Jagannath cult is unique in its character. It represents the most primitive cult in India and is still accepted as such by all the sects of Indian religions. Sri Jagannath symbolises the most ancient and yet the most rationalistic idea about the basis, the beginning, the manifestation of man and the universe ever conceived in the worship of a personal God. The worship of Him during the Car Festival alone frees man from the shackles of rebirth. In Car Festival, Sri Jagannath comes out of the temple with wooden form and people irrespective of caste, creed and religion worship Him at Badadanda. No priest intervenes and people freely embrace the images. Here the descendants of the primitive Savara worshippers are in sole charge of the deities and the Raja does the duty of a sweeper and becomes His first servitor.

Jagannath primarily belongs to Jain cult. He is known as a Puranic God also. All rites and rituals connected with Him are Puranic but non-Vedic. The god was in later times identified with Vishnu who was originally the Sun-Vamana of the Brahmanas and the Puranas.

Later it was extensively prevalent among the Buddhists and it became a living cult practised by the followers of the Panchasakhas of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. According to the Panchasakha Theory, everything comes out of nothing. This universe is the product of action and desire of the senses of the individual; if desires are eliminated, self will become Void. This is Nirvana (Permanent extensions), which is attained by yoga practices as evident from the sculptures of Mahenjodaro, the seat of ancient Indus valley civilisation.

Jagannath is worshipped in four images known and believed as four forms Chaturdha Murthi of one God, Jagannath. These forms are Sudarsana, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Jagannath. All these images are made of wood.

The Bramhinic Hinduism developed on the foundations of devotion to god and vedic religious practices. While Buddhism, Jainism and Hedonism of characteristic schools were authentic, Upanishadic Bramhinism took new shape through Ramayana and the Mahabharat. Later, Bramhinism split into various sects such as Vaisnavism, Saivism, Saktism, etc. By the first Century A.D., Vaisnavism and Krishna - Vasudeva cult developed similar traits. According to Chandogya Upanishad, Devakiputra Vasudeva Krishna was a patron of Bramhanism. The Ghosundri rock inscription of 2nd century B.C. speaks of the popularity of Vaisnavism or Bhagavatism in the post-Mauryan age. By the time of the Guptas, the
Yasovanta and Ananta. Vedanta, Tantra and many other religious faculties now merged into the cult of Prema Bhakti. Sri Chaitanya was left with the task of fusing Krishna consciousness into Jagannath consciousness.

Needless to say that Vegetarianism is a natural corollary of Sanyasa (giving up all worldly attachments) Bramhacharya (practice for attaining liberation) and also the sublime idea and practice of social equality and universal brotherhood so essentially associated with the cult of Jagannath. One attaining Mukti is Kevali (having a Kevala soul). Mukti, therefore, is Kaivalya (state of being Keval). It is significant that in the cult of Jagannath, Kaivalya exclusively is the term for mukti. Thus among the Jainas there appeared two main sections - one 'Voidist' and the other 'Soulist'. The essence of both are still found in Jagannath.

Names of Subhadra and Balabhadra are often interpreted to be those of Krishna's sister and brother. It seems incorrect. Jagannath himself is Visnu, though he has been never identified with krishna nor has he been overnamed Krishna.

The colour scheme in the images and their make up are evident. Jagannath form is black representing Sunya, the darkness. His brightness of colour and eye indicate absolute consciousness (clothed with light). His hands indicate action potential. Subhadra's yellowness as a woman is distinctively Dravid. Being she is the Sakti, there are no hands. Faces with eyes and noses make the images presentable as human features.

Sri Jagannath is Purushottama from time immemorial. The name Puri is neatly Purushottam - Puri. Locally it is called Purushottama (Oriya Purastama, Prastam). As the place of Purushottama or Jagannath it is supreme place of worship in the Hindu world. There has not been, nor is there still any other place where Purushottama is worshipped (Gita in its Purushottama yoga). It also proves that Jagannath as has been indicated above, is not Lord of universe, but Jagat itself worshipped as a person i.e. Jagat-person. His images are different aspects of looking at the samething. Ksara Purusa is represented by Subhadra or 'Daibi Maya', divine energy manifested in the phenomenal world, Virat or Balabhadra. The aspect of Aksar Purusa represented by the Jagannath. Sudarsana may here be the symbol of unity i.e. all is one - the unspelt character of Jagat-Person in the universe worshipped as a personal god.

Gita has referred to (IV-1, 2, VII-17; XII-19) void, many scholars seek to find in it a basis for the Jagannath cult. The Bhagavata cult rose out of a hero worship. This is how it appears, is Krishna of the Rig Veda - a great seer and supreme.

Lord Jagannath of Puri, who is so elaborately mentioned in our holy books - as Nilachala, Purushottama kshetra etc has not only diffused to the Himalayan kingdom of Nepal where he has been assimilated into the wider religious spectrum of Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism, but the cult of Jagannath has reached the soil of America. This shows the wider acceptability of the religious philosophy and social tolerance of Jagannath cult. The Lord of universe Sri Jagannath has rightly cut across the administrative and political boundaries of the country to bring and strengthen the existing socio-religious solidarity in the universe. As it is a Dham of Kaliyuga, it turns out to be the confluence of all religious beliefs of all social standards. It is most probably the vivaciousness that has kept the Jagannath cult alive through ages. Sri Jagannath is really a symbol of love, truth and tolerance and diffusion of the cult to other parts of the globe is due to this universal approach of its consciousness.

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