



## Mystic Phenomena of the Temple of Lord Jagannath

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When King Indradyumna, the King of Avantee, wanted to know where the real Brahma was, he sent his ministers all over India to find out, but they returned without success. So to Odisha known as UTKAL at that time another minister Bidyapati was sent. He was told by the tribal people of Puri. “On the beach in the Neelagiri cave. Brahma to be found”. He was being worshipped by their tribal leader Bishwabasu. So Bidyapati came and met the chief. But in spite of all his probings, no information was divulged, no place was even shown, so secret and sacred was this Brahma to Bishwabasu. The minister was forced to stay on for many years. With the hope of discovering this Brahma, Bidyapati married the chief's daughter Lalita.

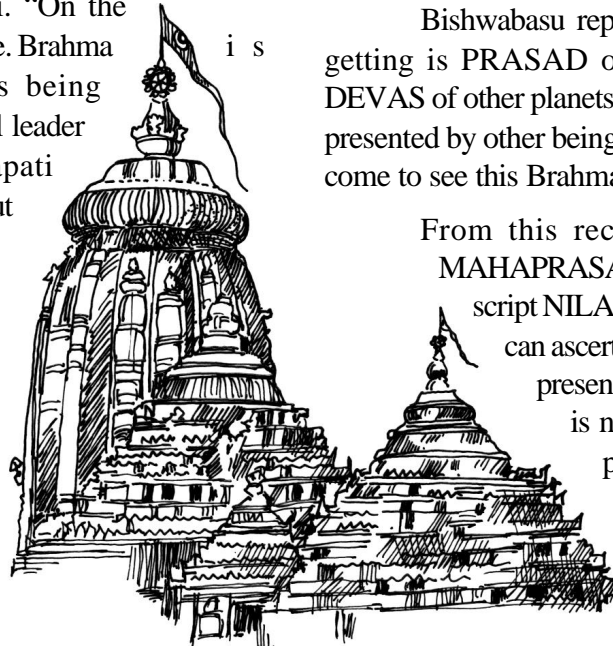
Afterward Bidyapati was stunned when Bishwabasu would return from his worship of Brahma. He gave Bidyapati very fine rice Prasad and other delicacies, curries and fruits not found

in Puri at that time. Bishwabasu himself would be smelling of heavenly camphor from his Arati. Bidyapati saw rare flowers that were not in season in Puri at that time. So he asked his father-in-law. “Sir, where did this fine rice and all these rare flowers come from?”

Bishwabasu replied, “The rice you are getting is PRASAD offered to Brahma by DEVAS of other planets and the flowers are also presented by other beings from outer space who come to see this Brahma.”

From this record of the origin of MAHAPRASAD found in the palm leaf script NILADRI MAHODAYA, we can ascertain quite clearly that this present day Jagannath Temple is not only an attraction for people of this world, but for the inhabitants of other spheres, or LOKAS, as well.

When King Indradyumna heard from Bidyapati that Brahma was at Puri, he immediately went there and wanted a temple built. His wish was fulfilled, then he wondered which deity was to be worshipped there. He dreamt that a log of wood would be floating near the beach. Out of this log, the deities





must be made. The dream came true. In procession the wood was taken to the temple. But again the king wondered. In which shape should the deities be carved? Nobody could offer the king any suggestions.

At last an old man came and offered to carve the deities. He looked so old, like a man about to die, all doubted that he could achieve success. When asked what his name was, he said emphatically, "My name is VISWAKARMA, the maker of the universe. I am from another world." People all around him laughed and thought that the old man would be shown to be a fool at last. However, King Indradyumna assigned the work to him. Viswakarma made three conditions :

- 1) He must be closed in a room where he would work for 21 days.
- 2) He would not take food or drink during this period.
- 3) He must not be disturbed.

Once this was agreed to, Viswakarma entered the closed chamber. Everybody suspected a trick, as there was no sound of any carving. The queen also became suspicious, thinking that the old man might even have died. Out of great anxiety the door was opened before the 21 days were up. Nobody was there, the old man had vanished. Only a voice was heard. "Oh King ! Worship these unfinished deities I have carved. You have broken your promise. I came from DEVALOKA only to make the full form of the deities you wanted to have !"

It means the divine craftsman himself came down to earth to help make the TRINITY known today as Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Mother Subhadra. They have been worshipped in Jagannath Temple, Puri for more than three thousand years.

As these stories about the origin of Jagannath Temple reveal, Lord Jagannath is a mystic deity. There are many phenomena surrounding Him which cannot be explained by modern science. Not only do sages, seers, and people from different parts of the world come to see Him, but also inhabitants of other spheres as well. As he is considered the master of the universe, He attracts all. There is documental evidence to support many of these occurrences in the form of eyewitness reports and objects left by divine beings when they came. These events are also documented in ancient epics, palm leaf scripts, and in texts written by scholars and sages of the past. Some are as follows :

- 1) MANIMA DAKA Sloka (source unknown)

*"Rajadhi Rajarajeshwer  
Ishwara Thakur, Manima !  
Anantakoti Brahmanda,  
Ishwara Thakur, Manima!  
Chaturdasha Bhubana  
Ishwara Thakur, Manima !"*

In the daily rituals of the temple, this prayer is recited at the time when Lord Jagannath retires to bed.

The meaning is this:

*"Oh Lord Jagannath !  
You are King of kings !  
You are Master of many universes!  
You are the Controller of all creation !"*

The Khuntia worshipper who recites this Sloka then scatters flower petals on the beds of the deities. After doing so, he also tosses petals up into the air to welcome all the divine beings who have come that evening to observe this ritual.

- 2) Kadachit Kalindi Sloka by Saint Adishankar in his Sanskrit verses "Jagannath Astaka"



“Rama, Samvu, Brahma, Surapati  
Ganesh Archit Padam  
Jagannatha Swami, Nayana Pathagami,  
Bhava Tume”

The meaning is:

Even Gods like Rama, Shambhu (Shiva), Brahma the Creator, Surapati, the king of Gods, Ganesh, the elephant god of Wisdom, all of whom belong to Devaloka, worship Lord Jagannath at Puri.

3) *Jatta chhaya Lokamatra  
Tribhubana Janata Badhate  
Na Tritap”*

This means that the inhabitants of all LOKAS, or spheres, are under the protection of Lord Jagannath. This sloka is taken from BRAHMA GEETA. (Writer not known)

4) from Kapila Samhita

“Sarba Rahasya Purusottamasya  
Deva Na Janati Kuta Manusya.”

The meaning is that the mystery of Lord Jagannath cannot be known by the Devas; so what to speak of man !

5) from Skanda Purana

“Byomatit Byomarupa Prakasa  
Byomakar Byapino Byomarudha.”

The glory of Lord Jagannath is described here. He can take on any shape. He is as limitless as the sky itself. He is even beyond that. The whole cosmos of life is divided into many spheres or LOKAS. These are described in the palm leaf scripts, Lokabimarsa, Loka Tattwa and Lokamimansa. As life evolves from lower to higher forms, consciousness becomes more individualized and expansive. The main Lokas are 21 in number. They are as follows:

### The Underworld Lokas

1) Patala, 2) Talatal, 3) Rasatal, 4) Bitala, 5) Mahatala, 6) Atala, 7) Bhutala

### The Earth Lokas

8) LOKA, this Earth, 9) Pitru-loka, 10) Matruloka, 11) Pretaloka, 12) Bhutaloka, 13) Jakshaloka, 14) Swargaloka

### The Higher Lokas

15) Divya loka, 16) Kinnara loka, 17) Gandharva loka, 18) Deva loka, 19) Sura loka, 20) Vishwa loka, 21) Goloka

Paranormal events occur on earth when beings from these other regions are present. According to the LOKA they come from, they appear in different ways.

### 1. PATALA LOKA

This is a sphere of the underworld which supports life on earth. It is said Vasuki, the snake who holds the world in proper balance, lives in Patala Loka. He comes to Jagannath Temple only at special Darshan times. If he is present, there will be a loud rustle in the crowd.

### 2. TALA TAL LOKA

When inhabitants of this Loka come, there will be rays of light of various eyed, or other deformed persons. They carry flowers in their palms to offer to the deities colours which can be seen by the naked eye. These beings come in disguise of blind, lame, one-in-the-crowd this can be seen easily.

### 3. RASA TAL LOKA

If a strong wind passes through the crowd and a hot place becomes cool suddenly, beings from this Loka have come. They often come also as children and sing loudly during Kirtan, even though they know nothing about all these things. They smile in the crowd after seeing the deities.



#### 4. BITALA LOKA

Beings from Bitala Loka come as birds, although not as vultures, who signify bad days ahead when they are seen.

#### 5. MAHATALA LOKA

Beings from this sphere come as animals such as cats, monkeys, and dogs. As dogs cannot enter the temple, if one is spotted inside, it is said to have come from this Loka. If this happens, it is felt the food that day was cooked in an impure way. All offerings must be stopped and the foods prepared again.

This dog is called KUTAMA CHANDI. He always disappears mysteriously.

#### 6. ATALA LOKA

Sages and saints with long beards who are deep in meditation often come from this sphere. They even walk into the temple with half-closed eyes. Only to look upon Lord Jagannath Himself do their eyes open fully.

#### 7. BHUTALA LOKA

Those who sweep the temple floors, make garlands for the deities, prepare the wicks and lamps, make the earthen pots for the kitchen, and fetch the water are often from this region. Their duties are not hereditary, but are done purely for spiritual pleasure.

#### 8. LOKA, this earth

Ordinary people from all parts of this visible world come to Jagannath Temple with a vast variety of wishes, both worldly and spiritual. The word Loka means people. Before birth all came from other Lokas, according to previous habits and activities. They wish to go to higher Lokas, by dint of their human birth. Inside the temple they come under the influence of beings from these other spheres, who are also present there, whether they are aware of them or not.

Actually, the very purpose of human birth is to pass through all the Lokas by degree. It is also told in ancient scriptures of India that the gift of human birth is the greatest boon God gives. In no other Loka can a being progress spiritually. That is why Devas and demonic spirits both long to return to earth.

#### 9. PITRU LOKA

These beings are the ancestors from the father's side of one's family. They come to the temple of Lord Jagannath at dawn when there is less rush. If one finds a man having a similar face to one's father, he is from Pitru Loka. If one feels attraction to some unknown person, he is certainly related and has come down from this Loka. Inhabitants of Pitru Loka come to earth as human beings.

#### 10. MATRU LOKA

These beings give the same signs of their presence here, but they are from the mother's side of one's family.

#### 11. PRETA LOKA

Those who commit suicide come to this Loka after death. This is the region of bad spirits and beings of evil demonic nature. They come inside the temple, but only to the outer portions, not into the inner altar of the deities. They criticise, joke, and make noise or other disturbances in spiritual gatherings there. Their coming is signalled by a bad smell, like that of a dead body.

#### 12. BHUTA LOKA

This Loka is similar to Pretaloka, only the confused inhabitants here have taken their lives by poison.

#### 13. JAKSHA LOKA

People in a crowd wearing gorgeous dress are often Jakshas in disguise. They have



come to this earth for worldly comforts and bad motives, such as how to collect money from those present in the crowd. They wear gold ornaments and precious gems to impress others.

#### **14. SWARGA LOKA**

SWARGA means Heaven. Beings from this sphere have this sign. In darkness there will suddenly be light. Many people present may experience a divine feeling without any visible reason at all. Not flowers but petals only will be found scattered on the floor afterwards.

#### **15. DIVYA LOKA**

When divine beings of this Loka come auras of different colours will fill the atmosphere. Even in darkness, these can be seen slightly. Some of the temple lamps (DIPAS) may be mysteriously extinguished at this time. Beings from DIVYALOKA do not come in form, but only as light and auras. There are other signs, but mortal man cannot have concrete experiences of them.

#### **16. KINNARA LOKA**

When Kinnaras come to the temple, they come as dancing girls. They may be seen visibly if one's third eye is open. They are eight in number, the ASTASAKHIS : RAMBHA, URBASI, MENAKA, TILLOTAMA, MANJUSI, ROCHIKA, MOCHIKA, and SUNDAREE. They come as DEVADASIS also, only to dance before Lord Jagannath before He goes to bed. They are decorated in flowers only, no ornaments.

#### **17. GANDHARVALOKA**

During devotional singing these beings are always present, both inside and outside the temple. They sing in chorus spiritual songs known as BHAJANS, meant only for the deities. If an ordinary person's singing is especially sweet one night, or soft sweet music is heard in the midst of silence, a Gandharva is present. According to

NADA SHASTRA, there are ten types of divine sounds that may be heard inwardly, the two highest being the sound of the flute and OM.

#### **18. DEVA LOKA**

Many gods come to Jagannath Temple to pray every night, such as Indra, God of rain; Baruna, God of the ocean : Vayu, God of wind; Laxmi, Goddess of wealth; Saraswati. Goddess of wisdom. The sign of their presence is complete tranquility and peace in the midst of a huge crowd. It would appear as if nobody at all was there. After they go, flowers of different varieties are usually found scattered on the floor of the temple.

#### **19. SURA LOKA**

Sura means strength especially the divine strength of mother. Beings from this Loka come to the temple during Darshan time known as SAHANA MELA. They come in a big rush so that the crowd is forcibly pushed aside for them to proceed to the deities without any difficulty.

#### **20. VISHWA LOKA**

Those who come from VISHWA LOKA think that Lord Jagannath is just like a human being. The worshippers of the temple who are in charge of decorating the deities with flowers, sandalwood paste and beautiful dresses and take great pleasure in doing such spiritual things are often from VISHWA LOKA. They seem to be worldly with homes and family life like ordinary people. But they are born to serve the supreme Brahma.

#### **21. GOLOKA**

From Goloka come Sri Krishna Himself and the Gopis. Even though there might be a big rush inside the temple everybody will love the gathering. All present will feel attracted towards something unseen and smell soothing fragrances all around. In the crowd there will be more ladies than men. Most significant of all everyone will hear a mysterious sweet laughter in the air.



There are other spheres of Lokas also such as:

1. Shiva Loka - the abode of Shiva (on no moon day)
2. Vishnu Loka - the abode of Vishnu (on full moon day)
3. Brahma Loka - the abode of Brahma (on Ekadasi day)
4. Asura Loka - the abode of demons (on Janmastami day)
5. Yama Loka - the abode of Yama, the king of death (on Sabitri Brata day)
6. Naga Loka - the abode of snakes (on Kaliya Dalan day)
7. Graha Loka - the abode of planets (on Sankranti days when the sun take a new sign of the Zodiac)

On Rath Yatra day every year, not only do people come from all over the world but also beings from all Lokas and planets. Lord Jagannath's chariot known as NANDIGHOSHA, is guarded by the following Devas :

1. The Flag by Hanuman from Mahatala Loka.
2. The Chariot itself by a being from Bitala Loka.
3. The Rope by Vasuki from Patala Loka.
4. The Wheels by Mother Vim ala from Sakti Loka.
5. The Entrance by Gatekeepers Jaya and Vljaya from Divya Loka.
6. The devas surrounding the Chariot being Rama, Laxman, Krishna, Nrusingha, Narayana, Chintamani, Yoga Maya, and Kubera all from Devaloka.
7. The sages all around the Chariot being Narada, Vyasa, Suka, Parasar, Rudra, Vashista and Viswamitra all from Pitru Loka.

The chariots of Balabhadra and Subhadra are guarded by many divine beings also. Some of the most mysterious phenomena reported from time to time by the people of Puri, especially the worshippers of Jagannath Temple, are as follows:

Not only do people from all over the world come to see Lord Jagannath, but so do gods and goddesses. It is believed that these devas are most fond of seeing the last ceremony of the day known as Pahuda, in which Lord Jagannath retires to bed. This occurs some time after midnight. Three beautiful beds made of ivory and decorated with the sweetest- smelling flowers, especially white jasmine, are brought before the deities. Flowers are scattered all over the beds to the sound of devotional music, and the miniature golden forms of Jagannath, Subhadra, and Balabhadra are laid down on the beds to sleep, actually a miniature, Gopi Krishna with Radha for Jagannath, and also the same for Subhadra. Then *arati*, the offering of a Dipa lamp, is done and flowers are scattered all around overhead to be collected by the gods and goddesses as a token of Lord Jagannath's blessing. So it is also the duty of all the gods and goddesses to be present at the time of this ceremony every night.

One night goddess Charchika of the distant village of Banki arrived late to the function. She was excused by Jagannath, who excuses all mistakes, but Balabhadra did not excuse her. "Mother do you think that the rituals of this temple should take place according to your convenience? You have become too proud these last few days. Get out ! You cannot come to see the Pahuda ceremony any more." In anger she replied "I am not the proud one! You are the one who is ostentatious, being gorgeously dressed, bedecked with royal robes, golden ornaments, and sweet-smelling flowers. I have eight hands, but you with no hands think you are doing everything. Who is



the proud one? You please let me pass so that I may meet my Lord. Why are you ostracizing me for such a little offense? After that Balabhadra became more angry and lost His temper. “Your misbehaviour to Bitarachha Mahapatra, the chief priest is of grave concern. I am ordered by him to prevent you from entering the temple any more. How can you go and protect ‘your area Banki, even with your eight hands with weapons, if you have no discipline?” Charchika replied, “Oh, then please go and ask Him to forgive me! I will not have any peace if I am deprived of the Lord’s vision. I will be happy again only when I am redeemed.”

Charchika was left standing there at the bottom of Baishipabachha, the twenty-two steps leading to the temple. The whole night was passing and her heart became very agitated. It was almost morning. The Sevakas were coming from the temple. Devas from all corners of the world had come that night, as was the custom every night to consult with Jagannath, the Lord of the universe. Now they were going out to execute His will. Only Charchika was left standing at the gate. If a Deva neglects his duty, he may cause harm to others and must be replaced. The sin of too much pride is almost irremediable. Just as Charchika was remembering this, Balabhadra came back with the sad news not to allow her inside. Balabhadra delivered the message of Lord Jagannath. “A proud Deva should not be admitted. If you wish to redeem yourself, render service in the home of Bitarachha Mahapatra, the head priest to whose function you came late, and not to me. Bitarachha Mahapatra alone can exonerate you, if he so desires and is pleased with your service.” Balabhadra explained, “By the practice of virtuous deeds an ordinary man ascends upwards and may eventually attain the status of a demigod. Such a good soul may be regarded as equal to God himself, but only

because of his goodness, not his high position. Do you know this, Mother?” Charchika replied, “Yes, I have done wrong. I myself will take on the task of serving this man Bitarachha Mahapatra, even though I am a goddess of the highest order. It is the right punishment for a degraded goddess. I will be serving a man who is himself a servant of Lord Jagannath. Let me leave this place before others come out.”

Disguising herself as a young widow in a white Sari, Charchika left the temple for the house of Bitarachha Mahapatra. As she approached, she saw the old man sitting on his front steps. So she quickly covered her face with her Sari piece and respectfully stood at some distance. The old man looked up and thought, “Who is this lady? I can see only half of her face, but she looks so young and radiant! I have never seen her in this area before.” Thinking like this, he called to her. “Mother, have you come to our house or are you looking for someone in this neighbourhood. The soft motherly appearance of Charchika made Bitarachha Mahapatra regard her as a mother. Charchika pleaded, “I pray that you accept me in your house as a servant, as I have no other means of survival, Father. As I lay flat on the ground before Lord Jagannath, He himself ordered me to serve here in your house”. The old man was astonished and with tears in his eyes, he answered, “This is your own home, you are so like my own mother. A son can never be reluctant to provide shelter to his mother.”

Thus Charchika became the maid-servant of the head priest Bitarachha Mahapatra. Gradually she became accustomed to the household affairs of the family and took full charge of the puja room herself, cleaning the brass puja articles, changing the dress of the deities daily, and lighting the lamps. So perfectly did she act out the role of mother that Bitarachha Mahapatra hardly thought of his own mother, who had just



recently died. Time passed. Bitarachha's wife was old and ailing and so she was very pleased with Charchika's help and good manners. Sometimes people wondered about Charchika, Who was she? Where did she come from? Sometimes Charchika would be overcome with feeling when there was talk of Lord Jagannath, What was the reason for this? They would ask her, "Why don't you go to the temple and have darshan of Lord Jagannath? When so many people come from far away to see Him, you are nearby and do not go?" Charchika said sadly. "It is a matter of luck, sometimes one is not destined to meet him. I will visit the Lord wherever he showers his mercy on me."

One day a huge storm hit Puri with heavy rain. The whole town was enveloped in darkness. Bitarachha Mahapatra struggled to find his way home and finally reached the door, knocking loudly. Charchika responded anxiously. "Oh, what a treacherous night to be out! When it fell dark I lit a candle and sat waiting, expecting you at any moment. That candle has just now gone out." The head priest had come from the temple and was completely rain drenched. He handed over the Mahaprasad to Charchika and went to change his dress. But there were no matches to light the candle in his room. Neither did he bring a candle from the temple, as it was raining too heavily. With surprise he asked, "How did you light that candle, when there were no matches and all the neighbours had already gone to bed? Can you light another one?" Charchika replied, "Yes there is a way. Allow me to light the room." She immediately assumed her original form. She stretched one of her legs to the top of the temple where a lamp was burning and with it she lit the priest's candle !

On seeing this divine vision, Mahapatra almost fell senseless. He could not believe his eyes. How could this maid servant assume such

a divine miraculous form ? And so vast and glorious it was. The whole town of Puri could be accommodated within the space between her feet. A deep sense of awe and wonder overcame him. Charchika came back to her normal form in a moment's time, and the room was lit. Mahapatra felt as if his eyes had betrayed him and he was going mad. "Do not worry, father," Charchika said, Bitarachha Mahapatra fell before her, pleading, "Oh Mother ! Please reveal your real identity. I will not leave your feet until you do so." Such rare display of God's divine grace thrilled the priest through and through. His body became numb.

So Charchika disclosed everything to him, especially the reasons why she was cast out of the temple. Mahapatra exclaimed, "Oh Mother, please go back to your original abode. I will get due permission from the Lord for your reinstatement." With such assurance, Charchika disappeared from Bitarachha's house. It was after midnight, the rain had stopped. It was as if everything had occurred in accordance with God's plan. Charchika once again approached the main gate of the temple and Balabhadra offered her a welcome smile. Because of this, Charchika realised that one cannot retain even his position as a demigod if he does not fulfill his assigned duties and commitments for the upliftment of the world, for these are the duties of the demigod. Lord Jagannath ordered, "I am now very happy with you. I will assign you an additional responsibility, that of caring for My own car during Rath Yatra, the great Festival of Chariots. Even though the regular Sevakas are there to look after Nandighosa, you will be its Deva." Charchika was silent and only nodded her head affectionately, then left. It was already morning and Bitarachha Mahapatra appeared before the deities to offer his regular service.





This event occurred in the year 1368. Before Goddess Charchika left the house of the head priest Bitarachha Mahapatra, she asked him what he wanted. He answered that he had no demands for any worldly things, but only wanted to see her again. She said, "Go to your Puja room;" and then vanished. He went there and saw protruding from the floor a framed stone image of the Deva herself. Even today, some six centuries later, this holy image is there and Puja is still being done to it daily by the descendants of Bitarachha Mahapatra, the head priest of Jagannath Temple.

Many more mysterious phenomena may be given in this respect. Personal experiences of worshippers and devotees can be given as proof of the divine Leelas of Lord Jagannath in their lives. Lord Jagannath is not just a deity made of wood but like a human being, He hears, but has

no ears, He sees, but has no eyes. He speaks, but has no tongue. He helps, but has no feet to walk.

Lord Jagannath has Love for all. He will speak to anyone and come to the rescue of anyone. He can even change one's destiny as He guides us on the right path. Only we must have the eyes to see Him, the ears to hear Him, the hands to help Him ! This is the only qualification. Then we have a heart to heart connection with Him and in our small limited world we can know Him.

- Jay Jagannath -

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