



The Monasteries of Puri — An Integral Part of Srimandir

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Lord Jagannath is the presiding deity of Odisha and Srikshetra is the nerve centre of various religious sects and philosophical doctrines. The religious teachers and scholars of different sects have founded a number of monasteries or Mathas to perform various religious duties. The monasteries of Puri are intimately associated with the temple of Lord Jagannath and use to observe different rituals traditionally. For example “Jagannath Ballav Matha” provides flowers for the decoration of the deities and “Uttar Parswa Matha” supplies special offerings of food to the temple of Lord Jagannath. Likewise the “Jhanja Pita Matha” wake up the deities in the morning by playing on different musical instruments and the “Jhadu Matha” has taken care of sweeping and cleaning the temple precincts.

The heads of the Mathas are called Mahantas. On special occasions the Mahantas are being consulted by the temple authorities and as per their advice solve many ritual problems. The Mahantas are considered as the spiritual guides of the general public and scriptural advisors to the Gajapati kings of Odisha. The Mathas own and possess vast landed properties being donated by the followers of different religious sects as well as religious minded persons for offering “Bhog” to Lord Jagannath in one hand and to facilitate the distributing of “Mahaprasad” to the pilgrims beggars and ascetics on the other hand.



The Monasteries represent various religion sects of Hindu religious namely Vaishnavism i.e. Sri Sampraday, Ramanandi, Kabir Panthi, Vallabhachari, Madhabachari, Goudiya Radhavallabi, etc. Saivism i.e. Dandi, Dasnami, Avadhuta, Naga etc. and Sakta cult along with miscellaneous sects of Nanak, Satnami and Sunyabadi etc.

Although the Emar Matha is wealthy and most influential among all the monasteries of Puri, the general public regard all the Mathas as equal in the ritual sphere. However the Mathas of Puri act as the connecting bond between the general public and the temple of Lord Jagannath for spreading the sacred tradition of the Lord.

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