

The Afghans of Bengal became weak after the death of Sultan Sulaiman Karrani in 1573 and as the prince Bayazid died a premature death, the throne of Bengal passed to the impetuous prince Daud Khan. Daud was defeated by the Mughal powers in 1574 and fled away to take shelter in Orissa, but was again defeated at Tukaroi on the river Suvarnarekha in March 1575. He was finally killed in the battle of Rāngamahā in 1576 and the Mughals occupied Bengal and Orissa. But the Afghan nobles were reluctant to submit to the Mughal powers till 1590 when Mana Singh invaded Orissa and completely crushed the Afghan resistance. But Mansingh went back after making temporary arrangement in the administration of Orissa which once more became the hot bed of conspiracy of the Afghans against the Mughals. Consequently, Mana Singh had to invade Orissa once again in 1592 when he strongly laid the foundation of the Mughal rule and himself became the Governor of Orissa till the death of Akbar in 1605.

From the year 1592 the political centre of gravity shifted from Cuttack to Khurda when Ramachandra Deva I, the son of Danai Bidyadhar, the Minister of the Bhoi king Govinda Bidyadhar, was made the king of Khurda by Mana Singh. Ramachandra Deva I was not only recognised as the successor of the former Gajapati line of kings but also as the controller of the Jagannath temple at Puri. The new Gajapati king made sincere efforts to popularise and glorify his rule. It is said that the image of Jagannath had been burnt by the fanatic Kalapahar after the occupation of Orissa by the Afghans of Bengal in 1568. Ramachandra Deva I constructed the new images of the deities and installed them in the sanctum of the Jagannath temple for which he was reputed as the second Indradyumna. Sometime in 1596 he set the famous Blue-wheel (Neela-chakra) on the crest of the temple of Jagannath and this work was done by one Damodar Champatiray, the son of Barjena Mahapatra, a temple accountant. Ramachandra Deva I was also appointed as a Mansubadar of 3500 horses under the administration of Akbar. In 1599 Raja Mukund Ray of Kassimkota took shelter in Khurda being driven out by Sultan Muhammad Quli of Golconda. Ramachandra Deva was defeated by the army of Qutb-Shahi kingdom as a result of which Mukunda Ray was forced to leave Khurda and fled away towards Bengal.

THE RAJAS
OF KHURDA

Gajapati Ramachandra Deva I was a patron of Brahmins. He set up many Brahmin villages in different parts of the district. These villages were known as *sasans*. Not less than 16 *sasanas* are ascribed to the time of Ramachandra Deva I. It was during his rule that the Muktimandap in Puri Temple was constructed, probably by Gaura Rani, the wife of General Mana Singh. Ramachandra Deva I died in 1607 A.D. and was succeeded by his son Purusottama Deva.