

CHAPTER I

GENERAL

Puri, one of the coastal districts of Orissa, is famous for its historic antiquities and religious sanctuaries. It boasts of a continuous history from the 3rd century B. C. to the present day and its unique monuments like those of Jagannath at Puri, Lingaraj at Bhubaneshwar and the Sun-God at Konarak are famous in the world. It has the Chilka lake, one of the largest lakes in India, that holds a picturesque sea-scape and offers an ideal resort for birds who migrate from different parts of the continent. There are two perennial hot springs with their sulphuretted water containing curative properties. Besides, there are many a natural spring reputed throughout India for their health-giving mineral water. By virtue of its geographical location, the climate of Puri is equable throughout the year. Thus, Puri with its historicity, religious sanctity, architectural grandeur, sea-scape beauty and moderate climate holds a wealth of attraction for the visitors.

INTRODUC-
TION

The district has been named after its headquarters town, Puri. According to Cunningham the ancient name of this town was Charitra mentioned by the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang as Che-li-ta-lo. But the restoration of the word Che-li-ta-lo as Charitra and its identification with the town of Puri are open to doubt. The importance of the town as a seat of Vaisnavism increased when Chodaganga Deva constructed the temple of Purusottama Jagannath and installed the images of the deities. Thereafter, it became famous as the abode of Purusottama and was popularly called Purusottama Kshetra.

Origin of
the name of
the District

In the drama Anargharaghava Natakam attributed to cir. 9th century A. D. we find the name Purusottama applied to this town. In the Nagari Plate of Anangabhima III of the Saka year 1151-52 i.e., 1229-30 A. D., the place is called Purusottama Kshetra. This name in the form of Purusottama Chhatar or only in the form Chhatar was used by the Mughal, the Maratha as well as the early British rulers in their official records. Even in Yoginitantra¹ and Kalikapurana the city is referred to as Purusottam. Puri² region was also known as Utkal.

1. B. C. Lal—Historical Geography of Ancient India, p. 184

2. D. C. Şircar—Study in Geography of Ancient and Medieval India, p. 84.