



The rituals of Lord Jagannath are related to our ways of life. The Lord is adored as the divine head of every Hindu family. For this reason, unless we first invite Him, we do not perform our social functions. Likewise, when we set out on any journey, we remember Him first and then we move out in our mission. Similarly many don't start their day, unless they pray to Lord Jagannath first and surrender themselves at His lotus feet. This is how we obey and respect the Lord in our day-to-day life. Lord Jagannath is the end-all and be-all of our life. He is the presiding deity of every Hindu House in Utkal Pradesh.

Sri Jagannath is the Lord of the universe. His 'Dham' i.e. Puri is one of the pilgrim centres

recognition of Mahaprasad and this way, the Mahaprasad of the Lord is most unique in the spiritual order. There is a belief among the Hindus that if 'Nirmalya' is given to a person on his death-bed, he is sure to have a place for himself in the heaven after his death following atonement of all his sins. In that way, Mahaprasad and Nirmalya are very auspicious. This is the illustriousness of the Jagannath cult and Jagannath Temple at Puri.

Cooked Mahaprasad in all its best conditions can at best be preserved for one day. It loses its taste when it becomes stale. So Mahaprasad of cooked rice and other dishes prepared in the Grand Temple are taken to other places only when it is hot and fresh. This is mostly done on festive occasions. But Nirmalya which

Mahaprasad

Durga Madhab Dash



of the world. He is seated on the Ratnavedi of the Grand Temple. The 'Prasad' offered to Him and later to Maa Bimala in the Grand Temple is known as 'Mahaprasad'. No Prasad offered in any other temple in India has the spiritual

is akin to Mahaprasad can be used at any time save certain items like the garlands of the Lord etc. which are not long-lasting like certain items of Mahaprasad.

Mahaprasad is of two types. One is 'Sankudi' Mahaprasad and the other is 'Sukhila' Mahaprasad. Both the types are available for sale in Ananda Bazaar of the Grand Temple.

'Sankudi' Mahaprasad includes items like rice, ghee rice, sweet rice, mixed rice, cumin seed and asaphoetida-ginger rice mixed with salt, and the dishes like sweet *dal*, plain *dal* mixed with vegetables, mixed curries of different types, 'Saag', 'Khata', porridge and so on. All these



are offered to the Lord in ritualistic ways. It is said that every day, 56 types of Prasad are offered to the Lord during the time of worship and all these are prepared in the kitchens of the Temple and made available to the devotees in Ananda Bazaar sold by the Suaras who are the makers of the Prasad. Aside from these 'Prasads', a type of dry sweetmeats is also prepared by the Suaras and made available to the devotees in the same way as the 'Sankudi Mahaprasad' is sold. This is known as 'Sukhila Mahaprasad'.

Besides 'Sankudi' and 'Sukhila Mahaprasad', another type of dry Mahaprasad is made available to the devotees in Ananda Bazaar of the Temple. This is known as 'Nirmalya'. This is also known as 'Kaibalya'. In spiritual recognition, Nirmalya is equally important as Mahaprasad. Nirmalya can be preserved for a good number of days. In places far-flung from Puri, if Sankudi Mahaprasad is not readily available in good condition, Nirmalya is taken by the devotees. Nirmalya is holy and sacred like any type of Mahaprasad prepared in the Temple. Nirmalya is commonly understood as dry-rice which is rice dried up in the hot sun in Kaibalya Baikuntha.

When the rice-stock remains unutilized, the said stock is taken to a place called Nirmalya Khala in Koili Baikuntha in the temple-garden and dried there in the hot sun. When the said rice is completely dried up, the dried form of rice becomes Nirmalya and it is made available to the devotees in red-cloth pockets.

As laid down in the Skanda Puran, things like flower, Sandal-paste, garlands etc. which are treated with reverence on the Lord including the other divine deities seated on Ratnasimhasan in the Temple are also known as Nirmalya after they are taken out from the deities.

It is thus clear to mention here that any of the divine accompaniments or components that is taken out from the Lord and his divine associates is known as Nirmalya. This fact is also mentioned in *Bruhat Tantrasar Yoginitantra*. It is mentioned in this Tantra Shastra that ornaments made of gold along with jewels like corals etc, copper pots, silk sarees etc used for the Lord and His divine associates and subsequently permanently taken out also become Nirmalya generally after six months of the use.

It may be stated in this connection that Mahaprasad or Nirmalya as the case may be, comes under the category of divine orts in reference to the deities of the Temple. But they are free from the stigma of offal. They do not become worthless on this ground for further use on any auspicious occasion. This is the illustriousness of the use of Nirmalya and Mahaprasad in our day-to-day life.

Widely used, the term Kaibalya also means different types of spiritual activities like Nama Kaibalya, Sannidhya Kaibalya, Lila Kaibalya, Mukti Kaibalya and Kaibalya Baikuntha.

Nama Kaibalya:- 'Nama' means the name of the Lord that a devotee repeats while worshipping his Lord. He may be Sri Jagannath; He may be Lord Hari or Narayan and so on. In this sense, the name of the worshipped is identified with the term, 'Kaibalya'. If a devotee repeats the name of his Lord regularly, he is said to be enjoying Nama Kaibalya.

Lila Kaibalya:- Lila means cosmic game. It means and refers to the various religious functions that are held at a religious place attracting devotees to the proximity of God. Devotees enjoying Lila Kaibalya participate in various



functions of the Lord and enjoy boundless divine ecstasy.

Sannidhya Kaibalya:- S a n n i d h y a means close proximity to the Lord. One can have close proximity to the Lord, if one stays at the place of the Lord. By this, one can take part in all the religious functions and festivals of the Lord and be closer to Him.

Mukti Kaibalya:- Mukti is emancipation. Devotees seeking emancipation in life get involved in spiritual activities surrendering themselves at the lotus feet of the lord. This is Mukti Kaibalya. In this, the devotees resort to the path of devotion.

Kaibalya Baikuntha:- One can attain Baikuntha in life if one is prompted to lead the type of life as laid down in the *Bhagavat*. A proper ambience is necessary for the purpose. This, one can have in life, if one settles down in a place like Srikshestra. Here, one can not only lead a sacred life but also get the benefit of enjoying Mahaprasad every day. This is obviously a rare opportunity in life.

In the opinion of Pandit Krupasindhu Mishra, the system of Mahaprasad was first introduced in the Grand Temple by King Jajati Keshari during his rule in the 6th century AD. For this reason, Raja Jajati is known as the 2nd Indradyumna in the cult of Lord Jagannath.

In the opinion of Aniruddha Das, it was Raja Jajati Keshari who had not only launched Mahaprasad but also brought about the system of offering Bhog to other gods and goddesses in the Grand Temple.

In the scripture known as '*Jagannath Kaijiyat*', there is an exposition about introduction of Mahaprasad and Nirmalya in Srimandir under



a disciplined system with the royal support of Raja Jajati Keshari. A legend has been in vogue to say that after introduction of Mahaprasad in Srimandir, a dumb person, sitting by the side of the earthenwares containing Mahaprasad etc consumed a handful of Mahaprasad to his utmost satisfaction and lo ! and behold ! after sometime, he got back his voice and immediately afterwards, he sang the glories of Lord Jagannath and His Mahaprasad, revealing thereby a great miracle of the Lord.

It is mentioned in Madala Panji that Gajapati Narasingha Dev (1621AD to 1647) had brought the divine images from Manitiry and offered 'Sankudi Bhog' to the divine deities in the Grand Temple. It is further said here that prior to the above period, during the time of Raja Ramachandra Dev, the system of 'Sankudi Bhog' had been discontinued in the Grand Temple on account of the invasion of Kalapahad and only Nisankudi Bhog was oblated to the deities at that time. Not only this, Nisanka Bhanu Dev during the period from 1337 AD to 1361 AD had included "flowers" of the divine images in the category of Mahaprasad. According to Krupasindhu Mishra, Ananga Bhima Dev (1189 to 1123 AD) had increased the quantity of Bhog which King Jajati had introduced in the Temple in the name of Mahaprasad.

According to Dr. Satyanarayan Rajaguru Mahapatra as written by him in his book "Sri Purusottam and Sri Mandir", Ananga Bhima Dev had displayed his utmost respect to the Lord by surrendering all his royal rights at the lotus feet of the Lord and brought about many good changes in the customs and rituals of the Lord particularly in the system of oblation. It was he who had introduced the system of making Mahaprasad available to the devotees on sale in the premises of the Grand Temple. He had also brought in to



use many other 'Nities' in this regard. He had got constructed a Bhog Mandap in the Temple. It is believed in this connection that Ananga Bhima Dev, had increased the Bhog-quantity and introduced a good number of new dishes numbering 56 items.

In crude local language, Mahaprasad is known as 'Maharda.' Some also call it 'Khatani'. In the temple language, "Khatani" means discharging one's duty. This actually entails a long-way process. For example, for preparation of "Mahaprasad," some people are engaged in the cooking of the dishes. Some are engaged to supply the requisite materials for cooking the Prasad. Both categories of servitors have one objective i.e. offering of Mahaprasad to the Lord. For this purpose, the servitors have their respective duties and corresponding shares in Mahaprasad whatever their names and titles may be. There is a Khatoni Nijyog to streamline this work. In crude-expression, Mahaprasad is known as 'Abadha'. As per the practice being followed in the Temple, Mahaprasad is partaken by the devotees from the very pots in which the dishes are prepared.

This system of consumption of Mahaprasad has been in vogue for the last hundreds of years. As per a holy belief, Mahaprasad is not to be served in platters to the devotees. The devotees are to take the same from one place irrespective of caste, creed and religion. This is known as the popular system of receiving Mahaprasad at the place of consumption. This binds the consumers with the fellow feeling of universal brotherhood. It may be stated here that this system is very much akin to the principle of eating as it prevails among the Sabaras who belong to aboriginal tribes. When the Sabaras sit down to take their food, they take the same from one pot. This system appears to have crept into the cult of the Lord as Sri

Jagannath is basically known as the God of the aboriginal tribes.

As per the system now being commonly followed, although 'Abadha' is served in leaf-plates, the term 'Abadha' has not lost its implication and significance. It still retains the sanctitude of commonly taking from one place with a fellow feeling of universal brotherhood. It may be a platter in the form of a banana leaf or a big sal-leaf plate for that purpose. The whole idea is that the consumers of 'Mahaprasad' while taking it need to have a fellow-feeling of oneness shorn of any individual distinction. This feeling of universal brotherhood is not in vogue in any other religion.

There is a beautiful story in the Utkal Khanda of Skanda Purana in this regard, which says that Mahaprasad is always sacred. It is always sacrosanct under all conditions and circumstances. It is imbued with divine attributes exhibiting many a miracle in our day-to-day life. One such attribute is evident from the following story as depicted in this scripture.

Long ago there was a Brahmin living in the central province of India. He was well versed in all scriptures. He led a sort of impeccable life. His wife was a pious woman. She had also very good knowledge of Purans and Shastras like her husband. Both of them led a peaceful life. Both of them were the devout devotees of Lord Narayana. Once the Brahmin told his wife, 'Priye, I have come to know from scriptures that Lord Jagannath is 'Brahma' in all respects. I want to join a group of my friends who are proceeding to Puri to have the 'darshan' of Lord Jagannath. I need your permission'.

The wife of the Brahmin was very happy knowing the details of her husband's journey to



Puri. And finally she permitted him to join the group of his friends.

The Brahmin was very happy. He and his friends proceeded to Puri. When they reached the holy place, they were astonished to see the Grand Temple about which they had heard many good things from others in their area. The Pandit and his friends had had the 'darshan' of the divine deities seated on the Ratna- Simhasan of the Temple. The Brahmin and his friends performed a Yajna near the Temple in propitiation of Lord Narayan Who was none other than Lord Jagannath at Puri. They had observed all the rigors of the celebration. They had conducted the Yajna in the Vedic order for full three days. At the end of the celebration every day, they used to take food cooked separately for the purpose. They did not prefer to take the Mahaprasad of the Lord. The Brahmin had a feeling that consuming Mahaprasad would be tantamount to violation of their ritualistic observance. Mahaprasad did not have the required sacredness for their purpose as it was touched by people irrespective of caste, creed and religion. This was an absurd feeling on the part of the Brahmin who was the leader of the team. In the ultimate result, all of them, after the celebration was completed, were succumbed to serious illness. Some lost their voice. Some were afflicted with severe skin diseases and so on.

The Brahmin was greatly surprised. He prayed to the Lord for His blessings. He prayed for their early recovery from the shocking illness. At last, the Brahmin heard a divine voice speaking out to him that he and his friends should take Mahaprasad for recovery from their illness. The Brahmin and his friends partook Mahaprasad as per the instructions of the divine voice and they had speedy recovery from their respective illness.

In this sense, one should have the belief that Mahaprasad is always sacred. It has divine



power. It is free from all blemishes. Under no circumstance, can it have any sort of disgrace or negative imputation. The Grand Temple for this reason is an illustrious shrine. The spiritual belief on this score is that Maa Mahalaxmi actually cooks the Prasad incognito. The cooks are mere scapegoats. She feeds Mahaprasad to the Lord. Shastras say that if a sinner hears the glory of Mahaprasad, he is expiated of all his sins. The Brahmari Lord gets delighted, if a devotee rubs Mahaprasad on his physical self and sings His name in ecstasy. This is the greatness of Mahaprasad as has been described in Skanda Puran (Utkal Khanda).

There is another story which needs mention in this regard. A legend has it to say that once Sri Narad Maharshi reached Brajapur when Lord Krishna was immersed in His cosmic Lila with Radha and other Gopis. Radha was feeding Her own hand-cooked food to Krishna. The Lord was enjoying the food unmindful of the surrounding where the Lila was going on. Sri Narad consumed some morsels that had fallen from the mouth of Srikrishna. After that, he went to Kailash in the Himalayas. Lord Siva saw bits of morsels on Narada's mouth. He could know from the morsels that those were the offals of Lord Krishna. He was very much delighted. He had the morsels with utmost satisfaction. At that time, Maa Parvati was present in Kailash. She witnessed the Lila of Her consort and wanted a morsel from Narad's mouth. However She could not get anything and so She was deeply distressed. In deep sorrow, Parvati prayed to Lord Krishna who came to know all the details of the spiritual happening that had taken place in Kailash. At last, to satisfy Parvati, He gave Her a boon saying that in Kaliyuga, He would appear at Puri in Utkal Pradesh, as Lord Jagannath and Mata Parvati would appear there as Bimala and everyday, She would have the Prasad of the Lord after which



His Prasad would come to be known as Mahaprasad.

In *Chaitanya Charitamrita*, Sri Chaitanya while, narrating the glory of Mahaprasad, has said, “Prabhu, having taken Mahaprasad, my divine yearning has been fulfilled and I feel that You have given me shelter at Your lotus feet. This is all due to Your unfathomable compassion and profound generosity. I now feel that I am released of the material bondage and achieved Your blessings in my life.”

In *Mahanirbana Tantra*, it is said that so far as Mahaprasad is concerned, all can take it from one plate irrespective caste and religion. All are equal before Mahaprasad for that purpose. Mahaprasad is the leftover food-stuff of the Lord. In quality, it has no grade or class. Mahaprasad is always Mahaprasad. Denial of Mahaprasad is a type of sin that can't be atoned.

In *Skanda Purana*, it is said that, with Mahaprasad, one can overcome Maya and attain 'Moksha' in life.

In '*Padmapurana*,' it is mentioned that if one has no satisfaction after partaking Mahaprasad, one shall be deemed spiritually treacherous and sinful of Lord Vishnu.

Rishi Marichi has said that his ancestors felt satisfied after partaking Mahaprasad on Sraddha rituals. So those who offer Mahaprasad to the ancestors on the Sraddha ceremony are virtuous persons and they achieve immense 'Punya' in life. And they also get the blessings from their ancestors. Not only this, Lord Biswanath is greatly satisfied with the offering of Mahaprasad. It can be taken as 'Prasad' of the Lord Vishnu on Ekadasi days as mentioned in '*Gouri Tantra*'.

It is mentioned in '*Brahma Puran*', that those who take holy bath in the sea at Puri and then offer 'Pinda' with Mahaprasad to their deceased parents, they are said to be worthy successors and they acquire 'virtues of Dasaswa-Medha Yajna in life. So it is advisable to offer 'Pinda' with Mahaprasad to the deceased ancestors in the area covering the 22 steps of the Grand Temple. *Purusottam Puran* and *Kurma Puran* also corroborate this view. As stated in these scriptures, offering of 'Pinda' in the Grand Temple is considered the best spiritual action whereby the ancestors get 'Moksha' from the cycle of birth and re-birth. Thus Mahaprasad is the symbol of utmost divine love, delightful adoration, exquisite rapture, graceful impeccability and the highest devotion to the departed parents awaiting Sraddha at an interval of one year as per the customs prevalent in our sphere of living. Nobody should drop a morsel of Mahaprasad on the ground. It is believed as per the Hindu scriptures that even the gods in the cosmic sphere have a fretful wait for morsels of Mahaprasad.

One has to follow certain rules while partaking Mahaprasad. One should not sit on any *asana* while partaking Mahaprasad. One should not also take any other cooked food of any private house along with it. After taking Mahaprasad, one should wash one's hands and mouth at a place that is clean and not sullied with any other leftover food or dirty filth. Nobody should walk over Mahaprasad at any place. While taking Mahaprasad, one should touch at first a little of it on one's head. This is very important. This action is a mark of reverence to the Lord and His Mahaprasad.

Durga Madhab Dash, House No-138, Ananta Vihar, Phase-II, Pokhariput, Bhubaneswar.