



Lord Jagannath - The Emblem of Cosmic Consciousness

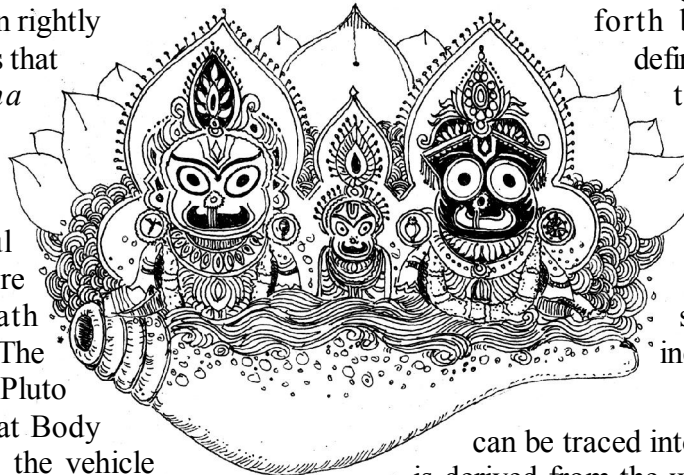
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Ek Brahman ditiya nasti. Ahom Brhmasmi. The fundamental truth of *Adweitabad* of Hinduism propagated by *Adiguru Sankaracharya* is that the *Atma* or Soul and the *Paramatma* are one and inseparable. When the soul attain *Nirbikalpa Samadhi* the individual consciousness is fully absorbed into supreme consciousness without any sense of duality and the soul never parish as it is completely assimilated into the absolute. It has been rightly said by the intellects that *Rathe tu Bamana drustwa punarjanma na vidyate.* In Upanisad the Soul means *Bamana* where the Lord Jagannath represents the Soul. The Greek philosopher *Pluto* has also defined that Body of the individual is the vehicle or the carrier of the Soul, where the body represents the *Yana* i.e the Chariot. The whole irony is that *Atmadarshan* is the highest kind of realisations for attainment of ultimate salvation.

According to *Sanatana Dharma* among the four most important holy shrines of Hindus, *Puri* or *Shree Khetra* is the most important pilgrim centre where Lord Jagannath

Balabhadra and *Subhadra* reside. The origin of Lord Jagannath can be traced into the hoary past most probably to the age of pre-history and the cult of Lord Jagannath is *Prak-Vedic* derived from the oldest civilization of the world. For which it has been rightly said that the uniqueness of Jagannath Cult is that all the old religions and sects of the world are assimilated in this Cult. Many arguments and counter arguments have been put forth by the scholars for defining the truth regarding the origin of Lord Jagannath from various sources like Jainism, Buddhism, Tribal origin or from *Veda & Brahminical* sources since its very inception.

Some says the origin can be traced into the *Jaina* cult. *Jaina* is derived from the word *Jin* which means *Nirgrantha* i.e to conquer over wishes and desires in order to attain *Nirvana*. The *Jaina Gurus* are called *Nathas* like *Adinath*, *Parswanath*, *Rusavanath*. According to which Jagannath is *Jagat Nath* that means the *Swamy* or the Lord of entire universe. Jagannath Cult is the combination of the two major sects of *Jainas* i.e *Sunyavadi* and *Atmavadi*. The scholar like *Adiguru Sankaracharya* the upholder of





Hinduism says Jagannath is the incarnation of Lord Buddha the last Tenth *Avatara* (Kalki *Avatara*) of *Dasavatara* of Lord Jagannath. Buddha has been acknowledged as one of the *Avataras* of Vishnu. Again the four dimensional *Stupa* of Lord Buddha is identified with Lord Jagannath since he is the incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Historians say Puri was an ancient seat of Buddhism. After the conquest of Kalinga by *Samrat* Ashoka, Buddhism was widely spread and gained its popularity after getting the royal patronage. Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang also described that the cult of Buddhism flourished in Orissa in 7th Century A D. and in pre Christian Era Buddhism was having strong foothold in Orissa.

Regarding tribal origin of Lord Jaganath it is said that Nilamadhava was worshipped by *Savara* King Viswabasu inside the dense forest of *Nilagiri* (the Blue Mountain). Subsequently Nilamadhava disappeared and reincarnated in the forms of three deities Lord Jagannath, Subhadra and Balabhadra. These three deities together symbolize Nilamadhava (*Nila-Ma-Dhaba*). *Nila* (Blue) represent Lord Jagannath, *Ma* (Mother) represents Goddess Subhadra and *Dhaba* (White) which represents Balabhadra who are worshiped at Puri. The *Savaras* became known as *Daitas* who are the hereditary servitors of Lord Jagannath. They observed the funeral rites of Lord Jagannath during *Navakalevara* (when the deities changed their body) and the sole responsibilities of *Snana Jatra* and *Sri Gundicha Jatra* are bestowed upon these *Daitas*. The worship of Lord Jagannath by *Savara* is also mentioned in *Darubrahma Gita* written by Jagannath Das in 16th Century AD and in *Deula Tola* written by Nilambara Das in 17th Century AD. Regarding origin of Lord Jagannath historian William Hunter also remarked that the aboriginal people worshipped a Blue Stone inside dense forests

as Nilamadhava the Dravidian God, who was offered *kacha* (Raw) food by the primitive tribes and with the passage of time as the Aryan elements introduced into Hinduism Jagannath he is worshipped as God of Aryan (a more civilized race) who is offered *pakka* (cooked) food. At present these two fold worship co-exist side by side. Till today the *Sauras* or *Savaras* worship trees "the Nature God" known as "Kitung" which means God for which they do not cut trees because they believe that *Kitung* dwells inside the tree. *Kitung* is otherwise known as *Jagant* and according to them Jagant is the 10th incarnation of Vishnu. As it is said the word Jagannath is not a Sanskrit word nor it is a Pali word but a derivation of Austric word *Jagant*.

Mythology is called the language of the primitive, because in Pre-Vedic age due to absence of literature it represented the temporal reflections to attain the penultimate truth if not the truth itself. Early Vedic religion is simple, natural and pure and the Early Vedic Mythology is the outcome of the intellectual inputs of numbers of scholars for generations together for which it is evolutionary in character which represents a dynamic process that converts simple Vedic God to God of a complex character by introducing various new elements into it. At the initial stage the *Griha Devata* transform to Village Deity was used to be worshipped outside the village and ultimately the God of mass is worshipped inside the temple. This signifies the merger or polarization of oriental primitive tribal tradition, the so-called little tradition in to the great tradition of Hinduism, which exist as two bipolar extremes. Hindu Mythology represents some distinctive features of Hinduism, its strengths and weaknesses from Pre-historic era. The body of Lord Jagannath is made up of Neem Wood for which he is regarded as *Daru Brahma* (wooden image). The origin of the



deity is also traced to the Vedic sources and *Bhagabat Gita*. In Vedantic literature of *Rigveda*, *Daru* is used to indicate the material from which the entire universe is made. The philosophy is the basic foundation of all religions and rituals and the superstructure in which mythology is the ornamental use for their decorations.

Lord Jagannath is also identified with the *Bijamantra* OM (the trilateral syllabi A U M). In *Upanisad Pranava* is called *Chatuspada* i.e. four faces of Brahma out of which four *Vedas* have been uttered. Four *Vedas* represents the *Chaturdhamurti*. Lord Jagannath represents *Sam Veda*, Devi Subhadra represents *Yajur Veda* and Lord Balabhadra represents *Rigveda* and Sudarshan represents *Sishu Veda* which also symbolizes *Dharma Artha Kama Moksha*, the four stages of Hinduism. One *Vijamantra* along with one God and one *Veda* formed the *Yogasadhana* for awakening of *Kundalini Shakti* for attainment of final liberation or *Moksha*. In *Rigveda* Sun is the only living God, (the Soul) who has the Chariot. Most probably the *Ratha Yatra* of Shri Jagannath symbolize the same where Sri Jagannath represents the Sun God. Jagannath represents the Night Sun, the Symbol of *Sunyabad* (the blue/black colour), Subhadra represents Morning Sun represents *Shakti* or Symbol of Power (Yellow colour) and Balabhadra represents brightness (Day Sun). The three deities symbolize three stages of senses of mind, Unconscious, Sub-conscious and the Super-consciousness. *Chaturdhamurti* represents Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshana, which symbolizes the unification of three deities. To understand the Supreme Consciousness, it needs higher sense of knowledge than any intellectual synthesis and power of reasoning of human mind what Sri Aurovindo has called the Supermind or the Supramental Consciousness.

Jagannath & The Human Philosophy

Lord Jagannath, the so called *Istadevata* of every Oriyas whose rites and rituals are fully identified with the manly character. Sri Jagannath is identified as the Lord of Masses since the rites and rituals observed in the temple have wide similarity with day-to-day activities of common man. The different rites of the deities that are performed everyday in the temple are *Dantadhapana* (cleaning tooth), *Snana*(bath), *Chandanapuspa dharana* (flower decoration), *Bhojana* (Eat), *Sayana* (Sleep) etc. The worship of Lord Jagannath inside the temple is done in tantric method. *Tantra* means tan (body) + tar (above). The *prasada* (offering) of Lords called *Mahaprasada* or *Kaibalya*, which is other wise called *Arnabrahma* accepting it gives liberation to *Jiva*. It is prepared by traditional method of steaming for preservation of nutrient value of food as it is done in the house of common men. Besides *Chhapana Bhoga* is offered to the Lords like *Areesa*, *Kheeri*, *Chenakakara*, *Gaja*, *Podapitha*, *Rabidi* etc which are the typical foods of Oriyas. Like common man the Lords also suffer from fever for a period of fifteen days in a year after *Deva Snana Purnima* (Cermonial Baths of Lords) immediate before the *Ratha Yatra*. The significance of this occasion is that the deities take heavy bath and give darshan to devotees in the *Gajabesha* after which the three deities are kept in *Anasara* (convalesce inside the sanctum for treatment) and given some natural medicines, which are served only by the *daitas*. During this time the devotees are not allowed for the darshan of the deities.

Sri Jagannath is called the Lord of entire universe with whose name the *Bada* (grand) is always associated. He is called *Badathakura* and the *besa* is called *Badasinghara* (decorated with flowers) whose temple is *Badadeula*,



whose sewakas are called *Badapanda*, whose prasada is called *Mahaprasad*, and whose *danda* (road) is *Bada Danda*, whose *dwara* (door) is called *Singhadwara* and the *Samudra* (Sea) where he resides is called *Mahodadhi*.

Relevance of Nabakalebara

Nabakalebara symbolizes the basic human philosophy of life and death in order to realize the eternal truth of life. As it has been illustrated in the Bhagabat Gita that just like the *Atma* of a *Jiva* takes a new birth leaving its old body so also the Lord change their old wooden body and take a new form once in twelve years when two *Ashadha* months are fall in a year. The term *Navakalevara* implies New Body (*Nava* means New and *Kalevara* means Body). The bodies of the deities are made up of Neem Wood and the Neem Tree is selected two to three months before, when the *Sevakas* of Lord Jagannath get the heavenly order from Kakatpur Mangala (the temple of the Goddess is 60km away from Puri). The significance of the Neem tree is that it contains the four symbols of *Sankha*, *Chakra*, *Gada* and *Padma* respectively, from which the body of the Lord is made. The Lords are called *Darubrahma*, which means *Daru* (the wood) containing *Brahma* (the *Paramatma* or the Supreme Soul). During the process of transfer of *Brahma* from the old wooden body to be kept in the new body, which is carved and in the darkness the *sevaka* with his eyes and hands closed bound with new cloths for which he is not allowed to feel or touch the *Brahma* directly. It has been said that the *Brahma* of Sri Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra are rare *Salagramas* where as it is quite different in Lord Sri Jagannath.

Ratha Yatra and Its Significance

When we cast our glance into the history of Ratha Yatra it has been said that during the time of Yayati Keshari who was a Soma Vansi

king, the height of Jagannath Temple was 48hands. The three *Rathas* were pulled from *Singha Dwara* to *Balagandi*. The three Chariots with four wheels were decorated over with gold coated *Ratna Chanduas* with Golden Bowls and decorated with colourful designs and devices. The *Badyakaras* used to go in front of the *Rathas* and the devotees behind. At that time the Ratha Yatra was held for one day and gradually it continued for seven days.

In between the Ratha Yatra was not organised for many years due to the attack of Yavanas like Kalapahada, Moghuls like Aurangjeb who tried to close the festivals forever and provoked Mir Mahammad accordingly. After seeing Lord Jagannath in dream as Allah he again ordered to continue the same. But during the royal patronage of Marahatta kings the festival was promoted in many ways. Marahatta Guru Brahmachari was doing *pahandi* at the time of Car Festivals. Rani Ahalyabai constructed the road of Lord Jagannath and King Bira Kishore Dev made some major developments of the Car Festival. In the 12th Century the King Chodaganga Dev employed Rathakaras and subsequently Anangabhima Dev employed other *Sevayatas* in the services to Lords before the festivals. Thereafter the Ganga kings Narasimha Dev, Suryavamsi king Purusottam Dev brought certain major changes to make the Ratha Yatra more attractive and beautiful. The woods were brought from Tribhuban Jungle for making the cars. The heights of *Rathas* were increased to 32hands. Suryavamsi King Kapilendra Dev had constructed another *dwara* in Sri Gundicha Temple called *Nakachana Dwara* facing to the sea beach. During the rein of his grand son Pratap Rudra Dev, Gajapati himself was scavenging the *Bada Danda* during the Car Festival. *Chera Pahara* in the Chariot was started during the time of Suryavamsi king Purusottam Dev. From that day it has been continuing till date.



Ratha Yatra otherwise called *Nandighosa (Ghosa) Yatra* or *Sri Gundicha Yatra* has a wide relevance not only in India but all over the world. It is usually held in the month of July every year and continue for a period of nine days when thousands of devotees assemble at Puri for holy *darshan* of three deities, Lords Jagannath, Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra. The Nine days *Yatra* represents *Nabadha Bhakti*. The four main functions that are observed during the *Yatra* are *Pahandi Vije* of three Lords Jagannath, Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra and *Cherapahara* by the King or Gajapati of Puri and ultimately the *Ghosa Yatra* and *Bahuda Yatra* of three Lords. In *Pahandi Vije* the deities are brought by the devotees who take them to the three Chariots made for the three deities. After performance of some rites and rituals Gajapati or the king of Puri sweep the three Chariots with golden broom and sprinkle sandalwood water on the floor in order to purify them. After observance of all rituals and worships to the Lords the three Chariots are pulled by thousands of devotees on the *Badadanda* (grand road) of Puri up to Sri Gundicha temple (aunt house of Lords). On the ways they are fed *Podapitha* (specially baked rice cakes). The deities after reaching Sri Gundicha Temple give *darshan* to countless devotees every day with ten different *Besas* continuously for eight days. Then the deities return to Sri Mandir (the main temple) riding their Chariots which is popularly known as *Bahuda Yatra*. The *sevakas* who are allotted to provide different services to Lords during the *Yatras* are called *Dahuka, Chitrakaras, Khuntia, Dolia, Pahandia* etc. The three *Rathas* are called by different names and are different from each other so far as their colour and structure are concerned. The *Ratha* (Chariot) of Balabhadra is called Taladhawaja, which has fourteen wheels, and the *Ratha* of Devi Subhadra is called Devadalana, which has

twelve wheels and that Jagannath is called Nandighosa which has eighteen wheels. The colour of Taladhawaja is Green and Red, that of Subhadra is Red and Black and that of Jagannath is Red and Yellow.

Ekam Satya Bipra Bahuda Badanti. Truth is one but called by many names. The holy *Pranava* from which the three deities Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra originated where Subhadra symbolises *Brahma* who is the Creator and Sri Jagannath symbolises Bishnu and Siva symbolizes Sri Balabhadra the Mahakala or the Destroyer. The basic philosophy Lord Jagannath is based upon is the central ideology i.e *Bahu Jana Hitaya, Bahu Jana Sukhaya*. Jagannath cult has crossed over all the narrow barriers and compartmental divisions of the society on which the caste divisions rest. The fundamental ethics of Bhagbat Geeta illustrates that the division of society is based upon the *karma* or the deeds of the individual concerned and not upon the caste, which is ascribed to the mankind and not achieved through individual dignity and self-consciousness. After all, caste is not made for the welfare of the society rather it create divisions in the society. It preaches the democratic principles and universal brotherhood i.e equality among the un-equals. The positive philosophy of Jagannath cult teaches us that from the Raja the supreme authority of the state to the *Praja* the common man all are one and the same and there should neither be any discrimination nor any differentiation between the two, for which the cult of Lord Shri Jagannath is said to be the rarest of the rare cults and perhaps the best cult in the world, which embraces all sects and religions.

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