



Significance of Gundicha Temple in Car festival

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Gundicha temple is a Hindu temple, popularly known as GARDEN HOUSE of Lord Jagannath, situated in Puri town of Odisha. It lies at a distance of about 3 K.M. from the main temple of Lord Jagannath (Srimandira). The two temples are located at two ends of Bada Danda (Grand Road) which is the pathway of Rath Yatra. The temple is built in Kalinga temple style. The complex of the temple comprises Viman (sanctum), Jagamohan, Natamandira and Bhogamandap. There is also a kitchen hall. The temple is set within a garden and is known as God's Summer Garden Retreat. In the garden there are Coconut, Mango, Neem, Bael trees and other favourite plants of Lord like Tulasi, rose and Jasmine flowers etc. The entire complex of the temple including garden is surrounded by a wall of 430 ft length, 320ft breadth with 20ft height.



Inside the temple, the sanctum features a plain raised platform 4ft height and 19ft long made

of chlorite stone called Ratnavedi where deities are placed and worshipped for seven days. Rest of the days of the year, the Ratnavedi and the temple remain vacant. This Ratnavedi is regarded as most holy place as narrated in Skanda Purana and Narad Purana. The temple has three gates. The western gate is the main gate of the temple called lion's gate through which deities enter the temple during Ratha Yatra. The eastern gate of the temple is known as NAKACHANA GATE which is used for departure of deities. There is also another gate towards north which is known as north gate.

There are many interesting legends behind the Gundicha temple and annual Ratha Yatra. One legend says that Gundicha, queen of king Indradyumna of Satya Yuga was a great devotee of Lord Jagannath. It is explained in many Puranas that Lord Jagannath surrenders Himself near His real devotees. Because of her (Gundicha) deep devotion, Lord



Jagannath promises her to come to her house during Ratha Yatra. Another legend says that Gundicha temple is Yagnya Vedi which is the birth place of Chaturddha Murtty (Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, Maa Subhadra and Sudarsan). Every year Lord with His brother and sister makes visit for seven days to the Gundicha temple on this occasion.

The Ratha Yatra starts on the second lunar day (Dwitiya), the bright fortnight (Sukla Paksha) of the Hindu month Asadha. One day before the Ratha Yatra, the Gundicha Temple is religiously cleansed for housing of Lords. On the day of Ratha Yatra, three wooden chariots magnificently built with wooden and beautifully decorated with flowers and clothes are kept ready at the main Jagannath temple for transportation of deities. The chariot carrying Lord Jagannath is called Nandighosh, the chariot carrying Balabhadra is called Taladhwaja and the chariot carrying Subhadra is called Darpadalan. All the deities start their nine days journey from the temple with a grand procession called Pahandi ceremony with servitors, Vedadhai Brahmins and devotees. The procession is a most thrilling and spectacular incident. After the deities are kept in their respective chariots, the traditional Chherapanhara work is done by the Gajapati (King) of Puri who is regarded as first servitor of Lord Jagannath. All devotees anxiously wait to see this event. After this event, chariots are drawn by lakhs of devotees to the Gundicha temple. The deities remain in the chariots on the first day and enter Gundicha temple on the second day. They reside at the Gundicha temple for the subsequent seven days. During this seven days sojourn, a major ceremony celebrated in the Gundicha temple is Hera Panchami (on the 5th day of Ratha Yatra). While Jagannath visits Gundicha temple with His brother and sister, His wife Lakshmi is left behind in the main temple (Sri Mandira) and also not even informed before His

journey. That wounded the sentiment of mother Lakshmi. She was so perplexed because of absence of Lord Jagannath and finding no alternative, She went to Vimala, wife of Lord Balabhadra and Saraswati wife of Lord Jagannath to seek their advice. Both of them shared the feelings of Lakshmi. Vimala is the goddess of Tantric. Consoling Lakshmi, goddess Vimala has advised Her to excite Lord Jagannath through Tantric application that is Moha Churna, so that His mind will be diverted and immediately He will return to Srimandir. Lakshmi has accepted the proposal and on 5th day of Rath Yatra popularly known as Hera Panchami, Lakshmi visits the Gundicha Temple in a beautifully decorated Palanquin through Her servitors in the evening. She is then welcomed into the temple. Both husband and wife (Lord Jagannath and Lakshmi) seat face to face on the porch in the sanctum of the Gundicha Temple. Goddess Lakshmi secretly applies that Moha Churna on Lord Jagannath and requests Him to return to Srimandir. Jagannath gives His consent by offering Agyan Mala (a garland of consent) which goddess accepts and after certain rituals She returns to Srimandir. Before returning to vent Her self-concealed anger She orders one of Her attendants to damage a portion of the chariot of Lord Jagannath. A large number of devotees congregate to see this event. Goddess Lakshmi then returns to Srimandira through a separate path known as Heragohari Lane.

On the next day of Hera Panchami, three chariots stand facing to Gundicha temple (western gate) prepare the Dakshinamoda ceremony for return car festival (Bahuda Yatra). It takes three days to turn the face of chariots in south direction from main gate of the temple and park the same at eastern gate (Nakachana Gate) through which deities leave the temple.



The day before the Bahuda Ratha Yatra (Return Car Festival), is a most auspicious day for devotees in Gundicha temple. This day is known as Sandhya Darshan or Navami Darshan. Some say it as Adap Mandap Darshan. In side the temple where deities are worshipped is known as Adap Mandap and also Mahabedi. It is said and also narrated in Skanda Puran that those who get the opportunity of seeing the deities at evening time on this day, the auspiciousness and virtuous are ten times more than the day time.

*“Dibatad darshanam punyam ratrau
dasagunam vabet”*

(Skanda Puran Ch.34 Sloka 10)

As per tradition on this day thousands of devotees throng the temple to have *darshan* of deities and partake of Mahaprasad with their family and offer to Brahmins for getting blessings. After spending seven days in the Gundicha temple, the return journey of Jagannatha, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Chakraraj Sudarshan starts on ninth day of car festival which is known as Bahuda Yatra (Return Car Festival). The images of deities are brought from the temple through Nakachana Gate in a grand procession of Pahandi ceremony to the accompaniment of enchanting Vedas and Stotras by Brahmins and of the beats of cymbals and gongs, the sounds of conches being blown.

The deities are taken to the same chariots in which they were brought and after some rituals particularly the traditional Chherapanhara (sweeping of the chariots) by the Gajapati of Puri, the chariots are pulled by devotees back to the main temple. It is considered auspicious to get a glimpse of the deities on their chariots. The colorful dance of devotees and other religious groups surcharge the entire atmosphere into a state of excitement and the individual self merges into an inexplicable ecstasy.

There is no comparable God in the world pantheon with intense human appeal, like Lord Jagannath Who has become a humanized God, crossing all barriers of caste, creed and colour under the gigantic wheels of His chariot. The most distinctive feature of Rath Yatra of Puri is the close and peculiar religious linkage of Gajapati of Puri with Lord Jagannath. Sweeping of the chariots by the king before the multitude of devotees is the height of religious devotion and greatness. Besides such a grand festival of Lord Jagannath suggests equality of human beings before the God.

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