



Brahmanda Chhatradanda - Shree Jagannath

Somanath Khuntia

When King Indradumna, 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 Orissa, 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* is 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 feared 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 the 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 manuscript *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 Indradumna heard from Bidyapati that *Brahma* was at Puri, he immediately went there, and wanted a temple to be built by him. His wish was fulfilled, but 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 volunteered himself to carve the deities. When asked what his name was, he said emphatically, "My name is Viswakarma, the Divine Architect ! I am from another world." People all around laughed at him thinking him to be a fool. However,



King Indradumna assigned the work to him. Viswakarma made three conditions.

- 1) He must be confined in a room where he would work for 21 days.
- 2) He would not take any 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 21 days were up. There was no body there. The old man 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 TRIO 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 documented 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* from *Niladri Mahodaya*

"Rajadhi Rajarajeshwar

Ishwara Thakur, Manima !

Anantakoti Brahmanda

Ishwara Thakur, Manima !

Chaturdasha Bhubana

Ishwara Thakur, Manima !

In the daily rituals of the temple this *sloka* 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 creations !"

The *khuntia* worshipper who recites this *sloka* then scatters flower 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

Ganesharchhit Padam

Jagannatha Swami, Nayana Pathagami, Bhavatume "

The meaning is :

Even Gods like Rama, Shambhu (Siva), Brahma the creator, Surapati, the king of Gods, Ganesh, the god of wisdom, who all 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 palmleaf scripts *Lokabimarsa*, *Lokatattwa* and *Lokamimansa*. As life evolves from lower to higher forms, consciousness becomes more individualised and expansive. The main *Lokas* are 21 in number. They are as follows :

The Underworld Lokas :

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

The Earth Lokas :

8) Loka, this earth, 9) Pitru-loka, 10) Matru-loka, 11) Preta-loka, 12) Bhuta-loka, 13) Jaksha-loka, 14) Swarga-loka,

The Higher Lokas

15) Divya-loka, 16) Kinnara Loka, 17) Gandharva-loka, 18) Devaloka, 19) Suraloka, 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 during special darshan times. If he is present, there will be a loud rustle in the crowd.

2. Talatala Loka

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

3. Rasatala 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 can not enter the temple, if one is spotted inside, it is said to have come from this Loka. If this



happens, it is felt that the food that day was cooked in an impure way. All offerings must be stopped and the food to be 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 when looking at 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 attracted to some unknown person, he is certainly related and has come down from this Loka. Inhabitants of Pitru-loka come to the 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 signaled by a bad smell, like that of a dead body.

12. Bhuta Loka

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

13. Jaksha Loka

People in a crowd wearing gorgeous dresses 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 suddenly there will 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 that time. Beings from Divya Loka do not come in form, but only as light and auras. There are other signs, but mortal man can not 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 *Asta Sakhis* : Rambha, Urbasi, Menaka, Tilottama, Manjulosi, 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. Gandharva Loka

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 precede 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, sandal 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 *Brahma*, the Supreme.

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, all 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
2. Vishnu Loka - the abode of Vishnu
3. Brahma Loka - the abode of Brahma
4. Asura Loka - the abode of demons
5. Yama Loka - the abode of Yama, the king of death
6. Naga Loka - the abode of snakes
7. Graha Loka - the abode of planets

A. From Shiva Loka : Shiva comes on Snana Purnima day to see the Bathing Ceremony of Lord Jagannath. He comes in disguise of a sage with trisula.

B. Lord Vishnu comes to see Dola Festival, or Colour Day held in the temple during Holi celebrations in the beginning of Spring. He comes as any other devotee but he would have with him big garlands, to be offered to Lord Jagannath.

C. Brahma comes during Chandan Yatra, or Spring Festival. He stays for twenty-one days. He can be identified with one who recites *Vedas* in front of the deities.

D. From Asura Loka : *Asuras*, or beings of demonic physical instincts come at the time of rice offering, especially at the time of mid-day *Bhoga*.

E. Yama; the King of Death: Someone from his Loka comes when a dead body is found in the premises of the temple.

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 Vimala from Sakti Loka.
5. the Entrance by Gatekeepers Jaya and Vijaya from Divya Loka.
6. the devas surrounding the Chariot being. Ram, Laxman, Krishna, Nrusingha, Narayan, 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 Pitruloka.

The chariots of Balabhadra and Subhadra are guarded by many divine beings also.

Aesthetic Experiences

Some of the most mysterious phenomena reported from time to time by the people of Puri, especially the worshippers (*Sevakas*) of Jagannath Temple, are as follows :

1. 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 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 three miniature golden forms representing



Jagannath, Subhadra and Balabhadra are laid down on the beds to sleep. Then arati-the offering of a lamp is done, the 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 day 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."

Charchika was not prepared to take this insult from Balabhadra and in anger she replied. "I am not the proud one. You are the one who is ostentacious, 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 enter so that I may meet my Lord. Why are you ostracizing me for such a little offence ?

After that Balabhadra became even angrier and lost his temper. "Your misbehaviour to Bitarachha Mohapatra, the chief priest is of grave concern. I am ordered by him to prevent you from entering the temple any more. How can you do 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 nay 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 becomes very agitated. It was almost morning. The sevakas were coming fout rom 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 saree, Charchika left the temple for



the house of Bitarachha Mahapatra. As she approached, she saw the old man sitting on the front steps. So she quickly covered her face with a 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 Mohapatra 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 become 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 Mohapatra 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 is 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 did not you go to the temple and have darshan of Lord Jagannath ?" When so many people come from distant places to see Him, you are living 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 whenever 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 hands 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 felt 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 lighted. Mahapatra felt as if his eyes had betrayed him and he was going mad.

"Do not worry, father," Charchika said. Bitarachha Mahapatra told 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 obtain due permission from the Lord for your reinstatement." With such assurance of Mahapatra, Charchika disappeared from Bitarachha's house. It was after midnight and 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 can not 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 demigods. 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 Ratha 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 demand 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 emerging from the floor a framed stone image of the devi 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.

2. By head priest Pattajoshi Mahapatra, in the year 1810.

Vibhisana was one of the brothers of the demon king Ravana in Lanka during Tretaya Yuga. Yet he took shelter at the feet of Lord Rama. After the death of Ravana, he was made king of Lanka. He always felt that Rama was the Supreme Lord, and it is believed by the people of Puri that he comes every day to Lord Jagannath, feeling that He is Sri Rama Himself. Like all the devas, Vibhisana comes to see and enjoy the last ritual at midnight, known as Pahuda Arati.

It was in the year 1810, when there was no electricity and the town was dark at night. When returning home through the horse gate of the temple, head priest Pattajoshi Mahapatra felt somebody walking beside him. The person was not visible owing to the darkness, but he was so huge, it seemed his head was touching the sky. Pattajoshi Mahapatra was totally overwhelmed. Out of fear, he questioned, "Who are you, Sir?" The answer was, "I am Vibhisana from outer space. I come here daily to see the last ritual of Lord Jagannath."

Still the head priest doubted him. He asked again, "Please give me some proof that



you are from the outer space !" So Vibhisana gave him the huge golden armlet he was wearing and vanished. Even now, almost 200 years later, this ornament given by Vibhisana of Devaloka is worshipped in the residence of Pattajoshi Mahapatra's family. It may be seen and verified. The ornament is the size of a wheel of a bullock cart. It could never have been used by a human being.

3. By a Mekap worshipper in the temple, in the year 1890.

The Mekap worshipper in Jagannath Temple is in charge of the deities' dresses and the store room known as Ratna Bhandar. Inside this sealed room are kept costly pearls, diamonds, emeralds, golden necklaces and many other precious ornaments used to decorate the deities during Suna Vesha or Golden Decoration. The deity in charge of this store room is Loknath, who is a form of Lord Shiva Himself. It is told that anyone who is greedy and tries to steal any ornaments from here will one day suffer from leprosy and everybody in his family will also die.

This actually happened once, in 1890. One Biswanath Mekap stole from the store room some ornaments, thinking nothing would happen. In his dream that night, two cobras entered his bedroom and he was bitten. His wife heard someone saying in a loud voice, " We have been sent from Nagaloka by Lokanath Shiva to punish him."

Biswanath Mekap died of snake bite and all his family members died prematurely and he was left heirless.

4. By Padmanav Khuntia, a worshipper of Jagannath Temple, in the year 1902.

Padmanav Khuntia was a very humble sincere worshipper of Lord Jagannath. He used

to return to his house at 2 A.M. after attending the last Pahuda Ceremony of the temple. It was his daily habit to bring from the temple used flowers and garlands. These he would later offer to local deities such as Mothers Dakshinakali, Shyamakali and Baseli. On his way home, he would throw petal to the smaller temples as he passed by.

However, one night he forgot to offer any to Shani Temple, the temple of planet Saturn. Suddenly he felt someone following him in the darkness. Dogs also barked and sensing the presence of some being Khuntia looked back. He saw only the head of someone, but not clearly visible. As if in a humble way, the voice requested, "Just a leaf of the garland used by Him, I am Shani ! (the god of planet Saturn).

He vanished at high speed when only a leaf from the garland was presented to him. Khuntia stood dead still and speechless. Later on when he told his friends of this event, they said, "Khuntia, you are saved ! He would have caused you many difficulties had he not been obliged. He is the planet Shani, who comes to Lord Jagannath, but usually in the disguise of a lame man or a one-eyed person or someone with a deformed body. You were lucky to meet him, but still we hope you will not meet him again !"

5. By a decoit (thief) from Bihar State, in the year 1910.

A thief from the state of Bihar wanted to steal the costly *Chitta*, which Lord Jagannath wears everyday over his third eye. The present value of this rare gold ornament studded with priceless gems would be millions of rupees. This thief was known as Bihari Daku. He went to the temple daily to learn every detail about the timings of the rituals, as the deities were guarded closely. Finally he came to know that



after Pahuda, the last ritual of the day, nobody is allowed inside the temple. So he made a plan. Wearing a black cloth, he hide himself inside the temple one night, just behind the sealed doors of the inner sanctum. He was with the divine trinity, but with evil motive. After all left, he stealthily climbed the altar where Lord Jagannath is worshipped. When he was about to take off the divine *Chitta* from the forehead of Lord Jagannath, he felt as if bitten by a thousand snakes !

The next morning worshippers and many other pilgrims saw Bihari Daku lying dead on the temple floor, surrounded by five cobras, who were also dead. The most aged worshipper present there said, "From Patala or Naga Loka devas come up as snakes to guard the deities while asleep.

6. By Hazuri Balabhadra, grand son of the great hero and worshipper of Lord Jagannath, Chakhi Khuntia, in the year 1940.

"I was standing on the roof of my house where the temple is more visible," reports Hazuri Balabhadra. It was 5 A.M. I have forgotten the date, but the month was July. I saw strange rays of light coming from the Chakra on top of the temple, like a clear line of brilliant light leaving the temple at high speed. This lasted for more than 10 minutes.

Out of great curiosity, I asked my father, He replied, 'You are very lucky. Only you saw the vehicle of some other devas coming to Lord Jagannath.' "I am thrilled even now when I tell you this !" This story was told to the father of this writer in the year 1940.

7. By Jayaram Singhari, a worshipper of Jagannath Temple, in the year 1963.

Jayaram Singhari was considered one of the most learned men in the society of

worshippers in the present day. He did not have any educational degrees or diplomas but he had profound knowledge of the ancient epics of India. Many people coming from different parts of India revered him as their spiritual guide. He only ate Mahaprasad, the rice meal offered to Lord Jagannath. One day for some reason his sons did not bring it from the temple. Even though he had not taken any food all day, he never revealed his hunger. Only his wife knew. As she looked sad, Singhari consoled her, "He will give, He will send !" But at midnight who would give ? All slept, his wife also.

After sometime there was a soft knock at the door. On opening the door, the old man found a banana leaf in which there were seven types of temple cakes ! Nobody was there. The next morning when he narrated this happening, nobody believed him. All day long this miracle of Lord Jagannath was very much in mind. The next night a voice told Singhari in a dream, "Did you eat everything that was given ?"

8. By Harihar Guru, who was one of the greatest worshippers of Jagannath Temple. He was called Prakruta Panda, a real worshipper; for the help he rendered to all. This event occurred in 1969.

Harihar Guru lived in recent times but he was one of the most honest, simple and sincere worshipper ever to serve Lord Jagannath. In spite of his limited income, it was his habit to help poor people. In fact, he became poor himself, helping others.

He used to come daily to the temple at 4 A.M. by the west gate, known as *Byaghradwar* or "Tiger's Gate". One morning he saw three beautiful ladies also going through the same gate. They had a divine fragrance around them and were nicely dressed,



decorated with flowers but no ornaments. Their faces were veiled. It was raining heavily at that moment, but Guru could not see them wet, even though he was completely drenched and shivering from the cold. The three ladies seemed to be going inside as if there were no downpour. Their saris were dry and there was no sign of their foot prints on the earth.

Seeing all of this, Guru approached them to ask who they were. They simply vanished ! Only the sound of soft laughter was heard. When he narrated this episode to his friends, he was told that the ladies were divine beings from Kinnara Loka.

9. By Krishna Chandra Ray; an Oriya man from Khurda District, in the year 1969.

Koili Vaikuntha is the place where old deities are buried during Nabakalebara Yatra, or the great festival of Metamorphosis in which the deities are changed and new ones made. This occurs only after a gap of atleast twelve years. *Dayitapatis*, who are considered to be the kith and kins of Lord Jagannath, carry the old deities out, just like dead bodies. Nobody except them can see this procession. It is said that if anyone else sees this event, he will die immediately.

Krishna Chandra Ray from Khurda district considered this to be an act of blind belief, a silly superstition. So on this special day he hide himself inside the temple at midnight. When the *Dayitas* carried the old deities to Koili Vaikuntha, he saw it all from the branch of a tree. The *Dayitas* returned after burying the deities. The whole atmosphere was dark and frightening. Ray heard the sobbing of ladies. He saw rays of different colours, but nobody was there. It had been told that beings of other Lokas come in the most sorrowful

mood. As the master of the universe leaves His body, all cry, out of deep sadness.

In the early morning hours of the next day, people found the dead body of Ray. This happened in the year 1969. The notes he had written of what he had seen was found beside the body.

10. By worshipper Harihar Khuntia, the father of the writer, in the year 1970.

Harihar Khuntia lived to the robust old age of 97. He was the spiritual teacher of pilgrims coming from Calcutta (Kolkata). When at Puri he would spent most of his time inside the temple, sometimes sixteen hours a day. When in Calcutta, he would spend most of his time discussing how Lord Jagannath is worshipped by all, even by the gods and goddesses. He was answering to all their querries. One day there was a very sceptical man sitting next to him. He putting all sort of odd questions to him.

One doubtful man from Bolpur questioned him, 'Is our Kali of Kalighat Lord Jagannath ?' The reply was spontaneous, "You take these flowers I have taken from Lord Jagannath and give it to the goddess Kali ! You will see Him in Her. Actually it was done and the next morning he came running and shouting, "I have seen Him, I have seen Him !"

11. By worshipperJairam Singhari, in the year 1972.

After Pahuda, the last ceremony of the day, no one is allowed to be inside the temple. Many divine beings come to attend the Lord at this hour. In the year 1972, Jairam Singhari, a worshipper, who was decorating the deity daily, narrated about this occurrence. He saw two ladies mysteriously entering the west gate of the temple after the doors were sealed in



the night. They were quietly talking to each other. From their talk, Singhari overheard that the name of one was Manujosha. Later he read in a reference book called *Amar Kosha* that she is one of the eight dancing girls of Kinnara Loka, a space beyond this earth.

12. By worshipper Laxman Mudali in the year 1985.

On the alter of *Ratna Singhasana* of the temple, seven gods and goddesses are worshipped. They all come from spheres beyond this world.

Name of Deities	Sphere Belonging To
1. Lord Jagannath	Vishnu Loka or Golaka, the abode of Srikrishna.
2. Lord Balabhadra	Shiva Loka, where Lord Shiva resides.
3. Lord Sudarshan	Swarga Loka or Heaven, the abodes of divine beings.
4. Lord Neela Madhava	Kinnara Loka, or abode of divine dancers. According to the palm leaf script, <i>Indira Nilamani Tattwa</i> , Neela Madhava is a dancing deity.
5. Goddess Subhadra	Sura Loka-All Suras derive strength from Divine Mother.
6. Goddess Lakshmi	Deva Loka -the abode of divine beings with only divine qualities.
7. Goddess Saraswati (Or Bhudevi)	Bhu Loka, or the Earth. One of the names of Saraswati is Bhudevi, as she is made of clay for Saraswati Puja every year.

The worshippers known as *Puja Pandas* perform puja to them daily. These are Puja Pandas, one for Lord Balabhadra, one for Goddess Subhadra, and one for Lord Jagannath and the other four deities. If there is any mistake in the recitation of *slokas* or in the text, the

worshipper will be reprimanded by the deities themselves. Some sign of disapproval or some bad things must happen. The priests who are the direct worshippers of the deities do not feel that the images are lifeless wood. Rather they are much more vibrant with life force than man, as they (the deities) do not belong to this world, but other higher spheres where energy is stronger.

Once a worshipper forgot to do *puja* to Neela Madhava when he was serving the five deities. When he returned home, he came to know that his wife has gone mad. She was found repeating only the name "*Neela Madhava, Neela Madhava,*" over and over again. After three days the worshipper realised the fault he had committed. As ordered in a dream, he held a *yagna* or holy fire ceremony. Only after that was performed his wife was cured of madness. As soon as she regained her senses, she asked, "Did you forget Neela Madhava on that day I went mad ?"

13. By Ganesh Mishra, in his book "*Santha Mala*", about a happening in the 18th century.

There was a very poor Brahmin whose habit was to recite the *Bhagavat Geeta* to the people who would be interested to listen to it. His wife was very much annoyed as she was without meals often. The husband would say, "I have Lord Jagannath to help" But where is He ? One day she was totally upset. Her husband was away teaching the essence of *Geeta* to the people. In fact his wife was dying of hunger.

She saw a black man carrying rice, vegetables and milk shouting, "Where is Geeta Panda's house ?" The wife, as her name was Geeta Panda, came out trembling. The young man told her, "Kindly accept all these offered by one of your friends."



"No please stay a little longer, you can eat. My husband will be coming now." "No, I have many works, I can not stay."

When the brahmin was told about all these by his wife, he became almost senseless. With weak voice, he said "You, poor lady, you saw Him, you are so lucky' Oh Lord Jagannath !"

14. By Ganesh Mishra, in his book "Santha Mala", about a happening on July 7- 1902.

Dasia Bauri from Dandamukundapur, in the district of Puri, Orissa took a coconut to be offered to Lord Jagannath through the priests of the temple. But they out of mockery did not accept the fruit. Dasia was extremely sad, cursing the heritage of the worshippers.

Out of pure devotion he stretched his hands and prayed, "Oh Lord, kindly accept this coconut". He was standing outside at the Lion's Gate of the temple. People saw two hands emerge from within the temple to take the coconut from Dasia. It was He who blessed Dasia in the presence of many.

15. Recorded in Madala Panji, the temple record book in 1818.

This is another true story of a devotee named Bandhu Mohanty of Jajpur to prove how Lord Jagannath descends from His throne to help His devotees.

Bandhu Mohanty was very poor and as such he had no support to maintain his family, consisting of his wife and two sons. His wife asked him out of agony one day that why he was not going to his rich friend of whom he was so proud. The friend about whom Bandhu Mohanty mentioned was Lord Jagannath, but his wife did not realise the essence of what her husband was saying all the time. So his wife

compelled him to go to the house of the friend whosoever he was. He under took his journey to Puri. It was night already. Their two little sons were crying for food. They came just near the temple. Bandhu Mohanty consoled his wife saying. "My friend's palace is too big. He is very rich but it is not right to enter his house now as it is night. We will go tomorrow."

All slept, being weak, hungry, tired and sad. But his wife did not sleep.

Suddenly, on a golden tray many kinds of food were brought by a robust man whose colour was very black. He left the place very quickly. She fed her sons and when Bandhu Mohanty was awake from his sleep, he was thunder-struck, hearing everything from his wife.

But the golden plate was missing from the temple and found with them. This made a great noise in the small town. The police arrested all the family members and they were produced in the court before the king for severe punishment the next day.

The king dreamt that very night of Lord Jagannath. As if giving order, the Lord said to him, "Oh King ! When guests come to you, do you not entertain them ? So release Bandhu Mohanty at once; he is my devotee." It was done, and he was given service as a cook in the temple.

Even now, descendents of Bandhu Mohanty are the main cooks in the kitchen of the temple and they daily offer food to Lord Jagannath on a golden Tray.

16. By Godavari Pujapanda on April 2, 1890.

A Puja Panda worshipper is one who does puja and offers food to the deity. While



doing so, in the course of offering, he hold water in his palm. A priest cannot sanctify the offering unless the deity is reflected in the water which he holds.

Once it happened that no reflection was seen for some unknown reason. This disturbed all. Nobody, not even the king knew why the deities were angry. Was the Puja Panda insincere ? Was the food not cooked with purity ? Not knowing what to do the worshippers remained sitting on the altar where Lord Jagannath is seated. The king was determined not to touch water until he could know the cause. He dreamt as if Lord Jagannath was telling him, 'Oh king, I was not

in the temple. I went to eat food prepared by Vedamata with love and loyalty. How can there be any reflection if I am away from my devotee. Now I am in the temple, so offer the food."

Immediately, the Puja Panda was informed about the dream of the king, and everything went well again.

Somanath Khuntia lives at Manikarnika Sahi, Hazari Lane, Puri - 752001.

