Jagannath cult is deep rooted, mysterious and esoteric. Yogis understand a little and the wise pray to know more. Many aspects of Lord Jagannath still remain obscure. Lord Jagannath transcends all forms and is beyond the limits of an icon. Cult and religious diversities have confluence in this ancient deity which can possibly save the world when in despair. In Kapila Samhita, (5th chapter), it is written, “Sarvesamapi Kshetranam Raja Sri Purusottamah, Sarvesamapi Devanam Raja Sri Purusottamah,” (of all lands it is the land of Purusottamah, of all Gods it is Purusottamah (Jagannath). Raja Mansingh, a General of Emperor Akbar claimed, “this part is not fit subject for conquest or schemes of human ambition, it belongs to God and from end to end in one religion of pilgrimage” W.W. Hunter wrote, “the true source of Jagannath’s undying hold consists in the fact that He is the God of the people. As long as his tower rises upon the Puri sands so long there will be in India a perpetual and visible protest of equality of man before God”.

A cult like the Jagannath cult with its deep roots in the soil of Orissa grew on its own through the worship of its unknown devotees. Only at later stage its patronage can be taken over by a king who would construct a greater temple and endow it with landed property and above all will invite Brahmins who will then begin to interpret the indigenous deity according to their Brahmanic learning. Lord Jagannath is the God of Universe. He is the guiding force of the past, present and future. He is forgiver, the compassionate, the supreme, the in-expressible and the infinite. Many legends, histories are related with Him. Though He is the almighty but many things had happened with Him. He is ‘Lilamaya’. He has shown different roles according to His own desire in different times. For many times, He had been kept in secret dwelling due to the invasions of Yavanas. Though He is the saviour of the whole world but in ancient period, the Sevayatas of the temple took Him secretly to different places for His safety. My paper is a humble effort to present about Lord Jagannath as a Wanders and how He had lived a nomadic life. With the permission of the then kings of Orissa, the Sevayatas had taken Him safely not only through the densely forests but also through the sea route.

From Madalapanji, it is known that from 1568 A.D to 1733 A.D; about 165 years continuously the Muslim invaders had attacked upon the Jagannath temple which forced Lord Jagannath to lead a nomadic life. Basically the early 17th century witnessed the three devastating attacks of the Muslim Governors against Puri and Khurdha. But from all of our sources, it is quite clear that it was not the intention to destroy the cult again; but to seize the famous temple.
treasure and to deprive the Khurda Rajas of their semi autonomous status which had been granted to them by Akbar few decades ago. But whenever Khurdha or Puri was attacked, The Rajas of Khurdha ordered the removal of the sacred image to some hiding places in south of Orissa where they remained often together with the Khurdha Raja for several years. This sad mutual experience when the ‘Lord of the world and the Lord of the Elephants had to take shelter in some remote places seems to have influenced deeply the relation between the Rajas and the prayers and the God of Puri. For many times Sevayatas of Puri had taken Him to not only interior Chilika but also to densely forests through many ways. Two special categories of Sevakas known as ‘Chapa Dalai’ and ‘Aria Sevakas’ were assigned duty to transfer Lord Jagannath from the temple to interior Chilika. They were always present with boats at the two mouths of Manikpatna and Khalkatipatna to transfer Lord Jagannath from the temple of Puri whenever the situation arose.

It is said by some scholars that Lord Jagannath is associated with the sea from different angles. From legend we know about the episode of formation of Chilika lake. According to it, under the commandership of Raktabahu, a group of yavanas had attacked upon the temple of Lord Jagannath to plunder it. But the priests of the temple could come to know the progress of the invader from the litters carried by the sea in adverse and managed to escape along with the precious image of Lord Jagannath and the wealth towards the shore. Raktabahu, marched to punish the sea but the sea receded fully for a couple of miles and then abruptly surged upon the Yavanas and swallowed them up. Simultaneously, it flooded a great part of the district and formed the Chilika lake. It is said that in respect of Lord the sea could do it. In many times, Chilika lake has given shelter to Lord Jagannath.

When Pratapradra Dev (1495-1532 A.D) was the king of Orissa, Hussain Shah, the king of Bengal prepared to attack Puri, the holy city. By getting this news, the Sevayats of Puri hid Lord Jagannath in Chadheiguha hill of Chilika lake.

From Madalapanji it is known that Kalapahada, the bigoted Afghan General and a cruel iconoclast plundered the temple in 1568 A.D for the second time. The Sevayats had taken Lord Jagannath secretly to Sonepur through densely forest in a huge wooden cart and the Lord lived in secret dwelling. Then continuously from the period of Pratapradra Dev (1509 A.D), the Muslims had invaded the Jagannath temple. In 1607 A.D” again the Muslims had invaded the temple and the Sevayats took secretly Lord to Kapileswar near Puri. Again Kalapahada had attacked upon Jagannath temple. According to Madalapanji, when Kalapahada discovered the hidden image of Jagannath he snatched away with him and consigned it to flames on the bank of Ganga. But according to tradition an Oriya named Bisar Mohanty had been able to secure the Brahma from half burnt image which Kalapahada had thrown into Ganga. He kept it for several years in Kujang (a place in Mahanadi Delta) till Ramachandra Dev in a dream was ordered by Lord to build a new image and set up by Brahmins. At that time, there was no strong ruler and the people of Orissa who were not capable enough to protect Lord Jagannath by retaliating Kalapahada. It is said that, before leaving Puri, Kalapahada desecrated the temple of Jagannath, plundered the store, damaged other images and uprooted and set fire to the Kalapavata tree.

In 1610 A.D, a Mughal Subedar named as Keshu Das had attacked upon the temple and burnt three cars of Lord which created a tragic scene to the religious feelings of Hindus. In 1611 A.D, during the rule of Purusottam Dev, the Lord was migrated to Mahisanasi through Satapada
Ghat of Berhampur, because the word ‘Berhampur’ comes from the word ‘Darubrahma’ of Lord Jagannath. Within 400 years this area was named as Brahmapur. The area Mahisanasi and Berhampur are related with each other because the village ‘Mahisa’ is situated 3 km away from Berhampur. So, it proves that Lord Jagannath was escaped through this Berhampur inland route by the Sevayats, with the march of time, this Mahisanasi became changed to ‘Chakanasi’ because the placement of Lord in round alternated of stone. Gradually it was changed to ‘Khatinasi’. From June 1611 A.D to 1612 A.D about 1 year Lord remained here secretly.

In 1615 A.D, during the reign of the Mughal in Orissa, Kallyan Malla, the son of Raja Todermalla attacked the capital of Purusottama Dev for second time. According to Puri District Gazetteer, the Sevayatas of Puri anticipated the invasion of the enemy and hid Lord Jagannath in Gurubai’ island of Parikud. Then Lord had transferred from Chakanasi to Sipanasi of Parikud through land route in huge wheeled wooden cart. According to R.C Panda in the book (Parikud) even today in Chakanasi three huge stone altar has remained. An image of Nabagraha also remained in the middle big stone altar. The villagers view that these three stone altars have been silted up gradually. It is also said that, an Ashram of Chaubarsadhu is situated here. Legend says that every day the sage of this Ashram had come to Chakanasi to pray Lord Jagannath. Many Kamabrahmins have stayed here to serve Lord. Many clay pots, coins, were also found from here. So it proves that Mahaprasad had offered to Lord. A gold coin was also found here.

In 1617 A.D, Makram Khan had attacked upon the Jagannath temple. Again Lord was replaced to Gurubai island of Chilika Lake secretly by his Sevayats. In 1622 A.D Ahmed Beg, the Mughal Subedar had attacked upon Jagannath Temple. So the Sevayats hid Lord to the fort of ‘Manitri’. In 1624 A.D again the Mughals had attacked upon the Jagannath Temple. So, the Lord was shifted secretly to one of the temple of SakhiGopal.

In 1647 A.D., during the reign of Purusottam Dev, the Mughal Subedar Mudbak Khan had attacked upon the Jagannath temple. In 1698 A.D. During the reign of king Divyasingh Dev of Puri, Aurangzeb the Sultan of Delhi had ordered Akram Khan to attack the temple and plunder it for which the situation became very serious.

During the reign of Ramachandra Dev II of Bhoi dynasty in 1725 A.D, the Naib of Orissa Muhammed Takkikhan had created panic in whole Orissa specially in Puri. Takkikhan had taken oath to destroy the religious and political power of Orissa which related with Lord Jagannath. In 1732 A.D Takkikhan attacked upon temple of Lord Jagannath. At that time, the Sevayats took him into Chilika and kept in a hill. Under this situation, Ramachandra Dev II of Bhoi Dynasty embraced Islam to protect the deity from the covetous eyes of Takkikhan. The legitimation of Ramachandra and his successors was mainly based on Ramachandra fame as the renewer of the national cult of the Oriyas which found its expression in the honourable title “Second Indradyumna”. Ramachandra II had selected Gurubai island for Land Jagannath’s secret dwelling because the island of Gurubai was the safest heaven as it was situated in the middle of the Parikud area. He also built as sacred altar made of stone under a huge banyan tree. Only a few of his confident Sevayats and Khandayat followers knew about this secret place.

For last time in 1733 A.D. Takkikhan attacked upon the temple. Before it, for his continuous attack, the Sevayats had taken the Lord to Chilika, Banapur, Nayagarh. At last in 1733 A.D, the Sevayats had taken Lord
Jagannath through the densely forest of Athagarh and a temple had built there in which Lord Jagannath had secretly worshipped for 3 years. The name of the temple was Marada. The Muslim invader Takkikhan could not know about this place in spite of his many inquiries. From this period, there was not any attack upon the temple by any Muslim iconoclast. From 1568 A.D to 1733 A.D. for long 165 years many temples had been built secretly for Lord Jagannath. We found many archaeological findings in many places in which Lord Jagannath had secretly dwelt. Even today the temple of Marada still existed which is very important from sculptural point of view.

From this above discussion, it is noted that due to Muslim attack Lord Jagannath maintained secret dwelling in many places. When the Sevayats had anticipated the attack of Mughals, suddenly they had taken secretly Lord Jagannath to different places through land and sea route by huge wheeled wooden cart and boat. For more than 30 years the ‘Lord of World’ was thus entirely free from His Ratnasinghasana in Puri during the reign of Aurangzeb was forcibly put under lock and key in his temple. It is too understandable that Kalapahar in Orissa became the embodiment of a furious iconoclast and the successive treatment of the Jagannath cult under the Mughals is taken as an example of the religious intolerance of Muslim rulers of India against Hinduism. The role of the then kings for the restoration of Jagannath cult was also very important matter during that time. Like true devotees, they tried their best for the safe transfer of Lord Jagannath from temple to different places. It is noted that to what extent the power struggle was occurred in central Orissa since the late 16th century was actually a struggle for dominance over the Jagannath temple. It was a tripartite struggle between the Rajas of Khurda, the Muslim Governors at Cuttack and to some extent the priests of Jagannath temple.

In this way Lord Jagannath is the supreme authority of entire Universe. The entire world is guided by Him. As the nerve centre of the human body influences every physical part of it, so also the institution of Lord Jagannath influences every sphere of life—cultural, social and religious. A religion and its deity are the products of spiritual and moral uplift of the people and the community. Many legends and histories are related with him and the truth is applicable to the concept of Lord Jagannath, so verily Lord is the symbol of truth. This powerful deity thus helped to bridge the gulf between the ruler and the ruled.

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