



## CAR FESTIVAL

'RATHA JATRA' or the 'Car Festival' is the most important festival of Lord Jagannath. This colourful festival, which draws millions of devotees from various parts of the country as well as from abroad to Puri, is held in June-July every year. Lord Jagannath, which literally means the Lord of the Universe, comes out of His sanctum sanctorum to give audience or Darshan to all devotees belonging to all sects and communities among the Hindus. Those who take part in the Car Festival earn their passage to the Heaven.

'Snana Purnima' marks the beginning of this festival. On this day the three deities—Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra take prolonged bath on an open platform known as 'Snana Bedi'. Then they retire for 15 days popularly called the period of 'Anabasara' and remain in isolation ; the Gods come out of the temple in a colourful procession to board their respective Chariots and thereafter begin the Journey known as 'Ratha Jatra'.

Reference to Car Festival is available in various scriptures like those of Buddhists, Jains and Hindus. However, the present concept of Lord Jagannath is most popular. According to the prevailing concept, Lord Jagannath was originally worshipped by *savaras*, a Scheduled Tribe of Orissa. Car Festival symbolizes the Lord's desire to come out of the temple for a brief period to give audience to the 'Patitas' (i.e., the lowest of the low) and redeem them. The chariots of Lord Jagannath and His brother Balabhadra and sister Subhadra are drawn by thousands of devotees in three gorgeously decorated chariots from the main gate of the temple to Gundicha Mandir near about 3 Kms. away. At Gundicha Mandir the Lord along with His entourage remains for 7 days.

When the chariots move on the main thoroughfare of Puri known as Bada Danda (Grand Road) through a vast concourse of humanity that usually throng to have His Darshan, the atmosphere is charged with sanctity. It is delightful to witness the foreigners in saffron robes dancing and reciting musical compositions in honour of Lord Jagannath and Krishna to the accompaniment of cymbals and Mridangas.

The Gods perform their return journey on the 9th day and this is known as 'Bahuda Jatra.'

The deities, after a seven-day stay at 'Gundicha Mandir' commence their return journey or the Bahuda Jatra, on the tenth day of the bright fortnight of Asadha. The return journey of the chariots takes place in the same order as in the Ratha Jatra. Balabhadra's chariot moves first, followed by those of Subhadra and Jagannath. On His way back, Jagannath stops for a while at Ardhasani temple popularly called Mausi Maa temple or the Temple of Aunt. He accepts his favourite rice-cake, *poda pitha* from the Aunt.

The three chariots, pulled by thousands of devotees, reach back the Singhdwara in the late afternoon of the Bahuda Day. On the next day the Bada Ekadasi, the three deities are attired in costumes of glittering gold ornaments and are worshipped by thousands of devotees. This form of the deities is known as the 'Suna Vesha'. On the Dwadasi day the three deities go back to their original place of the temple, the Ratna Singhasana, in the Pahandi style. Their arrival into the sanctum sanctorum marks the end of the Ratha Jatra, the grand festival of chariots.

## CHARIOTS

The three chariots are built anew annually excluding the Kalasa. 14 subsidiary deities, charioteers and horses, 1072 pieces of logs (i.e., Phasi, Dhaura, Mai, Simili) are brought from Daspalla and Ranapur forests. Nearly 125 temple carpenters (including helping assistants) work for 58 days at the Mahakhala (in front of the Palace) and chisel out 2,188 pieces of wood for the construction of the three chariots. The construction work commences on the AKSHAYA TRUTIYA. Each chariot is covered with new cloths of radiant colour. Nearly 1,090 meters of cloth are used for this purpose. The chariots are fastened with four long sturdy ropes (Each 240-250 'with 8" diameters) each so as to facilitate the devotees to pull them. The Kerala Coir Corporation provides these specially manufactured coconut fibre ropes, iron nails, brackets, clamps, etc., used for this purpose are indigenously prepared by the native smiths near the Dolavedi and it takes them more than a month. The techno-engineering details of the chariots are indeed a technical marvel by any standard for their static and dynamic stability. The superstructure (Above the wheels) contains eighteen pillars and roofs at various stages, which are known as Bhuin, Potala, Parabhadi, etc. Each chariot contains nine Parswa devatas, (Subsidiary deities), two Dwarapalas (Door keepers), one Sarathi (Charioteer) and presiding deities of the crest banner (Dhwaja Devata), all made of wood.

### DESCRIPTION OF CHARIOTS

#### Chariot of Jagannath –

##### **NANDIGHOSHA/GARUDADHWAJA/KAPIDHWAJA**

Number of wheels	:	16
Total Number of wooden pieces used	:	832
Height	:	13'.5m
Length and breadth	:	34'6" x 34'.6"
Wrappings	:	Red, Yellow colour cloths
Guarded by	:	Garuda
Name of the charioteer	:	Dahuka
The flag	:	Trailokyamohini
The horses	:	Shankha, Balahaka, Suweta, Haridashwa
The rope	:	Sankhachuda
Presiding Nine Deities	:	(i) Varaha (ii) Gobardhan (iii) Krushna, Gopi Krushna (iv) Nrusingha (v) Rama (vi) Narayan (vii) Trivikrama (viii) Hanuman (ix) Rudra

##### **Chariot of Balabhadra – TALADHWAJA**

Number of wheels	:	14
Total Number of wooden pieces used	:	763

Height	:	13'.2m
Length and breadth	:	33' x 33'
Wrappings	:	Red, Bluish green colour cloths
Guarded by	:	Basudev
Name of the charioteer	:	Matali
The flag	:	Unnani
The horses	:	Tibra, Ghora, Dirghasharma, Swornanava
The rope	:	Basuki
Presiding Nine Deities	:	(i) Ganesh (ii) Kartikeya (iii) Sarvamangala (iv) Pralambari (v) Hatayudha (vi) Mrutyunjaya (vii) Natamvara (viii) Mukteswar (ix) Sheshadeva

**Chariot of Subhadra – DARPADALANA/PADMADHWAJA**

Number of wheels	:	12
Total Number of wooden pieces used	:	593
Height	:	12'.9m
Length and breadth	:	31'.6" x 31'.6"
Wrappings	:	Red, Black colour cloths
Guarded by	:	Jayadurga
Name of the charioteer	:	Arjuna
The flag	:	Nadambika
The horses	:	Rochika, Mochika, Jita, Aparajita
The rope	:	Swarnachuda
Presiding Nine Deities	:	(i) Chandi (ii) Chamunda (iii) Ugratara (iv) Vanadurga (v) Shulidurga (vi) Varahi (vii) Shyamakali (viii) Mangala (ix) Vimala



## SHREE MANDIR (THE TEMPLE OF LORD JAGANNATH)

The Temple and the Icon-The temple of Jagannath built on elevated ground about twenty feet above the level of the surrounding area, presents an imposing sight and can be seen from miles away. The height of the main temple or Vimana above the road level is 214.8". It is a fine specimen of the 'Pancharatha' style of Orissan temple architecture. The construction of the present edifice is credited to Anantavarma Chodaganga Dev (1078-1147 A.D.) of the illustrious Ganga dynasty. The main shrine consists of four-distinct buildings viz., the Vimana or the Great Temple, 'Jagamohan' or the Hall of Audience, 'Natamandapa' the Dancing Hall and 'Bhogamandapa' or the refractory. The Natamandapa is approachable by two entrances on the north and south. The main entrance from Natamandapa to Jagamohan is called Jaya Bijaya Dwar and there is another door to Jagamohan on the south side. The only entrance door to Bimana is known as Kalahata Dwara, which is considered very sacred.

The images of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Chakraraj Sudarshana are installed in the inner sanctuary of the temple on a raised platform called the 'ratnavedi' or the jewelled platform. The miniature images of Laxmi, Saraswati and Madhab are also placed on the Ratnavedi along with the main deities and worshipped. The platform made of stone is 16 ft. long, 13 ft. wide and 4 ft. high. There is a circumambulating pat around the platform.

The temple has two massive enclosures. The two concentric stone walls known as KURMA PRACHIRA (Or inner wall measuring 400' x 278') and MEGHANADA PRACHIRA (Or outer wall measuring 665' x 644' with height varying from 20' to 24') were constructed in the reign of Purusottama Deva (1467-1497) and Kapilendra Deva (1435-1467) respectively. The whole temple complex comprises an area of 10.7 acres. The space between the temple complex and the inner enclosure goes by name of KURMA BEDHA owing to its shape resembling a tortoise.

The temple has four gates at the eastern, southern, western and northern mid-points of the outer wall, known as 'SIMHADWARA (Lions Gate), ASHWA DWARA (Horse Gate) VYAGHRA DWARA (Tigers Gate) and HASTI DWARA (Elephants Gate). They are said to represent Dharma, Mana, Vairagya and Aishwarya. In front of the Singhadwara is installed the ARUN STAMBHA made of a single solid chlorite stone and upon it beautiful Arun squatting in obeisance.

### FAIRS AND FESTIVALS OF LORDS

- (i) December-January (Pausa)-Navanna and Dhanu Sankranti
- (ii) January-February (Magha)-Makara Sankranti and Sripanchami
- (iii) February-March (Phalguna)-Dola Purnima
- (iv) April-May (Baisakha)-Chandan Jatra
- (v) May-June (Jyestha)-Nrusingha Janma & Snana Jatra
- (vi) June-July (Asadha)-Ratha Jatra and Bahuda Jatra
- (vii) July-August (Sravana)-Jhulana Jatra