



## Role of the Mathas in the Daily Rituals of Lord Jagannath

*Bhaskar Mishra*

Long years ago, a large number of Mathas or religious monasteries belonging to various sects are located here centering round the shrine of Shri Jagannath. Most of the Mathas of Puri are connected with the worship of Jagannath and have typical *sevas* or duties to perform in the temple. The Mahantas or religious head of this institution are the gurus or spiritual preceptors of many people. In the past, they received liberal gifts of money from their wealthy followers and endowments in land for the worship of Shri Jagannath and for other charitable purpose. They are to look after the management and maintenance of the institution under their control. At the time of necessity, they used to take special care for the smooth functioning of the great temple. During recent past, their specific importance was recognised by the Gajapati Maharaja who looked after the management of the temple. Some Mathas are also directly involved in various rituals as well as different festive occasions of Shri Jagannath Temple. For that many facilities like "Saraghara" (Store houses), "overs in the Kitchen", "Khandua Patta" (Silken Cloth) and Mahaprasad Khei etc, have been provided for them inside the Temple premises.

Prof. B.M. Das writes that in Puri, Mathas have grown in close association with the Temple of Shri Jagannath and have existed for the following reasons.

- (a) Propagation of the essentials of Hindu Religion and the Culture of Jagannath,
- (b) Providing shelter to the pilgrims visiting Puri,
- (c) To look after the mendicants and scholars of Hinduism coming from distant places.
- (d) Participating in various rituals of the temple of Shri Jagannath.

The organisation of ritual of the Jagannath Temple is composed of a variety of services which are rendered by servitors of different castes and communities. With the establishment of Mathas of various sects and their linkage with the *sevapuja* of the temple some of the leading communities which render services appropriate to their respective caste and occupation; established their own shrines at Puri. Gradually these shrines became important and changed into Mathas affiliated to respective founder communities.

Earlier the priests of the temple used to be trained at the Sankaracharya Matha and only after obtaining a certificate from the Matha were eligible to enter into priesthood and perform worship in the temple, but now this function is being performed by their concerned Nijogs of the temple.

Certain Mathas (more than 30 mathas) at Puri were established to perform specific



ritual services daily and on festive occasions in the Jagannath Temple. Although these mathas have their respective presiding deities and Mahantas but most of their works are confined to the temple. Since such Mathas were established by the Gajapati Kings these are generally known as Rajangila Mathas. Some of the Rajangila Mathas and their duties and functions are listed below.

<b>Mathas</b>	<b>Functions</b>
Bada Jhadu Matha	To sweep the Garbhagriha (sanctum, sanctorum) Anasrapindi & Jagamohan of the temple.
Sana Jhadu Matha	To sweep the Kurum Bedha court-yard and Natamandap.
Sunagosain Matha	To clean the suna well and Ratna Singhasana walls. Supplying the padak & Alaka (one type of flower ornament) daily.
Dagara Matha	To inform the general public & the officials of the temple if there is any breach of ritual performances or any other religious principles connected with the seba puja of the Lord Shri Jagannath.
Chhauni Matha	To give religious advice and to indoctrinate in the pious ways to the Rajas and their family members at the time of their visit to the Jagannath Temple.
Puranasabha Matha	To recite texts from various Puranas and preach the philosophy of Jagannath culture.
Kadali Patuka Matha	To supply the strands from plantain (banana tree) trees for making flower garlands which are offered to Sri Jagannath Mahaprabhu.
Kothabhog Matha	To keep in the store the stock of ghee and molasses bought

out of the income of the temple and look to the management of cooking of consecrated foods.

Kalitilaka Matha

To supply tilaka to the Vaisnabas of Chaturh Sampradaya.

Some leading mathas of Puri are closely associated with the daily rituals of Shri Jagannath and some of the important festivals. Jagannath Ballav Math, Raghabadas Matha, Badachhata matha, Bada Oriya Matha, Sunagosain Matha, Sri Ram Das (Dakhina Parswa) Matha, Uttarparswa Matha, Emar Matha, Radhakanta Matha, Jhadu Mathas may be included among them. Besides the daily rituals, these mathas are extending assistance in the Ratha Yatra, Snana yatra, Chandan yatra, Jhulan Yatra, Navakalebar ceremony and other festive occasions by offering Pankti and Pana bhog, Vesha materials, Cleaning of Ratnasinghasan, supplying of canopy and Chaka Apasara, Phuluri tele (til oil) Sandalwood paste for Sarbanga rituals, flower garlands, Tulsi leaves and other puja materials, besides performing Sankirtana with devotional Music and Chamer, Allat Services.

The Record of Rights compiled under the Puri Shri Jagannath Temple (Administration) Act, 1952 enshrines in detail the nitis to be performed by certain Mathas. Daily services performed by the Mathas are as follows :

### 1. Gobardhan Matha

Gobardhan Peetha, a monastery or Matha established by Adi Sankar at Puri about 9th Century A.D. plays an important role in the rituals of Shri Jagannath temple, Puri. Sankaracharya Matha has a number of rights in the temple rituals. Jagadguru Sankaracharya, Peethadhisa of this Matha has the authority to



offer his opinion on the ritualistic system of the temple and he is the head of the Muktimandap (An assembly of Sasan Brahmins). The Khei which is granted to this Matha as a daily routine is unique and rarely enjoyed by any other Matha of Puri. Sankaracharya at the time of their visit to the temple is given some special privileges by the Temple Administration.

## **2. Oriya Matha**

To supply the daily Ballava bhoga and performing upachara chamara, allata services.

## **3. Badachhata Matha**

To receive devotional songs with music daily at the time of Mangala Arati and Badasinghar Pahuda rituals.

## **4. Jagannath Ballav Matha**

To supply the Masala (torch) during the Abakash rituals, Ballava Bhog and Khuamanda, Tilak, Jhumpa (one type of flower ornaments) for badasinghar Vasha, Khatani bhog (Arna Mahaprasad); to perform Chamara services as per tradition.

## **5. Papudia Matha**

To perform Sunabenta chamara (flywhisk) and allata (fan) services.

## **6. Chaulia Matha**

To perform Chamara Seva, supply the pijuli (Guava) for Gopallaballav bhog (the services are discontinued since long).

## **7. Raghava Das Matha**

To perform Upachara Chamara and allata services, supply of Ballava bhog and Khatani bhog.

## **8. Gangamata Matha**

To perform Sunabenta Chamara and allata services.

## **9. Radhakanta Matha**

To perform upachara chamara services and daily Sankirtana parikrama inside temple premises.

## **10. Rebas Matha**

To perform upachara chamara and allata services, offering of Khatani Bhog.

## **11. Emar Matha**

To supply the Ballava Bhog, 'Chandrika' and 'Chausara' (one type of flower ornaments) for Badasinghar vasha, to perform upachara chamara and allata services.

## **12. Radhaballava Matha**

To perform upachara chamara and allata services.

## **13. Trimali Matha**

To perform chamara and allata services. Supplying the dihu (torch) at the time Abakash and Gopalaballav Bhog rituals.

## **14. Ramaji Matha**

To perform chamara services.

## **15. Sanachhata Matha**

To perform chamara and allata services.

## **16. Rajguru Goswami Matha**

To perform chamara services during Abakash and Dhupa puja period.

## **17. Venkatachari Matha**

To perform chamara and allata services.

## **18. Nua Matha**

To perform chamara and allata services.

## **19. Chhauni Matha**

To perform chamara and allata services.



## 20. Balaramkot Matha

To perform chamara and allata services.

## 21. Sriram Das Matha

To perform chamara and allata services, supply of flower ornaments for the deities of the temple.

## 22. Uttarparswa Matha

To perform Chamara and allata services and supply of five seer materials for preparing mahanbhog to the temple every day.

## 23. Mangu Matha

To perform Chamara services.

## 24. Jhanjapita Matha

To perform seba puja of the 'Padapadma' by the inmates of the Matha.

Besides this, certain mathas such as Gobardhan Matha, Badasantha, Radhakanta Matha Jeerswami Matha, Badachhata Matha, Jagannath Ballav, Emar, Uttarparswa, Dakhinaparswa, Sidhabakula, Gangamata, Haridas Thakura Samadhi, Rebasa, Chhauni, Radhaballav, Bada Oriya Mathas etc. have the right to offer Khatani bhog (cooked food offering) to the deities daily.

It is ascertained from the Temple Record of Rights that there are 86 ovens in the temple's kitchen allotted to several Mathas such as Emar, Sankarananda, Gangamata, Kausalya Das, Bada Santha, Sri Ram Das, Laxmibhadra (languli), Panjabi, Baula, Jagannath Ballav, Raghava Das, Radhakanta, Bada Oriya, Mahiprakash, Bada Jhadu, Khajuria, Dukhishyama Babaji, Haridakhandi, Uttarparswa, Trimali, Achari Matha, similarly more than 30 Saragharas (store houses) are found recorded in the names of some Mathas like Sankaracharya Matha, Sankarananda,

Papudia, Achari, Jagannath Ballava, Uttarparswa, Rebasa, Sibatirtha, Emar, Bada Oriya, Radhaballav, Mahiprakash, Kotha Bhoga, Raghava Das Matha etc.

According to record of rights of the temple, Radhaballav Matha and Jhanjapita Matha have their special establishments in the temple, presently known as "Radhaballava Temple" and "Padapadma Chaura" over plot No.176 and Plot No.132, 133 and 134.

In the past different Gajapati Maharajas and Superintendent of the Shri Jagannath Temple had given rights through sanandas and royal charter in favour of some Mathas connected with the rituals of Lord Sri Jagannath allotting store houses, ovens in the kitchen, Chamara and allat services, Pankti and Khatani bhog etc. for the smooth performance of the daily rituals of Shri Jagannath Mahaprabhu. Presently some of the Mathas have been deprived of the services and some have discontinued the services altogether. Even some of the Mahantas are not performing the Chamara and allata services which are their most important and sacred duties. Some of the Mahantas are occasionally performing the services only to keep up the tradition.

### References :

1. Shri Jagannath Temple Record of Rights, part-II.
2. Purira Matha Sanskruti (Oriya) - written by B. Mishra.
3. Sri Jagannath - Research Bulletin No.IV, 1985 edited by Dr. P.Ray, S.C.S. College, Puri.
4. Orissa Review, Navakalebar Special Issue, 1996.
5. District Gazetteer, Puri, 1977

Bhaskar Mishra is the Officer on Special Duty in Shri Jagannath Temple, Puri.