



**D**evi Subhadra is popularly known as the sister of Lord Krishna and Balaram. In Purans somewhere She is shown as the daughter of Yosada, the wife of Nanda (Yosada Garbha Sambhuta), somewhere as the Daughter of Rohini, the mother of Lord Balaram and the other wife of Basudev (Rohini Garbha Sarnbhuta) and somewhere She is also shown as the daughter of Debaki, the mother of Lord Krishna and the wife of Yadav Basudev (Debaki Garbha Sambhuta). However the essence and the concept in all those versions are one and the same as everywhere She has been shown as the sister of Lord Balaram and Lord Krishna. Legends say that Yadavas celebrated a festival at Raibat Bana attended by prominent leaders like Balaram,

Ugrasena, Pradyumna, Udhab, Srikrishna. Satyaki and many others. Arjuna during his one year's pilgrimage after visiting various holy places, came at last to Pravas Tirtha in the planes of the western mountains. He met Yadav leader "Gada" there who described him the unique beauty of Subhadra. The description evoked in him the desire to get and marry Her for which purpose he assumed a form of Sanyasi (monk) and sitting under a tree thought about Lord Srikrishna Who understood the fact while lying on the bed with Satyabhama. Immediately he began to laugh. Asked for the reason for laughing thus Lord Krishna narrated about the thoughts of Arjuna to Satyabhama. He then went to Arjuna and questioned him about the reason of his pilgrimage.



## Devi Subhadra

*Balakrushna Dash*

Arjuna explained the circumstances of it. They then went to Raibata where Yadavas were celebrating the festival. There Arjuna saw Subhadra. The sight of Subhadra among others evoked uncontrollable love in Arjuna who asked Krishna secretly about the means for him to marry Subhadra. Krishna answered him, the only way out was to abduct Subhadra as abduction is also ordained for Kshatriyas. Arjuna immediately sent word about the matter through emissaries to Indraprastha. After the festival of Raibata was over, Subhadra returned to Dwarka. As for Arjuna, he sat on a rock in the forest thinking about Subhadra when Yadav heroes like Balaram, Sarana, Samba, Pradyumna, Gada and others



came that way by chance. They saluted Arjun who disguised in the form of a Sanyasi and others arranged for stay of the Sanyasi who pretended to spend Chaturmasya (4 months of rainy season) there. He was to be fed and nourished by Subhadra. Arjuna in the form of a Sanyasi was overwhelmed with joy. As days passed on thus, Arjuna geared more and more sick with love. Subhadra felt unbounded affection also in the young Sanyasi. She heard from him many stories about the valiant Pandavas and especially about Arjuna. When he disclosed Her that he, the fake Sanyasi was really Arjuna who is living there without the knowledge of his mother and brothers, Subhadra bent down Her head in shyness. Subhadra's marriage was decided to be held on the twelfth day from that date. Balaram, Udhava, Akrura, all of them short-tempered, were not informed about the decision. Krishna was taking the lead in making preparations for the wedding. In fact most of the Yadav -chiefs wanted Subhadra to be wedded to Duryodhana, disciple of Balaram and against their desire Subhadra and Arjuna together drove themselves away on a chariot through lines of people and this created a stir among the Yadav heroes. But Krishna pacified them all. Arjuna came to Indraprastha with Subhadra disguised as a Gopi. Latter on the wedding of Subhadra with Arjuna was duly celebrated. Many costly things by way of Subhadra's dowry were duly sent from Dwaraka to Indraprastha. (Puranic Encyclopedia).

Thus Subhadra has been assigned the lawful position of a wife to Arjuna the valiant Pandav of Mahabharat Yuga (i.e Dwapara Yuga).

However with the end of Dwapara Yuga Lord Balaram and Lord Krishna left the world for Their heavenly abode. As per Skanda Puran king Indradyumna of Malava came to know about

the Great God Neel Madhab, the other shape of Srikrishna in Kali Yuga from Vidyapati, one of his Brahmin Ministers who was sent to Udradesa (Odisha). Informed by Vidyapati when Indrayumna reached and searched for the Lord he could not able to get the trace of Him but heard a voice from the heaven to perform Yajona at the sea-shore to get the sacred tree having four branches known as "Daru Brahma", out of which, he would get Lord Neelamadhab in the shapes of Balabhadra, Subhadra, Jagannath and Sudarsan and to worship Them constructing a temple at Neelachala. As such we see Srikrishna as Lord Jagannath, Lord Balaram as Lord Balabhadra, sister Subhadra as Devi Subhadra and disc (Chakra) as Lord Sudarsan on the Ratna Singhasan.

In the views of prominent historians like H. Kulke, A. Estefan, G.C. Tripathy and many others Neelamadhab became Jagannath and was worshipped originally alone. Devi Subhadra was subsequent addition upon the resurgence of Shaktism. At some point of time the figure of Lord Balabhadra and Sudarsan were so added to satisfy Saivas and Sauras to the existing couple Lord Jagannath and Devi Subhadra .This could have taken place once the process Krishnalization was well advanced and the political importance of the cult after Chodagangadev, only under a special royal impact. (The cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition).

Therefore we see Devi Subhadra is seated in between Lord Jagannath and Balabhadra at Sriksheetra, Puri who have been taken as Balaram and Srikrishna of Dwapara Yuga and worshipped as such. Here Devi Subhadra is assigned the position of a loving sister of Balaram and Srikrishna of Dwapara by some of Vaishnavite devotees. This concept is also confirmed from the following Sanskrit version :-



“Niladrau Sankhamadhye Satadala Kamale Ratna  
Singhasan-stham,  
Sarbalankarjuktam Nabaghana Ruchiram  
Samsthitamchagrajena,  
Bhadraya Bamabhage Ratha Charan Jutam,  
Brahma Rudrendram Bandyam,  
Bedanam Saramisham Sujana Paribruttam,  
Brahmadaru Smarami.”

But many of the devotees take Her as the Parashakti, Sahalipta Shakti, Jogamaya, Kampilya Vasini, Ekanansa, Bhubaneswari, Mahalaxmi and many other forms of the Supreme power of the World. She is worshipped in Bhubaneswari Mantra (Hrirm) which denotes that She is virtually the lipta (Gyana) shakti of the Lord of the Universe Sri Jagannath who mingled with Him but shifted aside taking a separate shape.

Moreover nowhere in the world the sister remains always with his brothers as in the case of Devi Subhadra at Srikshetra, Puri. Wife and husband use to stay under one roof with that conception Devi Subhadra’s presence with Lord of the Universe connotes that She is the supreme Goddess (Power) of the world Who cannot bear separation of Parambrahma (Daru Brahrna) for a moment and therefore seated with Him on the Ratnabedi. This is confirmed from the following Sanskrit versions :-

“Nanalankar Ruchiram”  
Nana - Kalush Nashanam,  
Tayormadhye sthitam Bhadram  
Subhadram Kunkumarunam,  
Sarba Labanya Basatim  
Sarbadewa Namaskrutam.

Laxmi Laxmisha Hrudayam  
Pankajastha prithaksthitam,  
Barabja Dharini Devim  
Divya Nephathya- Bhusanam,  
Prapanna Kalpalatikam  
Sarba kalusha Nashinim”.

(Skanda Purana Ch-5 /Version ,60,61 & 62.)

Or

Subhadra Charubadana  
Barbjabhaya Dharini,  
Laxmi Pradurbhabeayam  
Sarba Chaitanya (Jnana) Rupinim”.

(Skanda Purana)

Thus we see Devi Subhadra on the Ratnabedi not as the loving sister of Lord Balaram and Krishna but as *para-shakti* (Supreme power) Jogamaya Mahalaxmi along with Jiva-Brahma Balabhadra and Parambrahma Sri Jagannath with disc Sudarsan. Therefore virtually Lord Jagannath and Balabhadra are not the same Krishna and Balaram of Dwapara Yuga; They are the *paramatma* (Param Brahma) and *jibatma* (Jiva Brahma) conjoined with *parashakti* or Lipta (Gyana) Shakti of the Brahma known as Devi - Subhadra.

Unique and enigmatic, are the images of Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarsan without any parallel in any Hindu shrine. They are not built according to the injunctions in the Silpa Sastras. In fact, there is no foundation in traditional scriptures for the construction of the images of Gods and Goddesses in wood and thus, the four fold images of Daru Brahma stand apart from all the other icons in the temples situated in the campus of the great temple. They are all of traditional type, by and large; human in form and built according to the scriptural descriptions and injunctions and yet this strange.” Chaturddha Murti or four-fold, Daru Brahma is the centre of the Jagannath Cult that has dominated Odishan life, art and culture and in the sense, it synthesizes all the major cults of India.

Jay Jagannath.

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