of Aul (All) and the Zamindari assigned to it, and he became king over it. Chhakadi Bhramarabara, another of Mukundadeva's sons, was appointed Patia's chief. By doing so, Mansingh demonstrated his diplomacy.

During Ramachandradeva's reign, one notable event was the invasion of Ibrahim Qutab Shah, the Sultan of Golkunda. He pursued his adversary Mukunda Raja of Kasimkota, who sought Ramachandradeva's assistance. Naturally, it is unknown what happened to Ramachandradeva during the battle against Ibrahim. Ramachandradeva's defeat is to be believed with a reasonable degree of certainty. This assumption must be made because Kalinga and Rajahmundry had been annexed by the Odishan empire and incorporated into the kingdom of Golkunda Sultan by that time. Though Ramachandradeva faced stiff opposition from the Afghans of Bengal in the north and the Sultan of Golkunda in the south, he possessed up to thirty-two zamindaries. Among them, the Zamindari of Khurda was

particularly significant due to its 73 forts. Additionally, Zamindaries were established in Banki, Domapara, Baramba, Tigiria, Narasinghpur, Angul, Talcher, Nayagarh, Dasapalla, Parikud, Khallikote, Tekkali, Raghunathpur, Rathipur, Tapang, Rorung, Karki, and Bolegarh. Ramachandradeva's territory roughly extended from the Mahanadi river in the north to the Khimindi border in the south, and from Chilika lake in the east to Nayagarh and the Dasapalla region in the west.

His charitable deeds

Ramachandradeva was a devout individual. Immediate after assuming the throne, he reinstalled the idols of Jagannath, Balabhadra, and Subhadra in the Puri Jagannath temple, which had been destroyed during the Afghan invasion of Odisha under the illustrious Kalapahada. According to the Madala Panji, he remained present near the Jaya Vijaya dvara and distributed Mahaprasada to various segments of Hindu society. He was given the name Dvitiya Indradyumna in recognition of this noble deed. He was also instrumental in the construction of Sakshigopala's temple. He also desired to appease the Brahmins due to the fact that he had ascended the throne by ignoring the claims of Mukundadeva's sons. Though Emperor Akbar recognised this, Ramachandradeva believed it prudent to obtain the blessings of the Brahmanas to legitimise his claim. As a result, he established several Shasanas (Brahmin villages), one of which is Vira Ramachandrapura. The Madala Panji also states that Gauri Rani (Raja Mansingh's queen) constructed the current Mukti Mandapa within the sacred complex of the Jagannath temple in Puri. Raja Ramachandradeva I was an eminent scholar patron. He was a gifted poet in his own right, having written Durgotsava Chandrika and Sri Krishna Bhakta Vatsalya Charitam. However, Raja Ramachandradeva's composition of Durgotsava Chandrika is controversial, and its authorship is attributed to Vardhamana Mahapatra, the family's Rajaguru. Ramachandradeva died in 1607 CE.

Purusottamadeva (1607-1622 CE)

In 1607 CE, Purusottamadeva succeeded his father Ramachandradeva. During his reign, he witnessed the ferocious Mughal atrocity against Odisha. Jahangir was the Mughal emperor in Delhi during his reign, and he appointed Hasim Khan as the Subahdar of Odisha. He desired

to march towards Khurda in order to avenge Purusottamadeva. One of his subordinates, Raja Keso Das Maru, went to the temple of God Jagannath with his Rajput soldiers. Though Purusottamadeva besieged the temple, Keso Das Maru's soldiers threw rags soaked in oil and ghee, setting fire to them, destroying the Raja's Chariots, which eventually surrendered and made peace with Keso Das Maru. Raja Kalyana Mal, Hasim Khan's successor, was far more titanic than the former. He invited Vidyadhara, Purusottamadeva's Prime Minister, and held him captive at Ghantasila Tangi before attacking Khurda. Purusottama reached an agreement with him. Following Kalyan Mal, Mukarram Khan was appointed Governor of Odisha, tarnishing Sakshigopal's image.

Ramachandra, enraged, advanced to confront this fanatical governor appointed by Jahangir, but was defeated. He immediately fled Khurda and sought refuge with the Rajahmundry king. Khurda appears to have been annexed by the Mughal empire on a temporary basis. He was deposed in 1620 CE, and Husain Ali Khan briefly served as Subahdar of Odisha. Following him, Ahmad Beg's appointment as Governor of Odisha in 1621 enabled Purusottamadeva to deal with the Mughals. Purusottamadeva marched against him, enlisting the support of local chiefs. Ahmad Beg departed from Khurda to confront him. Purusottamadeva died in 1622 CE while residing in a camp near Banapur.

Purusottamadeva was a devout follower of Lord Jagannath. Additionally, he patronised the Brahmins. Purusottamapura Shasana, Sri Purusottamapura Shasana, and Pratapa Purusottamapura Shasana are all credited with his establishment.

Narasimhadeva (1622-1647 CE)

Purusottamadeva's son Narasimhadeva succeeded to the throne of Khurda in 1622 CE after his death. He was unable to evade the wrath of Ahmad Beg, Odisha's then Subahdar. As Narasimhadeva refused to accept his humiliating proposal that the royal family of Khurda remain as security at the Mughal court in Cuttack, the former invaded Khurda.

Narasimhadeva engaged the Mughal Governor in a toe-to-toe fight and defeated him. Ahmad Beg, who desired to lead a second expedition to Khurda, was enraged by this. At this point, prince Khurram (Shah Jahan) rose up against his father Jahangir and marched from

Golkunda towards Odisha. This foiled Ahmad Beg's plan to attack Khurda, and he fled with his family to Burdwan and then to Akbar Nagar. The defiant Mughal prince was treated with deference. Shah Jahan left for Bengal, completely satisfied with Narasimhadeva's behaviour. However, Mahabbat Khan's alertness prompted the prince to retreat to Golkunda via Odisha.

After Shah Jahan's departure, Ahmed Beg returned and served as Governor of Odisha until 1628 CE, causing no trouble for Narasimhadeva. Narasimhadeva encountered new difficulties during the governorship of Baquar Khan Nazim Sani, who was appointed following Ahmad Bag. Nazim Sani led an expedition to Konarka's Sun temple. Knowing full well the Subahdar's attitude, Narasimhadeva had already replaced the Sun god's image in the Konarka temple with that of God Jagannath. Raja Narasimhadeva paid his respects to the Hindu deity Jagannath. During Ahmad Beg's governorship, the idols of Jagannatha, Balabhadra, and Subhadra were relocated from the Puri temple to Garah Manitri. Narasimhadeva reintroduced these images to the temple and had them reinstalled. According to the Madala Panji, he directed that the temple of God Jagannath in Puri be plastered. Additionally, after a long hiatus, he organised a car festival during the Spring season, which was not celebrated due to Mughal governors' fear. According to the Rasika Mangala, Sri Rasikananda Deva Gosvami, Syamananda's famous disciple, visited Puri and spread his faith throughout Narasimhadeva's kingdom. Mutquad Khan's attack on Khurda was precipitated by the removal of the sun god's image from the Konarka temple. Narasimhadeva was assassinated by his adversary during that bloody battle.

Balabhadradeva (1648-1659 CE)

Through the assistance of Mutquad Khan, the Governor of Odisha, the death of Narasimhadeva enabled Gangadharadeva, a nephew of the deceased king. This engendered widespread resentment among the subjects and some of the king's officials.

Balabhadradeva, Narasimhadeva's elder brother, assassinated Gangadhara and ascended to the throne in 1648 CE with their assistance. Throughout his reign, he was forced to fight the Mughals. It was only because Turbiyat Khan was appointed Deputy to rule Odisha on the Mughal's behalf. Mirza Balaki launched an attack on Andhari's fort.

Raipitam, who had been appointed commander of that fort by Balabhadradeva, was defeated and fled the fort. His family members have been apprehended. At this point, Balabhadradeva fought alongside the Muslims and liberated Raipitam's family from their clutches. The Mughals, on the other hand, occupied Andhari fort. Balabhadradeva's reign was ignominious. He is credited with founding Vira Balabhadrapura Shasana near Puri.

Mukundadeva I (1659-1688 CE)

After Balabhadradeva's death in 1659 CE, his son Mukundadeva I succeeded to the throne of Khurda. Dharmadeva Rajaguru, as a minor, administered the kingdom on behalf of Mukundadeva. Dharmadeva Rajaguru organised the kingdom's zamindars and paid no tribute to the Mughals, despite the fratricidal war between Shah Jahan's sons. Following Aurangzeb's victory, Khan-i-Dauran was assigned to deal with the Odisha zamindars and the king of Khurda. He assassinated numerous obstinate zamindars and marched towards Khurda. In 1661, he defeated Mukundadeva and offered the Kingdom of Khurda to Bhramarabara, Mukundadeva's younger brother. Mukundadeva, on the other hand, negotiated with Khan-i-Dauran to reclaim his kingdom and entrusted the matter to Dharmadeva Rajaguru. Khan-i-Dauran was certain Mukundadeva had reclaimed his throne. He imprisoned Bhramarabara Raya following his coronation.

Mukundadeva encountered opposition from the Mughals during the Subahdarship of Sayasta Khan, Aurangzeb's maternal uncle. Abu Nasir, one of Sayasta Khan's sons, marched to Jajpur and Jhankada and destroyed the temples, erecting mosques in their place. He came to a halt in Sakshigopal, on his way to Puri. His plan to attack the Jagannath temple in Puri was thwarted, as the MadalaPanji reports that a sudden thunderbolt struck Sakshigopal during the spring season, and Abu Nasir fled to Cuttack in fear after negotiating with Mukundadeva. Mukundadeva's career came to an end in 1688, when he died of smallpox.

Divyasinghadeva I (1688-1714 CE) and Others

Divyasinghadeva I succeeded his father in 1688 CE and was one of the Bhoi dynasty's most capable rulers. Ekram Khan attacked the Jagannath temple in Puri during his reign and captured forged images of the Lords. However, following his departure, Divyasinghadeva restored the temple's original images, reopened Simhadvara, and permitted the temple's rites to continue, including the car festival, which brought joy and jubilation to the people of Odisha. When Murshid Quli Khan, the Governor of Bengal, was also appointed Governor of Odisha, he appointed Shuja-ud-din, his son-in-law, as Deputy Governor of Odisha. Shuja-ud-din marched towards Khurda and was defeated by Divyasinghadeva, who had gathered the local zamindars to his side. This was an additional feather in his cap. He did, however, die in 1714 CE

Harekrishnadeva (1714-1719 CE)

Harekrishnadeva, Divyasinghadeva's younger brother, succeeded him upon his death. His reign was marked by peace and tranquillity, as there had been no Muslim attack on either the Khurda or Puri Jagannath temples during that time period. The whitewashing of Lord Jagannath's temple was completed during his reign. Additionally, he founded a new shasana, Vira Harekrushnapura shasana. Gadadhara Rajaguru created numerous celebrated works during his reign, including Sudhi Sara, Kala Sara, and Achara Sara. He was assassinated in 1719 CE

Gopinathadeva (1719-1727 CE)

The accession of Gopinathadeva brought an end to the Bhoi dynasty's ongoing conflict with the Mughals. His reign is characterised by a single romantic episode. He was seduced by the beauty of Suka Dei, Trailokya Harichandana of Banki's queen. To make his dream a reality, he attacked Banki and took over some paraganas. Trailokya Harichandana was assassinated on the battlefield by Gopinathadeva. Suka Dei then proceeded to the battle field and tightened the toe of Gopinathadeva. Whom the queen defeated and imprisoned, However, the gracious queen released him, and Gopinathadeva returned to her all previously occupied territories.

Gopinathadeva was well-known for his benevolence. He founded the village of Routarapura near Puri. He also bestowed a village on his physician Dhananjaya Nedhinatha Rao, who saved the king's life by curing him of a fatal disease. During his reign, a unique ritual cleansing occurred in the temple of God Jagannath, which involved the Gods being bathed three times. However, there were numerous flaws in Gopinathadeva's character. One particularly egregious instance has already been related to Suka Dei. Additionally, while the Ranapur chief was on his way to Puri to visit God Jagannath, Gopinathadeva blocked his path and attempted to forcibly take his daughter, who was a paragon of beauty. The situation was averted by the chief's steady flight to Rathipur with his daughter and followers. He was enraged when his soldiers entered Gopinathadeva's palace and murdered him, bringing an end to Gopinathadeva's uneventful reign.

Ramachandra Deva II (1721-1736 CE)

Another turbulent period in the history of the Bhoi dynasty began with Ramachandradeva II. He was forced to bear the brunt of Nizam's invasion from Hyderabad immediately following his accession. Ramachandradeva's territory, which included Tekkali, Raghunathpur, and the Chilka lake, fell under the Nizam's control. At that pivotal point in his career, Ramachandradeva-I never wavered in his commitment to the indigenous paiks and zamindars. He fought valiantly against the army of Hyderabad but was easily routed by the Nizam's army. The Nizam gained control of the aforementioned territory. Taqui Khan, appointed by Murshid Quli Khan as Odisha's Naib, did not come to Raja Ramachandradeva II's rescue.

Muhammad Taqui Khan was a bigot based on religion. He then proceeded towards Khurda, destroying numerous Hindu shrines in Odisha. Although Ramachandradeva II gathered the Paiks around him, they did not fight for the king due to the Brahmins' influence, and even Bakshi Benu Bhramaravara Rai and Diwan Nilambara Harichandana fled the battle field. Now, Ramachandradeva appointed two Muslims as Baksi, Lodhu Miana Diwan and Khalifa Gadadhara Mangaraja, but their appointment was unsuccessful. Taqui Khan demanded Ramachandradeva II's surrender after assassinating the newly appointed Diwan and Bakshi.

Though the kings carried out his order, Taqui Khan marched towards Khurda, captured Ramachandradeva, and transported him to Cuttack. Meanwhile, Taqui Khan marched towards Khurda, and Ramachandradeva's rebellious sons fled the palace. Taqui Khan pursued them and took control of the area between Khurda and Banapur. Bhagirathi Kumar, one of Ramachandradeva II's sons, sought the assistance of the king of Kodala after leaving Khurda. Athagarh and their combined army were responsible for the Mughals' demise. Taqui Khan, on the other hand, convinced Ramachandradeva II to fight on his own behalf against Bhagirathi Kumar, who was defeated and marched away from the battle field towards Dasapalla. Even so, Taqui Khan never trusted Ramachandradeva and kept him imprisoned in the palace of Khurda. Ramachandradeva II was well aware of Taqui Khan's bigotry. As a result, he removed the images of Jagannath, Balabhadra, and Subhadra from the Puri Temple and transported them to Banapur, and later to Takkali. Taqui Khan's invasion of Puri and entry into the Jagannath temple were rendered futile due to the idols' absence. As a result, he attacked Khurda once more, but Ramachandradeva fled. Ramachandradeva reinstalled the Lords' images in the temple following Taqui Khan's departure to Murshidabad. Taqui Khan returned from Murshidabad in a hurry and imprisoned Ramachandradeva in the fort of Barabati. In that fort, Taqui Khan was assassinated by two Khandayats employed by Rajaguru Paramalakshmi. Murshid Quli Khan II was appointed Naib Nazim of Odisha following Taqui Khan's death, and Ramachandradeva was released from the fort of Barabati. The feudatory chiefs greeted him. According to legend, he fell in love with Souria, Murshid Quli Khan II's daughter, and married her after she converted to Islam.

This fact should be taken with a grain of salt. It is believed that because he was a weak ruler, he was coerced into becoming a Muslim. His entry into the Jagannath temple was prohibited following his conversion to Islam. He desired to enter the temple by force, but the Brahmins and temple priests stood in his way, and an open rebellion against him was declared. Mir Habib, Murshid Quli's Deputy, is now in charge of Odisha's administration. In 1736 CE, he took poison and expired.

Surendra Mohanty, an eminent novelist of Odia literature, has lauded Raja Ramachandradeva II's career and accomplishments in preserving the honour of the Gods of the Puri temple in his two monumental historical novels, Neela Saila and Niladri Vijaya. However, many of the facts in these two novels are based on the novelist's imagination and should not be taken as factual. If this is accomplished, it will be a misnomer, leaving Odisha's history befuddled.

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