

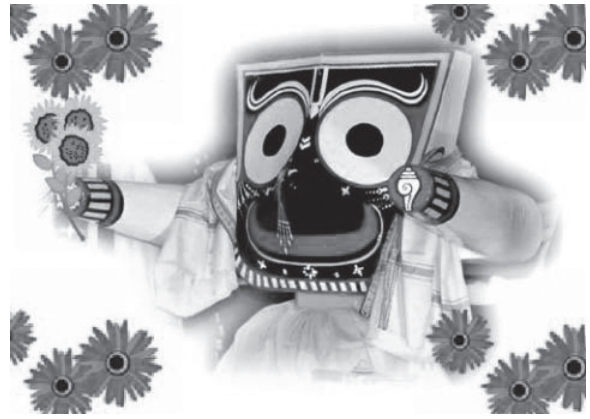


## Influence of Tantra in the Rituals of Shree Jagannath

Dr. Sarbeswar Sena

Shree Jagannath, the Lord of the Universe is worshipped in the form of *Daru Devata* (wooden-incarnation) in *Shreemandir* of *Nilachal Dham (Puri)*. He is world famous as *Daru Brahma*. In the body of the deity the *Brahma* (the mystic syllable of Om) is placed; so He is *Daru Brahma*. But people address Him in thousand names. Similarly followers of different religions have tried their best to establish *Jagannath* as their tutelary deity but still He is mysterious. No one is able to guess His beginning or end. His super human power is beyond any thought, belief and imagination. Yogis remaining in meditation for years together are not able to meet the almighty, Shree *Jagannath*. He is the paramount ruler and under His direction and will the whole world is governed. He is the source of all powers because *Brahma* is the only truth and the world is meaningless. (*Brahma Satyam, Jaganmithya*). *Brahma* is hand and legless but inspires all to move, without eyes sees everything and being earless listens to the supplication of the devotees. This has been narrated in *Swetaswetara Upanishad*,

“*Apanipadojavanagrahita  
Pashyatachakshuhsashrunotwakarnah  
Sabettibedyanatasyastibetta  
Tamahuragyampurushampuranam.*”



So the learned have accepted *Daru Brahma* as the *puranapurusha* (a progenitor, God) and worship Him with deep devotion.

Shree *Jagannath* is a symbolic deity. Hence He has become an easy accept for all religions. For Vedic Aryans He is *Bhu, Bhurva, Swah*, for Buddhist, Buddha, *Dharmo, Sangho*, for Yogis, *ida* (an artery supposed to run on the left side spinal cord), *pingala* (a particular tubular vessel of the body), *sushumna* (the name of an artery of the body), for *Shaibas, parvati, Shiva, Ganesh* and for the wise He is *Maha Laxmi, Maha Kali* and *Maha Saraswati*. In the Veda *Jagannath* is described as *chaturddhamurti* (four fold incarnations) i.e. *Balabhadra, Subhadra, Jagannath* and weapon *Sudarshan*.



In *Bhagavadgita Bhagavan* Shree Krishna has narrated before *Arjun*,

“*Jejatha mam prapadyante,  
Tamstathaibabhajamyahm  
Mama batmranubartantemanushyaha,  
Parthasarbashah.*”

(In the way the devotees reciprocate me *Partha*, I also reciprocate in the same way, for people in all respect follow my path.) Hence, Shree *Jagannath* is above all religious concept.

Originally the name of *Jagannath* is not mentioned in the Vedas but mentioned in the Tantric scriptures. Moreover the system of idol worship is not there during the Vedic age, though the names of many Gods are mentioned in it. They are worshipped only through *Jajna* (a religious offering). But in tantric method of worship an image is very much essential. Hence the tradition of idol worship in *Shreemandir* is nothing but a tantric method. It is also pertinent to mention that not only now but also long time ago Indian religious concept has been dependant on two cultures i.e. Nigam (the Vedic) and Agama (Tantric). Shree *Jagannath* is the tantric deity, although different scholars have made an attempt to establish Him of the religion and culture of *Shavara*, *Vedic*, *Brahmanya*, *Buddhism* and *Jainism*. The side deities, system of their worship in *Jagannath* temple are the clear symbol of the tantric concept.

Shree *Jagannath* is worshipped on *Vairava* Chakra and known as *Vairav*. The offering to Him is *Mahaprasad*. It is also a tantric

word. Among its other synonymous words, *Nirmalya* and *Kaivalya* are familiar ones. According to the tantric doctrine *Asta Shakti* (eight powers) safeguard the religious centre. Same is also marked in *Jagannath* temple. *Mangala*, *Vimala*, *Sarva Mangala*, *Ardhashosini*, *Alamchandi*, *Kalaratri*, *Marichika*, *Chandarupa* are the eight powers placed in the south east, west, north west, north, north east, south, east and south west direction respectively of *Jagannath* temple. *Kapalamochana*, *Jameswar*, *Isaneswar*, *Markandeswar*, *Bileswar*, *Nilakantha*, *Bateswar* and *Mahesha (Loknath)* are the eight *Rudras* protecting the temple. *Jagannath* is regarded as *Vairav* and *Vimala* the *Vairavi*. The paintings of *Dasha Maha Vidya*, *Vagadarshini*, *Chhaya Maya* and *Kali* in *Vimala* temple are the Tantric Devis. In temple enclosure and outside images of many tantric side deities are displayed. Just like a *tantric* deity on a *Yantra* (an implement), *Balavadra*, *Shuvadra* and *Jagannath* are inhered on the *Tara*, *Bhubaneswari* and *Shyama Yantra* respectively, inscribed on *Ratna Singhasan*.

*Bamachar* method of tantric worship is narrated in the ritual of Shree *Jagannath*. Accordingly *Pancha Ma Kara* (fine objects used in tantric worship) such as wine, fish, meat, *maithuna* (sexual union) and *mudra* (gesture) are offered to the deity. Indirectly it is also observed in the worship of *Jagannath*. Nutmeg juice and coconut water in bell metal plate, *Birhi* (a kind of pulse)-cake, ginger, raw sugar, half naked dance



of *devadasi* and *yoni mudra* exhibition are the symbol of *Pancha Ma Kara* that are offered to *Jagannath*. *Mendha Mundia Khechudi* (a hotchpotch of rice and spices) is used in the adoration of the deity in the specific *Thali* (metal plate). Some are in the opinion that in the past the head of sheep has been offered to *Jagannath*. All the above facts justify that tantric concept in the temple service are pre-eminent. Similarly the most important ritual, *Navakalevar* is also influenced by the same concept.

*Navakalevar* (the periodical renewal of the wooden body-divine of the deities) is the most important ritual in *Jagannath* culture. As per Hindu religious tradition the same ritual is observed in *Joda Ashadha* (a joint third Indian month, June-July), usually called *Malamasa* (an intercalary month)/*Adhimasa* (an excess month). Generally, in between two *Sankrantis* (the passage of sun from one zodiac sign to another/ the first day of Indian month) if double *Amabasyas* (the day of the new moon) fall, then it is accepted as the intercalary month. The same month is narrated in Hindu scriptures as *Purusottama* month. The intercalary month is determined as per astrological calculation, based on the movement of the Moon. The Moon takes 27 days 7 hours and 43 minutes for revolving once in the zodiac. By that time the sun also revolves in the same. Hence for the meeting of the both, the Moon takes approximately 29 and 1/2 days. As per the solar demonstrated calculation after 2 years, 8 months, 16 days and 16 *Danda* (6 hours and 24 minutes), the lunar month is of four fortnights instead of two.

Only Indian joint 3<sup>rd</sup> month *Ashadha* is accepted for *Navakalevar* ritual. People in general are with the conception that it occurs in every 12 years is a wrong one. As per historical records joint *Ashadha* falls in 8, 11, 19 and 27 years difference. Last *Navakalevar* ritual has been observed in 1996 and after 19 years the same is performed in 2015.

*Navakalevar* ritual is deeply influenced by *Vaishnavism* but impact of tantric worship also plays an important role. The first phase of the said ritual is *Banajaga* and it begins from the tenth lunar day of bright fortnight in the 12<sup>th</sup> Indian month *Chaitra*. A group from the different classes of priests and servants attached to *Jagannath* temple like *Daita*, *Pati Mohapatra*, *Purohita*, *Viswakarma* (an epithet of the architect of gods), *Lenka*, *Kahalia* (a trumpeter) and some temple police start in a procession in quest of *Daru* for the construction of new deities. They take rest in *Jagannath Vallabha* math, and then proceed for *Deuli* math of *Kakatpur* situated by the bank of river *Prachi*. Once upon a time the same was the abode of Mangala. Later on a new temple is built and Mangala has been shifted to it. It is only a legendary belief. Mangala of *Kakatpur*, *Bhagabati-Banapur*, *Charchika-Banki*, *Sarala-Jhankada*, *Ramachandi-Konark*, *Harchandi-Brahmagiri*, *Alamchandi-Atharanala* and *Ugratara-Bhusandapur* are the eight pillar-powers that guard *Shreekshestra*. They are the tantric goddess. Among them the role of *Mangala of Kakatpur* in *Navakalevar* ritual is the most important one. Without her grace



the search of *Daru* is impossible. For her benediction the *Banajaga* team first moves to *Mangala* and completely surrender them before her. Then the worship of the goddess is performed in tantric process. After purification of the temple, the *Smarta* Brahmins recite '*Samputachandi*' and other Brahmins pray her in *Swapnavati Mantra*. At the same time the *Daitas* completely surrender them to get the blessings of the goddess. Being pleased *Mangala* indicates the direction of *Darus*. Accordingly the *Banajaga* team proceeds and collects *Darus* for four deities after completion of all sorts of worship and traditions. Not only in *Mangala* temple but also in *Banajaga* near selected *Daru* tantric Mantras are recited and special sacrifice of pumpkin-gourd near it are some aspects of tantric system. After collection of *Darus* those are brought to *Shreemandir* through the north gate and kept in the *Daru Sala* (an edifice meant for construction of deities) at *Koili Baikuntha* (the rest abode of *Jagannath*) and worshipped daily. The graveyard is the most auspicious ground for tantric worship of *Chandi*. The tantric achieves perfection in satisfying *Devi Chandika* in the burial ground. Similarly *Koili Baikuntha* is the most sacred and holy place and selected for some important parts of *Navakalevar* ritual. It is situated at the outer circumference of *Jagannath* temple in the North-West direction. It is narrated in the *Smruti* scripture, "*Utaresarva Devata, utaresarvatirthani*" (all deities and all holy places in the north). So among nine abodes of *Vishnu* it is the famous one. The other eight are *Niladri Baikuntha*, *Purva Baikuntha*, *Paschima*

*Baikuntha*, *Patala Baikuntha*, *Leela Baikuntha*, *Brahma Baikuntha*, *Ananta Baikuntha* and *Naba Baikuntha*. *Kaivalya Baikuntha* is popularly known as *Koili Baikuntha*. *Baikuntha* is the abode of Lord *Vishnu* and *Koili* the degenerated word of *Kaivalya* that means the relinquishment of the organ of sense and sole existence of soul. During *Navakalevar* ritual the construction of new deities, consecration of *Brahma* in them and divine burial rituals of old images are performed in *Koili Baikuntha*. The old deities take heavenly rest. Hindu mythologies have described it as '*Golaka Vishram*'. All those rituals in *Koili Baikuntha* are related to tantric concept. Besides, during the consecration of deities, fish offering to *Dasha Digapal* in the North East corner of the consecration arbour are just like the tantric practice. After sacrifice of *Magura* and *Sheula* (kinds of fishes) the blood and fish are offer to eight powers, the *Varahi*, *Nrusinghi* and *Koumadi* etc. The effect of tantric concept in this ritual is also well imagined. More importantly the goddess in *Koili Baikuntha* is *Smashan Chandi* is none but a tantric *Devi*.

According to tantric concept water of unused *ghat* provides maximum result. After bathing in it and use of *Kurubeli* (a kind of sweet scented flower) helps in taming all. Similarly in the full moon day of the second Indian month *Jyestha* is the auspicious *Snana Purnima*. On the same day the famous *Snana Yatra* (bathing festival) of the deities is celebrated. The deities bathe in the water of *Suna Kua* and put on





*kurubeli*. According to *Navakalevar* ritual *Darus* kept in *koili Baikuntha* also bathe in four waterfull pots brought from the same well. The well *Suna Kua* is not used all along the year except in *Snana Yatra*. This festival is very much influenced by tantric concept. Besides those, Shree *Jagannath* is worshipped as *Kalika* (the goddess Kali). *Alaka* (ringlet on hair), *Nakuasi* (an ornament for nose) and, *Odhani* (veil on the face) and that *Jagannath* puts on during adoration as per tantric worship. So it is mentioned in tantric scripture -

“*Niladrau Shree Jagannath  
sakshyatdakhinakalika*”.

*Jagannath* is worshipped in *Gopal-mantra*, *Bhubaneswari-mantra* and *Nrusinghatapini Mantra* are the clear symbol of tantric adoration. *Jagannath* is not the *Vedic* deity but now a day the *Vaishnavas* have tried to establish Him as their God but failed. From many angle it is justified to accept *Daru Brahma* as tantric deity. But by what tantric rituals the worship in *Shreemandir* is being influenced is yet to be ascertained. In due course of time the tantric concept in *Jagannath* culture has been reformed

and new stream of worship became customary. However the start of tantric system and the pioneer of it in *Jagannath* temple are still in darkness. As per the Holy Scripture -

“*Utkalenavideshe cha Biraja Kshetramuchyate  
Bimalatma Mahadevi Jagannath vairavah*”.

Shree *Jagannath* never belongs to any religion. He is the assimilation of all community, all philosophy and all concepts. He is the deity of equality. All other Gods are glorious of their majesty. But for *Jagannath* the devotees recite,

“*Jagadanandakandayapranatatriharastha cha  
Nilachalanibasaya Jagannathayatenamah*”.

There ends all religious speculations related to *Daru Brahma* Shree *Jagannath*. The rituals in *Jagannath* culture are influenced by different religious thoughts but tantric concept in the rituals of Shree *Jagannath* is pre-eminent.

---

Dr. Sarbeswar Sena, At/Po- Purusottampur,  
Via- Karilopatana, Kendrapara - 754223.

