



**Sri Jagannath : The divine face of pluralism.** Why I chose this topic ? As an individual, I subscribe to pluralism. I believe in the plural nature of the Nature, the humanity and by implication the plural nature of our cultures, languages, faiths and belief systems.

Some 33 years back, when I came to Odisha for the first time, the Odia culture was unknown to me. Though the name Jagannathan is a common name in my place, I had not seen the Jagannath temple. Somewhere down the line, I started internalizing the idea that Lord Jagannath is a symbol of pluralism, inclusiveness and diversity. My exposure to tribal heartland of

umbilical cord of a common ancestral womb for a fleet second.

Now in my home, in my *puja* room, the Trinity of Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra preside over, the other Gods and Goddesses.

Then the next question I ask myself: Do I qualify to speak on a topic like this ? I am not sure whether I am qualified in terms of my scholarship. But, the very idea of visualising Jagannath as the 'Divine Face of Pluralism' excites me enough and it encourages me to go further.

And, at this point, I gratefully look back and wonder at the distances I have travelled in

## Sri Jagannath : The Divine Face of Pluralism

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Koraput in late 80's had an anchoring effect in shaping my understanding of pluralism.

The very concept of a numero uno presiding deity of the State being seen in the company of His elder brother and younger sister, as a Trinity in the form of wooden images painted in three different colours, was something very new to me. My idea of deities till that time was basically bronze and granite stone sculptures.

Whenever I stand in the dimly lit, sanctum sanctorum of Sri Mandir I feel overwhelmed, not precisely due to religious affinity, but due to an obscure sense of being part of a 'primordial environ' as if I get directly in touch with an unseen

this State, the hills I have climbed and the riddles of this culture I dared to explore. My academic investigations about the genesis of Sun Worship; about the unknown aspects of Konarak; about the ancient contacts between Kalinga and Indonesia opened for me new windows of understanding.

Whether it was about the unexplored "network of wells" in Chaurasi village of Prachi valley or about the roots of tribal substratum of Odisha's impressive superstructure or my experiments with the use of the place names of Odisha to trace its multilayered foundations I was truly blessed with infinite enthusiasm and above all rare opportunities.



I have been fortunate to be the Secretary, Culture of Odisha, (2001-2004) by far the most honourable and in my view the 'highest' position I have ever held in Government of Odisha. I believe that I strived hard to justify that trust.

I feel good that I could be part of some memorable efforts taken. The publication of the "Cultural Atlas of Odisha", a first of this kind initiative in India; publication of 'Charles Grome's Report on the Temple of Jagannath (1805); and 'George Webb's Report on the Temple of Jagannath (1807)' with the help of Professor K.S. Behera and others and the recent documentation of the Management of Naba Kalebara 2015. Besides, my research articles about Odisha published in various national and international journals. All these, in a way have given me the conviction and zeal to deal with this topic.

I request you to consider my views as purely academic in my capacity as a part time researcher, and I will be extremely thankful for any suggestions, viewpoints, which I will humbly welcome with open mind.

### Dealing with the Remote Past

Dealing with the remote past, particularly when verifiable documents are seldom met with, is a great challenge. We have a tendency to start any narrative about the past with a generic beginning long-long ago'. But, most of the time we do not know, 'how long ago' and in fact no one knows ! The undated and unknown realm of distant past gets merged into a known zone of intermediate and immediate past.

The origin and growth of Jagannath Culture has given scope to multiple claims, speculations and theories. That by itself is indicative of its remoteness as well as its plural nature. We need to keep in mind that in the process

of reconstruction of the past, the evidence for an uninterrupted continuity is far more relevant and important than the obscure point of origin.

### The Existing Suggestions

There are many existing suggestions about the genesis of the Jagannath culture. Alexander Cunningham, W.W.Hunter, R.L. Mitre and Dr. H.K. Mahatab are among the scholars who subscribe to the Buddhist origin. Nilakantha Das, Kedarnath Mohapatra and Binayak Mishra believe in its Jaina association. Benimadhab Padhi, A Starling, S N Rajguru and A Eschmann subscribe to Savara tribal origins of the Jagannath worship. A.P.Pattnaik traces the evolutionary growth of Jagannath worship with immigrant Sumerians in the ancient past. These would give a broad idea about the spectrum of possibilities.

Besides, scholars like K.C. Mishra, S.N. Das, Subhakanta Behera, A. Eschmann, Hermann Kulke, G.C. Tripathy and Roland Hardenberg have dealt with various aspects of identity discourses and the regional traditions associated with the Jagannath worship.

I would like to specifically acknowledge the work of Subhakanta Behera who have analysed the construction of identity discourse around Jagannath culture based on Odia literature and other resources during the period 1866 (the unforgettable year of great famine) and 1936, the memorable year of commencement of Odisha as the first linguistic State of modern India.

However, while dealing with the subject, I propose to travel back and forth with a free wielding liberty of an amateur researcher.

### What is Pluralism?

Against this background, let me start the conversation with a question: "What is pluralism?"



Pluralism denotes a diversity of views or stands rather than a single approach or method. A plural society is described as a society in which members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, or social groups maintain and develop their traditional culture or special interest within the confines of a common civilization.

Pluralism as a political theory acknowledges the belief that there should be diverse and competing centres of power in society. Value pluralism is the idea that several values may be equally correct and yet in conflict with each other. And, finally the religious pluralism amounts to the acceptance of all religious paths as equally valid, promoting coexistence.

### The Jagannath Culture and Pluralism

I think there is something fundamentally plural about this place. Since ancient times, there have been multiple identities such as Kalinga, Odra and Utkala associated with this region. Pluralism as a philosophy is manifested in every aspect of life in Odisha. Pluralism seems to be the language of its Soul. The Jagannath Culture at once represents the regional, social, cultural, religious, political and linguistic narratives of Odisha.

As already pointed out, extensive researches have been done and much has been written about the origin and growth of Jagannath Culture with reference to various affiliations.

Buddhism in the context of Odisha was a post-Ashokan development. If there was a considerable resistance from the periphery of Kalinga that merited an invasion from the Mauryan Empire the society of that time had to be essentially a non-Buddhist one.

The Aryan perception of Kalinga and Odra in ancient times was somewhat uncharitable.

Baudhayana in his *Dharma sutra* states that it was sinful to visit Kalinga and if one visits, one should perform penances to redeem oneself. (*Dharmasutra. 14.*, P.Olivelle, “*The Law codes of Ancient India*”). The *Manava Dharmasastra* places the Odras, outside the ambit of the Aryan as they are counted along with the Paundrakas, Dravidas, Kambojas, Yavanas, Sakas, Parads, Pahlavas, Cinas, Kiratas, Dardas and Khasas. (*Manava Dharmasastra.44*, trns. William Jones).

In the *Mahabharata* also Kalinga was not portrayed in a positive light. It was probably due to the fact in the battle of Kurukshetra, the king of Kalinga was an active supporter of the Kauravas, the antagonists.

The *Brihat-Samhita*, a work of astronomy by Varahamihira states that the countries of the Udra and Kalinga were under the direct control of the Sun god. (H.K. Mahatab, *The History of Orissa*, p.12.)

It is relevant to note that though Sun is propitiated as a life-enhancing source of power and healer in the Vedic hymns, the worship of Sun as the Supreme God was not taken kindly by the orthodox school of Vedic order.

The Bharadwajas were the special priests of Pusan, a Vedic Sun god. They were not rated high. Bharadwajas considered Sun to be the highest reality and this view was opposed by Gautama. Bharadwajas were bracketed with other non-Aryan tribes like Suhmas, Dardas, the Barbaras. (For further details see: V.C. Srivastava, *Sun Worship in Ancient India*, Allahabad: Indological Publications, 1972, p.112)

Hence, I emphatically rule out the possibility of the dominant faith of Kalinga during pre-Ashokan times to be one of Vedic Aryan.



Even today the tribes of Odisha account for 22.1 per cent of its population. Nearly 10 per cent of all tribes of India live in Odisha. Hence, we can easily imagine the nature of demography of ancient Kalinga. Based on this, we have reasonable scope to believe that the Kalingan spiritualism and faith systems had their probable roots in the plural and diverse tribal foundations.

Against this backdrop, I would like to focus on few fundamental aspects that contributed to the plural credentials of the Jagannath Culture such as emergence of Jagannath as the 'State God' with all its political ramifications; the close link between Odia language and the Jagannath Culture and how this connection contributed to strengthen the plural nature of Odisha's social fabric.

Besides, I also propose to suggest the probability of close and root-level link between Sun Worship and the Jagannath Culture and present a 'four dimensional matrix of symbolism of "God- King Sun-Lion."'

### **The Uniqueness of Jagannath- the 'Emperor'**

The concept of Jagannath being a unifying yet a plural philosophy can be well understood only when we illustrate that in terms of comparison.

Let us take the examples of the Tamil Society where Lord Murugan is called the Tamil God; the composite Andhra Pradesh where Lord Balaji of Thirumala is considered the most important deity or the case of Kasi Viswanath of Benares and so on. The story of Jagannath is significantly different from these examples. He is literally and figuratively venerated as the State God. In case of other examples given above the sovereign aspect of identity is missing.

In case of Jagannath there is a clear vertical of the God- King relationship well nurtured over centuries. Nowhere else in the country one could see this unique articulation of State Craft through the personality and symbolism of a specific God.

Draksharama inscription (1216 A.D) praises Anangabhimha Deva III as deputy (*ravuta*) and the son (*putra*) of the Trinity namely Purusottama, Rudra and Durga. Anangabhimadeva III acknowledges Purusottama as the divine overlord of the empire. (H. Kulke, *Kings and Cults*, p.23). According to an inscription at Lingaraj temple, he described himself as a servant of the God Purushottama of Puri who was regarded as the real Lord of the Ganga dominions. (E.I,XXX, 1954,p.18).

Gajapati king Kapilendra Deva (1435-67A.D) made Lord Jagannath symbolically responsible for all his important decisions and deeds. In Warangal inscription, he stated to have become the king of the Utkala country at the command of Lord Purusottam-Jagannath of Puri. ( E.I,XXXIII, 1959-60,pp.128-29).

In Rajabhoga section of the Madala Panji, Jagannatha has been described as the "king of the kingdom of Odisha". In Kanchi-Kaberi written by Purusottama Das, Lord Jagannatha has been described as king of Odisha. In this narrative Lord Jagannatha is directly brought to the "battle field" in defense of Odisha.

The real life politics was no different from the poetic narratives. The Suryavamsi king Kapilendra allowed his court poets and priests to call him an "Elected of Jagannath." In one of the inscriptions Kapilendra claimed to have consulted Jagannatha before initiating action against rebellious chiefs. Kapilendra called himself as a servant (*sevaka*) of Jagannath.



As the imageries of the remote past have the rerun the 'past' repeats itself in the 'present'. King Ramachandra renewed and consecrated the deities and installed the deities on the lion throne of Puri temple, after "the destruction and removal of the deities by Kalapahada for almost 20 years" he hailed by the priests as 'Second Indrdyumna'. (H.Kulke, *Jagannath Revisited*, p.216).

Around 1766-1778 A.D. when the Maratha King Januji Bhonsla put his 13 points terms and conditions for ceding of Odisha territory, he brought in the affairs of Jagannath as the first point for negotiation with East India Company. Similarly, the Company also had clear political agenda about the Jagannath Temple. In the preparations for war against the Marathas the Company was guided by their realization and awareness that "the possession of the God had always given the dominion of Odisha" as W.W. Hunter put it many years later.

When the Governor General Wellesley sent his "famous dispatch" addressed to Lt. Col. Campbell he becomes the "first Christian Governor General" who came out with a policy to be pursued with reference to a particular Hindu Temple. Even when the British troops approached Puri town the priests of the temple quoted "Jagannatha's decided answer" to allow the English Government to be the guardian of the temple. Melville did not hide the fact that he used Jagannatha's "decided answer" as a stratagem to win over the feudatory chiefs of Odisha.

When Mukunda Deva (1798-1817 A.D.), Raja of Khurda was confined in Cuttack in 1805 he wrote a poem in which he appeals to Lord Jagannath 'to destroy the enemies of Odisha with his sword in hand'.

Cornwallis advocated a sort of "handle with care" approach when it comes to Puri. Nowhere else in India the British were so careful with an Indian God as that was in the case of Jagannath. No other God of India was the subject matter of street protests and diplomacy in London.

Lord Jagannath as '*Rastra Devata*' as G.N. Dash puts it, had become the binding force of the heterogeneous elements that was the Odisha empire. Later on Lord Jagannath becomes symbol of Odisha Nationalism during Paika Rebellion and also become the focal point of political development during rest of the 19th Century and subsequently.

The famous Puri Temple Case of 1886-87 A.D., further cemented the relationship between Odia Nationalism and Lord Jagannath. One of the most important aspects of Puri Temple Case was the role played by the legendary Madhusudan Das, a Christian by choice (and not by birth) who was later on elected to be the President of the All India Christian Association twice. He gave legal advice to Rani Suryamani and pursued the case in Calcutta High Court, participated in protest meetings and also wrote in Press (*Utkal Dipika*). Madhusudan Das made a passionate call in 1928, in the name of Jagannath.

*"Save Jagannath" / Definitely darkness would be displaced and you will see the path of progress of the race/ Sudarshan Chakra will ring in His powerful hand. / Mother Utkal would assume her former shape and enemy would run away out of fear."*

His religious faith did not stand on the way. Lord Jagannath became the rallying point and



embodiment of Odia nationalism, transcending religious boundaries.

Gopabandhu Das created strong Odia sentiment in the Odia speaking regions of Bihar, Bengal, and Madras Presidency by means of slogan:

*“Let us tread the path and meet the Orissan road and let us tread this path and have a darshan (glimpse) of the black faced god Jagannath”.*

Lord Jagannath thus invoked as the symbol of Odia unity which was the need of the hour for the unification of the Odia-speaking regions.

When Parala Raja took over the responsibility of the first Prime Minister of Odisha he rushed straight to Puri Jagannath to submit himself. Even now the Chief Ministers follow this tradition. Biju Patnaik once said, “Jagannath, there is no leader except Jagannath”.

In fact, Odisha acquired a sort of ‘larger than life political and territorial image’ through the instrument of God-King alliance.

This aspect is most dramatically immortalized in the *Kanchi-Kaberi* legend, which all of you aware of and I need not elaborate. This collaboration or expectation for a ‘political role on the part of Jagannath’ as the ‘God Empire of Odisha’ has been a continuing legacy.

### **Odia Language and Jagannath**

Odisha became the first linguistically reorganized State of Modern India. In that sense 1st of April 1936 was a Red Letter Day. Let us reconstruct this glorious moment in the light of Jagannath Culture and its plural secular base.

Odisha being home to 63 distinct tribes speaking languages and dialects categorized under

different linguistic families such as Austro-Asiatic with its North Mundarian South Mundarian sub groups, Dravidian Desia and Indo-Aryan Languages makes the issue of linguistic identity as one of the most important prerequisites for building a political identity and territorial integrity compared to the religious identity the language identity is a more broad-based one and an inclusive identity cutting across castes, creeds and other identities.

In that sense Odia speaking tracks became the most important contours that defined Odisha as a regional entity. When multiple identities such as Kalinga, Odra and Utkala, which were connected but not coterminous, were wellknown outside the region, the articulation of a common binding force and a singular identity became a historic necessity. In such a situation, building a binding factor which is essentially secular yet enduring one was needed to be identified. Odia language at this stage as the binding force required an impetus and a sort of catalyst.

At a very relevant point of history Jagannath Culture and Odia language played a mutually complementary role. The arrival of Sarala Das and Panchasakha poets in the literary horizon of Odisha made the big difference. Prior to that direct or indirect reference to Jagannath and Jagannath Centric Culture was somewhat mooted and lacked a territorial and political content.

Sarala Das brought all main characters of Mahabharata to Odisha soil. Panchasakha poets added an entirely different local flavor. As S. Behera puts it, Sarala Dasa reconstructed the Indradyumna legend and made Lord Jagannath a thoroughly Odia God. (S. Behera, *Oriya Literature and Jagannath Cult*, (1866 1936). p.24)



The Company administration replaced Odia as the official language and introduced Hindi in Sambalpur region. The most important reason for this decision was the fact that the foreign rulers apprehended the Mahaprasad brotherhood system followed by the Odia speakers was not conducive for the colonial administration's priority.

Whatever the case may be, the fact remains that the foreign rulers were worried about 'Mahaprasad brotherhood' becoming the unifying factor among the Odia speaking employees. Hence, in order to unsettle that equation they wanted to bring in many Hindi speaking non-Odia employees from the Central Province. That calculation led to change in official language policy which resulted in 'language agitation.' This further strengthened the Jagannath centric Odia consciousness through the symbolism of Mahaprasad brotherhood which further proved the plural nature of the Culture in secular terms.

### Sun Worship and Jagannath Culture

Konarak Sun Temple is one of the most important achievements of Odisha. The image of Jagannath sculpted along with Rudra and Durga (as Trinity) in one of the stone panels of Konarak temple provides an organic link between Sun Worship and the Jagannath Culture. Notwithstanding the context of shifting of the *Aruna Stamba* from Konarak and its establishment in front of the Lion's Gate of Jagannath Temple, the significance and symbolism cannot be missed.

In this context, I would like to discuss the probable deep rooted association between the prominent worship of Sun God in Odisha and the Jagannath Culture. Here, it would be appropriate to recall that *Brihat-Samhita*, a work of astronomy by Varahamihira which states that

the countries of the Udra and Kalinga were under the direct control of the Sun god. Varahamihira lived in 6th Century A.D and himself considered a Sun worshipper. Aditya Dasa was his father's name. Varahamihira composed *Pancha siddhantika* – five astronomical treatises which includes *Surya-Siddhanta*. The present Konarak Sun Temple was constructed by Narasimha Deva I of Eastern Ganga Dynasty in 13th century. That means seven centuries before the present Konarak temple was constructed, Varahamihira mentioned that Udra and Kalinga were under the direct control of the Sun god. Hence, it is obvious that Konarak Sun Temple was only the climax of a Sun Worshipping culture and not the beginning. In this context the old brick structures within Konarak Temple Complex have to be taken into account as an evidence for pre-existing Sun worship there. Apart from these, the fact that the entire Sun Temple has been structured as a moving chariot with 24 wheels and 7 horses symbolically reminds probable association between Sun worship and the Jagannath Culture. It is needless here to remind the most prominent iconic symbol of the Jagannath Culture is the "Car Festival" with the imposing chariots of the Trinity. The parallel imageries of Konarak temple as gigantic chariot and the *Nandighosa* - the chariot of Jagannath on the Grand Road are offering an interesting comparison.

I am of the view that the genesis of Sun Worship in Odisha cannot be meaningfully studied without taking the Sun Gods of tribal Odisha because of their antiquity and rootedness. In this regard I recollect the Alice Boner National Memorial lecture; I delivered in 2002 at Bhubaneswar. In that lecture I elaborately dealt with the tribal origins of Sun Worship.



*Singi Arke* is the name of Sun God of Bondas of Koraput who like in the case of Savaras speaks an Austro Asiatic language. Sing Bonga is the name of the Sun God of Mundas who again speaks an Austro Asiatic language. The common stem Sing / Singi in Mundarian language means the “Sun”. That is why the Munda homeland of “Sing Bhum” needs to be understood as land of Sun. Arka is the one of the names of Sun god mentioned in Vedic texts. The name Konarak itself will bear testimony to the association of the term 'arka' with the Sun God.

If the emergence of Buddhism in Odisha is a post Ashokan development the question arises about the nature of faith and belief systems prevalent in ancient Kalinga. Considering the importance of Sun worship among the tribes of Odisha and its predominant position in the ancient Kalinga cannot be ruled out.

If the tribal origins of Jagannath worship are taken into account then the very form of wooden image of Jagannath and its worship will give clue about its tribal roots. Tree worship is one of the ancient forms of worship. Stone sculptures, Metal sculptures and anthropomorphic attributes of divine figures are later developments. Wooden image worship being preceded by a Silpa Shastra driven anthropomorphic metal or stone images are a remote possibility.

I would like to underscore my argument that the tribal origins of the plural foundations of Jagannath culture through the probable medium of Sun Worship with the help of one more example. The origins of Sun Worship, that is the worship of Arka, the Sun god in Konarak has traditionally been associated with Samba Myth. It is relevant to note that Arka is one of the 12 names of Sun god mentioned in Vedic literature.

Then does it give the Sun God of Konarak, a pure Vedic origin? It is very doubtful, because worship of Sun God as a Supreme God was never appreciated within the Aryan concept.

Now I would like to deal with the probable connection between the Sun Worship and the Jagannath Culture at a remote point of time which may probably explain why the worship of Jagannath is being traced to a tribal or a mixed tribal origin.

### **God-King : Sun- Lion symbolism and Narasimha —Jagannath**

Now I propose to suggest the probability of close and root-level link between Sun Worship and the Jagannath Culture and present a ‘four dimensional’ matrix of symbolism of “God- King- Sun-Lion” for your consideration.

The Sun and Lion motif symbolism is near universal in ancient cultures. The lion and sun symbol is based largely on astronomical and astrological configurations: the ancient sign of the Sun in the House of Leo which itself is traced back to Babylonian astrology and near Eastern traditions.

The ancient Persian traditions continued to celebrate this tradition. This root of this symbolism was so strong that the Sun and the Lion were the two prominent elements in Iran’s National Flag until 1979 when the Rule of Shah was overthrown.

Let me discuss one more fundamental aspects of Sun Worshipping Cultures and its probable contribution to the genesis of Jagannath Culture. Sun God is considered the witness to truth. People who take oath in the name of Sun are considered not to be telling untruth. Even today in Odisha people take oath touching ‘Aruna Stamba’ vouching for truthfulness. In front of





Singhadwar stands Aruna Stamba. In Bonda hills even now people take oath in the name of Singi Arke. It is believed that no one dares to tell a lie after talking the name of Sun God fearing retribution.

With this input let me come to Jagannath Culture. Mahaprasad represents one of the dominant symbolisms of the Jagannath Centric Culture. In Odia families, the engagement ceremony is solemnized by exchange of *mahaprasad* or *nirmalya*, so that parties are committed in the name of Jagannath enter the marriage relationship. This is called *Mahaprasad Nirbandha*. In this Mahaprasad, the symbol of the Jagannath Culture stands witness to the words spoken. It is still customary that the first invitation of a Odia marriage, is made to Lord Jagannath so that Lord might attend the ceremony to bless the married couple. The God again becomes witness to the compliance of the words spoken.

Mahaprasad is the divine leveller, symbolic equalizer. There is no question of any 'untouchables' when it comes to *Mahaprasad*. Here *Mahaprasad* plays the role of Sun for whom there is no difference. He is above everything. He is the 'all seeing orb', the 'all seeing eye' the Omniscient.

During my early years in Odisha I saw an Odia movie *chaka akhi sabu dekhuchi*; when I enquired about this I was told Chaka Akhi is the round eyed Jagannath, the all seeing God. When I stand before the wooden image of Jagannath that has prominent round eyes painted, I see the 'all seeing Sun', the primordial force before me; when I think of his Association with Narasimha Avatar, the Sun-Lion symbolism comes to my mind; I recall the reality of the imposing 'Lion-Gate' of Jagannath Temple, the Singha Dwar.

The God-King association is strongly expressed through the 'State God' nature of the "Emperor Jagannath". The royal seat of king is called Singhasan not only because of the lion is considered the 'king of the forests' but also because lion is symbolically associated with Sun and by implication a witness to the truth. The 'royal seat' from where decisions are pronounced has to be Singhasan. Thus the God- King; Sun-Lion matrix perfectly explains the concept of Jagannath as the State Deity, King of Odisha empire, and the special relationship of Puri king with Jagannath Temple and the concept of Mahaprasad and the Lion Gate. It also explains the probable nature of tribal origins of the Jagannath worship.

If we take a long and singular look at the entire length of legends, myths, traditions, epigraphic, and documented evidences put together, one thing becomes very clear that whether it was with reference to the 'undated past' are connected to the 'dated history', the evidence for pluralism is visible.

In the legends and myths there were Savara tribes, Biswabasu, his daughter Lalita, territorial kings like Indradymna and Brahmanical personalities like Vidyapati. There were turbulences, upheavals resulting in "travel of Jagannath" from one place to another through the medium of Nature (i.e. Sea) and the agents of human intermediaries.

Even in the medieval traditional account there were personalities like Kalapahara and the turbulence and upheavals and human intermediaries like Bisar Mohanty who as per traditional account supposed to have played a key role as an ardent devotee of Jagannath in ensuring the continuity of Jagannath culture.



When we come to the documented historical past again Anagabhimadeva, Kapilendradeva, Ramachandra Deva (called second Indradyumna) Marathas, Mughals, British empire, Cornwallis, Campbell, Sarala Dasa, Panchasakha poets and of course Madhusudan Das and Gopabandhu Das.

In the continuing legacy of the Jagannath Culture apart from the institutional systems like temple, priests, kings, Sevaks and administrators the role played and being played by the common men and women, the people of Odisha is prominent and crucial.

It is obvious that the foreign rulers of Odisha were worried about this 'Juggernaut' not because of the might of the local army, but about the power and faith of these millions.

The grandness of the Jagannath culture reaches its peak annually only when Jagannath comes out in open 'Sun Light' and be available to one and all, irrespective of caste, creed or any

other differentiations. That is the day even the 'foreign devotees' of the Jagannath can have their *darshan*. Lord Jagannath is at his plural best on that day. The 'Juggernaut' runs its epic course. And, all roads lead to Puri's Grand Road.

### The Inclusive God

One of the 'litmus test' for an inclusive God is His ability to command the devotion of people who otherwise profess another faith. Take the example of Salabeg. His bone melting songs of devotion are immortal. Madhubabu had no hesitation in linking the destiny of Odias to the protecting Hands of Lord Jagannath.

The story of Salabeg is hearsay to me. But when Sikander Alam sang his Jagannath Bhajans in Ravindra Mandap and Jayadev Bhawan I was an eye witness. When I listened to his Bhajans with closed eyes, boundaries melted and I felt within me a silent breaking of many a "narrow domestic walls".

Jai Jagannath.

