



## World Famous Lord Jagannath

*Naresh Chandra Rout*

Famous deities associated with Indian culture and worshipped long since are Vishnu in different forms in four 'Dhams', twelve 'Jyoti Lingas' (Shiva) in different forms and fifty two 'Shakti' dieties in different forms in 'Shakti Pithas'.

Out of four 'dhams' (sacred land) Badrinath in Badrika Dham of Uttarakhand, Dwarakadhis in Dwaraka Dham of Gujrat, Sri Jagannath in Puri Dham of Orissa and Shrirameswar in Rameswar Dham of Tamilnadu are being worshipped.

### **Shri Jagannath in Puri 'Dham'**

Odisha is known to common men of other states as the land of Shri Jagannath, who is not only famous in India but is all over the world. Jagannath temples have been built and car festivals are celebrated in many places outside India also.

Puri Dham close to shore of the Bay of Bengal is known as Shrikshetra (Land of prosperity) Sankha Kshetra, Bhouma Kshetra, Purosottam Kshetra (land of the supreme being), Nilachal (blue hill), Jamanika Kshetra, Uddiyaman Kshetra, Martya Baikunth (Paradise on earth) et al. Many anecdotes are cited in support of the names.

Jagannath is the 'Kalpa Bruksha' (boon giving tree), 'Yogamurti' of the Siddhas, Bishnu

for the Vaishnavites, Shiva for the Shaivites, Mahabhairab for the Tantrics, Buddha and 'Anupurusha' (void) for Boudhas and Ganesh for the Ganapatya. The rituals, the adornment outfits and festivals support one god in different names and adornments. Four gods namely Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarsan have been installed on the raised platform called Ratna Bedi (sanctum sanctorum). Jagannath stands for Shrikrishna, Balabhadra is the elder brother, Subhadra is the sister and Sudarsan is the all conquering wheel weapon.

Subhadra, Jagannath and Balabhadra represent the Trinity of Hinduism i.e. Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswar. The three deities represent the entire humanity. Jagannath black in colour represents the black race, Balabhadra white in colour represents the white race and Subhadra, yellow in colour represents the yellow race. In other temples, idols are made of stone or metal but here the idols are made of specified wood. The eyes of Jagannath are circular and devotees therefore call him 'Chakadola'. All these idols are unusual and sculpted in incomplete form. It indicates that true and complete picturisation of God is not possible. It is said God completes his morning works at Badrika Dham, puts on his robes and ornaments at Dwaraka Dham, takes his lunch at Puri Dham and wears night dress at



Rameswar Dham and goes to bed. Therefore Mahaprasad or sacred food in large quantities in different varieties is available at Puri. Sudarsan, the wheel-weapon, due to influence of Buddhism is shaped like a cut-out part of pillar with a wheel painted on it. Wood is a short living material. Consequently 'Navakalevar' (New idols) are made and their installation is celebrated at specified intervals. Every year renovation of the idols is done observing specified rituals.

### Origin of Shri Jagannath

In this context there are varying opinion in legends. The anecdote generally accepted is as follows:-

Autochthonous Sabar King Viswabasu was worshipping 'Nilamadhab' in 'Nilagiri' Hill. Indradyumna, the king of Abanti was a devotee of Vishnu. He wanted to build a temple and install Vishnu therein. Minister Bidyapati sent by the king to search for Nilamadhab came to Biswabasu. In no time Bidyapati and Lalita, the daughter of the Sabar king were entangled in love. Consequent upon earnest request of both, Biswabasu took Bidyapati to Nilagiri. He stood spell-bound to see dazzling Nilamadhab. Thereafter Bidyapati stealthily left the house of Biswabasu and rushed to Indradyumna to report about the precious discovery. The king galloped with his entourage to Nilagiri only to see vacant mountain. He heard a heavenly voice that He would float as a tree trunk at Banki Muhani of the Bay of Bengal. The king managed to collect the tree. After failure of all artisans, an old artisan volunteered to complete the idols within a period of 21 days inside a closed chamber. After 15 days the door was opened on the insistence of Queen Gundicha in apprehension of untoward situation when no sound was heard. The old artisan had vanished leaving behind incomplete and unique idols. The king went to Brahma, one of the Trinity, to consecrate the idols.

Long time elapsed, by the time the king returned only to find another king Galamadhab contending to have built the temple. However Galamadhab yielded, the problem was solved, and the three idols were consecrated in the temple. With time the old temple gave way. It is said that construction of the present temple was started by Jajati Keshari and completed by Chodaganga Dev in 12th century. There are differing opinions in different books but historical truth is not available.

### Shri Mandir (The Grand Temple)

One of the many names of spouse of Jagannath is Shri Shri means prosperity. Campus of Jagannath temple covers 10 acres of land. Two compound walls surround the temple. The outer wall is called Meghanad Prachir which is 650 ft in length, 644 ft in breadth and 20 ft in height. The inner wall is called Kurma Prachir which is 400 ft in length, 278 ft in breadth and 20 ft in height. The height of the majestic temple is 214 ft 8 inch from the level of Bada Danda (Grand Road). The massive temple is full of sculptures in Orissan style of architecture. A lime coating was provided in the past to protect the sculpture from effect of saline wind blast on the sea coast. Recently the coating has been removed to expose the wondrous sculpture. 15 ft high Neelachakra (Blue Wheel) made of a compound of 8 metals soars at the top of the temple and very large pennant, a symbol of relief to the suffering hovers at the top of the wheel. There are four gates to enter into the campus of the temple. East (Main), West, North and South gates are called Lion, Elephant, Tiger or Khanja and Horse gates. A 33 ft monolithic sculptured pillar has been installed in front of the Lion's Gate. This is called Aruna Stambha which has been shifted from the Konark temple. Idol of Patitapaban comes into view on the right side before entering through the main gate for relief to that all barred from entering into the campus. After entry through the Lion's Gate



visitors have to cross Baisi Pahacha (22 steps) to go round the campus. Actually there are 17 steps and the name Baisi Pahacha is a mystery. In front of Baisi Pahacha stands the grand temple which is divided into 5 chambers called Bhoga Mandap, Nata Mandap, Jagamohan, Bahar Pokharia and Bhitara Pokharia from front to rear. Devotees make obeisance standing behind Garuda Stambha facing the prime deities. The door between Jagamohan and Bahar Pokharia is called Jaya Bijay Dwar and the door between Bahara Pokharia and Bhitara Pokharia is called Kalahat Dwar. In Bahar Pokharia there is a pedestal called 'Anasara Pindi'. In between Snana Jatra and Ratha Jatra, idols are worshipped on this pedestal for a specified period. In Bhitara Pokharia stand the Chaturdha Murti (four idols), Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarsan on the Ratnavedi (Sanctum Sanctorum). Although called Chaturdha Murti there are 7 idols, the additional idols being Bhudevi (Saraswati), Shridevi (Laxmi) and Nilamadhab. Bhudevi and Shridevi are made of metal and Nilamadhab is made of wood. Bhudevi and Shridevi sojourn to specified destinations during specified festivals as Bij Pratima (emmissary). Nilamadhab never moves out of Ratnavedi.

#### **Bahar Bedha (Outer Compound Wall) :**

Temples and other sacred places within Meghanad Prachira and Kurma Parchira are as follows: Kasi Biswanath, Shri Ramachandra Mandir, Veta Mandap, Rosa Ghar (kitchen), Shri Ramchandra Mandir, Sadabhuj Gourang, Mausima Mandir, Barabhai Hanuman, Gurundi Gopal, Puruna Nrusingha Mandir, Buddhima Mandir, Nilachal Upaban (Blue hill garden), Nirmalya Khala (consecrated rice drying area), Panchamukhi Mahabir Mandir, Durga Madhab Mandir, Sidheswar Mahadeb Mandir, Chakra Narayan Mandir, Rameswar Mahadeb Mandir,

Niladri Vihar, Dhabaleswar Mandir, Koili Baikuntha (sacred burial ground), Baikunth Mahadeb Mandir, Arpaana Gopal Mandir, Mahabir Tapaswee Hanuman Mandir, Bamana Mandira, Laxmi Nrusingha Mandir, Uttarayani Mandir, Sitala Thakurani Mandir, Jhadeswar Thakurani, Beddha Lokanath, Ganesh Mandir, Parsunath Mandir, Dhabaleswar Shiba Mandir, Isaneswar Shiba Mandir, Ananda Bazar (consecrated food market), Snana Mandap (Both Platform), Chahani Mandap (Gazing pedestal).

#### **Bhitara Bedha (Inner Compound Wall):**

Temple and sacred places on the inner side of Kurma Parchira are as follows: Agneyaswar Mahadeb, Shri Satya Narayan, Shri Radha Ramana Thakura, Shri Batakrushna Mandira, Radhakrushna Mandira, Shri Brahma, Bishnu Maheswara Mandira, Shri Hari Sahadeb Mandir, Shri Bata Jagannath, Shri Balamukunda Mandira, Shri Bata Ganesh, Bata Mangala, Pancha Pandab, Shri Baraha Narayan, Kalpa Bata (Boon-yielding tree), Shri Surya Mandir, Anant Basudeb, Kutam Chandi, Khetrapal Mahadeb, Muktaswar Mahadeb, Mukti Mandap (Salvation Court), Nrusingha Mandir, Jalakrida Mandap, Rohini Kunda, Natua Ganesh, Shri Badri Narayan, Bimala Mandir, Shri Benu Madhab Mandir, Mandani Ghar, Padapadma Deula Naxa (Temple Plan), Shri Sakhigopal, Shri Kanchi Ganesh, Gopinath Mandir, Khirachora Gopinath, Bhubaneswari, Shir Nilamadhab, Beddha Kali, Shri Laxmi Narayan Mandir, Mahalaxmi Mandir, Nabagraha Mandir, Laxmi Narayan Mandir, Shir Surya Narayan Mandir, Shir Dadhibaman Mandir, Shri Ramchandra Thakur, Pataleswar Mahadeb, Shri Padapadma, Shri Narayan Mandir, Shrimandira Karyalaya (Temple Office), Shri Radhakrushna Mandir, Garad Ghar (Security Office), Navikata Mandap, Deba Seva Mandap, Paduka Kunda, Bali



Bamana Mandir, Shri Nisa Nrushingha Mandir, Ekadasi Mandir, Kaliyug Venddha, Dakshina Ghar, Majana Mandap, Indrani Mandir, Shri Bata Balabhadra Mandir, Shri Ananta Sayan.

### Rites and Rituals of Shri Jagannath

Legendarily luminaries like Shankaracharya, Ramanuj, Madhabacharya, Chaitanya, Guru Nanak and Kabir have come to Puri and have left indelible imprints on rites and rituals and festivals of Puri. Syncretism of Vaishnav, Shaiva, Shakta, mystic tantric and autochthonous rituals are reflected in the Temple. Routine rituals continue from 5 AM to 12 midnight. Gopaniya Niti (Secret rituals), Nakshatra, Bandapana Niti (Rituals in worship of stars), Ghodalagi Niti (Rituals for changing apparels and ornaments), Grahana and Parag Niti (Rituals for lunar and solar eclipse), Ashauch and Durghatana Niti (Purification and accident rituals) are observed on specified days. On Mahastami day, a male goat is sacrificed outside the temple premises and the blood mixed with rice is offered to Bimala and thereafter the temple premises are purified. Deities Laxmi and Saraswati of sanctum sanctorum and Ramakrushna Madan Mohan, Rama, Lakshman, Sita, Hanuman, Narayan, Dolagobinda, Bada Nrushingha and Panch Pandab of Dakshina Ghara take part in specified festivals on specified days as representatives of Jagannath. Snana and Anasara rituals, Ratha Jatra (Car festival) and Bahuda Jatra (The retreat festival) are famous in India and lakhs of people congregate at Puri. Brief description of festivals is furnished test infra.

### Bhoga Samagri (Delicacies Offered to Shri Jagannath)

Lord was so overwhelmed with devotion of king Indradyumna at the time of inauguration of the temple that he offered to ask for any boon. The king asked for the boon that such large quantities of food in numerous varieties would be

offered to the Lord that his palms will never be dry. Although called Chhapan Bhogi (Lord Who is served fifty six varieties of food), the number of varieties and quantities all so large that it is not possible to elaborate them here. Kitchen of Jagannath is said to be the largest kitchen in the world. Legends provide varying opinions as to why the offered to Jagannath food is called Mahaprasad. More acceptable opinion says food offered becomes Mahaprasad and after it is reoffered to tantric goddess Bimala. Mahaprasad comprises two main varieties viz Anna Mahaprasad (lunch / dinner variety), and Shukhila Mahaprasad (Snacks variety), Anna Mahaprasad consists of Anna (rice), Dali (Lentils & pulses), Dalma (vegetable and pulses), Shag (Spinach), Khata (Pickle), Kanika (Fried rice), Ghia Anna (ghee-mixed rice) etc. Only indigenous vegetable are used in the temple kitchen. Potato, Tomato etc. are not used due to foreign origin. Token Anna Mahaprasad taken in two fingers is called Kaibalya. Dried Anna Mahaprasad is called Nirmalya and it is customary to take a grain of Nirmalya to complete Puja process in the morning by the ladies. Very small packs of grated cocoanut mixed with jaggery in a piece of dry leaf is called Sukhili and is available at nominal cost. Pilgrims distribute Sukhili in villages after return from Puri. Sukhili also accompanies betel leaf and nut as a part of invitation in marriage ceremony and thread ceremony. Specified Bhog items are supplied by specified 'Maths (monasteries) on specified days.

### Veshas of Jagannath

Throughout the year Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and their representative deities assume different decorated personae on different occasions. Main 'Vesas are as follows:-

Chandana Vesha for 42 days from third day of second fortnight of Kartika Month, Elephant or



Ganesh personae on full moon day of Jyestha, Rukmini Harana Vesha on 11th day of second fortnight of Jyestha, Naba Jouban Vesha on new moon day of Asadha, Suna Vesha on 11th day of second fortnight of Asadha, Chitalagi and Rahu Rekha Lagi (Ornaments) on new moon day of Shraban, Banabhoji Vesha on 10th day of first fortnight of Bhadrab, Kaliyadalan Vesha on 11th day of first fortnight of Bhadrab, Pralambasura Badha Vesha on 12th day of first fortnight of Bhadrab, Krushna Balaram Vesha on 13th day of first fortnight of Bhadrab, Baman Vesha on 12th day of second fortnight of Bhadrab, Raja Vesha on 10th day of second fortnight of Aswina, Radhadamodara Vesha from 11th day of second fortnight of Aswina to 10th day of second fortnight of Kartik and Harihara Vesha on Mondays within this period, Thiakia or Laxminarayan Vesha on 12th day of second fortnight of Kartik, Bankachuda Vesha and Tribhubana Vesha on 13th day of second fortnight of Kartik, Laxmi Nrusingha Vesha on 14th day of second fortnight of Kartik, Rajarajeswari Vesha on full-moon day of Kartik, Shradha Vesha from 14th day of first fortnight to first day of second fortnight of Margashira, Abhiseka Vesha on full-moon day of Pousa, Padma Vesha on Saturday and Tuesday between new-moon day and 5th day of second fortnight of Magha, Gajaudharan Vesha on full-moon day of Magha, Chacheri Vesha from 10th day of second fortnight to full-moon day of Phalguna, Raja Vesha on full-moon day of Phalguna, Nagarjuna Vesha is adopted in the year in which Panchaka covers six days in place of normal five days upto end of Kartik and lakhs of people congregate to celebrate the festival. Different personae of one God and syncretism of different faiths and different idols is reflected in the Vesha's (Note: Months are Indian lunar months of almanac).

### Servitors of Shri Jagannath

It is said Shri Mandir provides for Chhatisha Nijoga or 36 grades of servitors. In fact the number of grades of servitors is about 250 and total number of servitors is very large. Raja Seva (Royal service) and other services are the two main kinds of service to the temple. Gajapati Maharaja is the first and main servitor. People treat him as roving God. He alone is permitted to go inside the temple borne in a palanquins to the accompaniment of drums and trumpet and bow before the Lord in the sanctum sanctorum. He sweeps Lords' chariots with the help of a gold broom at the time of car festival, sweeps Dolabedi and Snana Vedi during Dola festival and Snana festival. Daitas (autochthonous servitors) and priests receive betel nut as token of authorisation by the Maharaja to proceed in search of wood for Nabakalebara (New Idols). He is the Chairman of temple management committee. Other services are taken care of by the large number of servitors. There are servitors even to chase crows at the time of cutting, rolling and grinding vegetable and spices necessary for cooking in the temple kitchen. There are also many kinds of servitors for service outside the temple premises.

### Snana Jatra (Bath Festival), Rath Jatra (Car Festival) and Bahuda Jatra (Return Car Festival)

Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra are taken from sanctum sanctorum to bath altar one by one in ceremonial procession called Pahandi. Bath is also conducted with festive ceremony. It is said that the three deities suffer from fever after the bath. Therefore the deities are confined to Anasrapindi up to end of first fortnight of Asadha and they are worshipped by Daitas following their rituals. The damage or disfiguration during one year is taken care of by restoration of Idols during



this period. People congregate for Nabajoubana Darshan or to set eyes on the youthful Idols on the first day of second fortnight of Asadha. On the second day of second fortnight of Asadha Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarsan are taken in slow ceremonial procession to the three chariots which move to Gundicha temple in ceremonial procession called Rath Jatra (Car Festival). Lakhs of people congregate to take part in this festival. The deities remain in Gundicha Temple till 9th day of second fortnight of Asadha and worshipped with the same rituals in Shri Mandir. The deities return in Rath Jatra - like procession on 10th day of second fortnight of Asadha. The deities remain on the chariots on that day and the next day on which Suna Vesha is made. The deities are adorned with precious apparel and heavy crown and ornaments of gold. The deities retreat to the sanctum sanctorum of Shri Mandir on 12th day of second fortnight of Asadha. The Car Festival is famous in the world for the unique ceremony and huge gathering of people irrespective of caste, creed, colour, religion etc. Running commentary of the festival is transmitted in radio and television during the festival.

### **Naba Kalebar (New Body)**

As the bodies of four idols are made of wood, changing bodies after reasonable period is inevitable. Nabakalebar is made during the year in which the month of Asadha comes in a pair for reconciliation between lunar and solar months. In the past Naba Kalebar was held in 1912, 1931, 1950, 1969, 1977 and 1996. Observing specified rituals 'Daitas and priests proceed to Kakatpur and worship deity Mangala who reveals the location of appropriate trees for making the idols. Trees are located, cut to appropriate sizes and transported to Puri observing prescribed rituals. 'Brahma Pinda' (Divine matter) is extracted from old idols and inserted in new idols. Naba Kalebar

festival is more famous than car festival in terms of splendour and convergence of multitude of people. Bodies of old idols are cremated in 'Koili Baikunth' (sacred burial ground).

### **Supernatural Powers of Shri Jagannath**

Jagannath responds to prayer of persons in distress and therefore one of his names is Artatrana (Great Healer). There are many accounts from the devotees depicting relief due to grace of Jagannath and instances are: episodes of Jayadev, Jagannath Das, Balaram Das, Raghu Arakshit, Dinakrushna, Salabeg, Dasia Bauri, Bandhu Mohanty, Nilambar Das, Rajkumari Bishnupriya, Gita Panda, Paramesti, Ganapati Bhatt, Sadhu Mohanty, Raghu Das, Krupana Panda. Famous example of grace of Jagannath is 'Kanchi Abhijan' (Kanchi expedition). Princess of Kanchi was famous for beauty and erudition. Purusottam Deb was the Maharaja of Utkal. A proposal was mooted for his marriage with the princess. Raja of Kanchi declined with satirical remark that marriage with a sweeper who sweeps the chariots of Jagannath is not possible. Treating the refusal as an insult to Lord Jagannath, Purusottam went on expedition to Kanchi seeking blessings of Jagannath. At Adipur near Chilika lake Manik Gouduni (milk-maid) obstructed the Maharaja pleading for unpaid cost of cheese and curd eaten by his two leading soldiers riding black and white horses producing a gold ring as evidence. Purusottam identified the ring as that of Lord Jagannath leading the expedition. It was a war between Jagannath-led army with that of Ganesh-led army of Kanchi. Purusottam won the war, brought the princess to Puri and instructed his Minister to get the princess married with a sweeper. During next car festival, when Purusottam was sweeping Lord's chariot, the clever Minister offered the princess to the Maharaja.



### Parting Words

Pre-eminence of Laxmi, the consort of Jagannath is exemplified in 'Laxmi Puran'. Attracted by the welcome wall painting and devotion of Shriya, of low caste, Laxmi went to her house. Jagannath ordered to banish Laxmi from the temple at the behest of elder brother Balabhadra as contact with low-caste people was forbidden. Laxmi left pronouncing the curse that poverty would rage in Shri Mandir after her departure. Jagannath and Balabhadra saw vanishing act of food in Shri Mandir and wherever they went. At last they agreed to take food from the house of a low-bred woman in a sea-side house. Items served proved that the food was prepared by none other than Laxmi. Responding to the apology of the two brothers, Laxmi consented to return to Shri Mandir on condition that caste-bias would be discarded from that day. But servitors prohibit entry of Muslims and Christians into the temple. Most probably such prohibition is in practice due to waves of invasions by Muslims on Orissa, Shri Mandir and other Temples and anti-Hindu activities and patronisations of Christianity by Christians as a safety measure.

All corporeal beings have to undergo cycles of weal and woe and Shrimandir and Jagannath are no exceptions. At the time of coronation of Jajati Keshari in the 9th century AD, Shri Mandir was devoid of the idols. It was ascertained from servitors that the idols were secretly transported to Sunupura (Sonepur) and buried somewhere secretly. The Maharaja salvaged the 'Brahma Pinda' and consecrated new idols inserting the same and worship was resumed.

In the year 1510 AD, Hussain Saha, Sultan of Bengal (Kalapahad) destroyed the idols during his attack. Brahma Pinda was secretly removed from the idols and carried to Kujangagarh before the attack. In 1575 AD, Brahma Pinda was salvaged, inserted in new idols and installed in renovated temple by Gajapati Ramachandra Dev. Therefore he earned the title second Indradyumna.

In 1620 AD in apprehension of attack by Moghul Commander Ahmed Baig, Brahma Pinda from the idols was removed and secretly hidden in Gadamanitri area of Banpur. Sacred stone was restored in the idols after four years and worship was resumed.

In 1687 AD, during the reign of Gajapati Divyasingha Dev, Nawab Ekram Khan under orders of Aurangzeb attacked Jagannath Temple, caused devastation in the temple premises and destroyed the Nilachakra bringing down the same from the top of the temple.

In 1733 AD, before the attack of Taki Khan, the idols were carried in litters to Tekali at the border of Khalikote kingdom. Idols were restored in the temple after peace prevailed.

Jagannath is not the Lord born out of fear as conceived by Bertrand Russell. He is the gurdian, guide and guru to the devotees and the bond with Him is unbreakable. People go to Jagannath with betel leaves and nuts to invite Him as the first invitee in marriage and thread ceremonies.

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Naresh Chandra Rout lives at 19, Buddha Nagar, Bhubaneswar-6.

