



Place of Chakratirtha in the Cult of Lord Jagannath

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Chakratirtha is an important pilgrim centre of Sri Kshetra Puri. It is situated in the eastward direction of the holy town at a distance of about three kilometers from the Grand Temple of Lord Jagannath abutting the famous sea-beach in an elegant spiritual surrounding. In the religious practice of the Hindu pantheon, Chakratirtha is adored as a holy place of many sacred beliefs. This place is as much religiously sacrosanct as any other peripheral sanctimonious place of the Nilachala Dham of Lord Jagannath. Commonly acclaimed as a Tirthakshetra of the holy town, Chakratirtha is famous for Tantra worship of Sri Nrusingha in Hindu religious practice. As stated in scriptures, Sri Nrusingha, the first lord of Sri Kshetra, was consecrated at Chakratirtha in three different divine appearances seated on the Yantra of the Divine Disc (Chakra-Yantra) known as Abhaya Nrusingha, Chakra Nrusingha and Laxmi Nrusingha, each name having a spiritual significance of its own. The form of Abhaya Nrusingha is worshipped as the Lord of enormous compassion. He appears incandescent to confer divine blessings on His devotees constricted to total surrender in impeccable devotion. His Chakra Nrusingha appearance is worshipped as Durgamadhab Swarup bound by an esoteric order of Tantric rituals. In the third category of His appearance, He is worshipped as the Lord of the Universe glorifying His divine presence with His consort, Mahalaxmi.

As stated in the Gita, the Lord descends on earth as a divine incarnation when there is decline of religion and uprising of un-righteousness in the celestial creation. The Nrusingha form of the Lord as consecrated at Chakratirtha, is one such appearance of His divine incarnation. It is stated in Puranas that the Lord manifested in this appearance from a wooden prop of Hiranyakasipu's palace at the earnest divine wish of His devout worshipper, Prahallad. This was His wondrous manifestation signifying the resplendent attributes of His omnipotent expanse. This also meant that God in His Nrusingha Avatar had displayed Himself as Daru Brahma on earth. It is believed in this connection that, like Sri Nrusingha, Lord Jagannath was also at a later period consecrated as Daru Brahma conforming to a meaningful spiritual significance in the Hindu pantheon. There are many sacred legends about this spiritual incident in the cult of Lord Jagannath. It is for this reason that Lord Jagannath is worshipped as Daru Brahma at Puri in Sri Nrusingha Mantra in the ritualistic practice of the Divine Trinity. Sri Jagannath Das, the author of the Oriya Bhagabat, at the beginning of his spiritual poetry has first prayed to Lord Nrusingha and said, "Oh, Lord ! I worship Thy holy feet; you are the first infinite Lord of the Universe." Chakratirtha is thus the citadel of Lord Nrusingha in Sri Kshetra Puri. He is worshipped here in a Tantric order of peerless excellence.



Lord Nrusingha has thus a unique place in the ceremonial rites of the Grand Temple. This is precisely noticeable when Lord Jagannath retires to Anasaraghara before the car festival every year. Sri Nrusingha during this period is adored in the place of Lord Jagannath in the daily rituals of the Grand Temple. All religious oblations in the Temple are offered to Lord Nrusingha during Anabasara period as Sri Jagannath is not available for worship by his devotees. The Prasad offered to Lord Nrusingha in the daily rituals during this period are also held out in oblation to Goddess Vimala. In the usual practice, after being offered to Goddess Vimala, the Prasad of Lord Nrusingha becomes Mahaprasad.

In the Tantric order, the three different forms of Sri Nrusingha as consecrated at Chakratirtha have a unique divine expression in the scriptures of Hindu religion. The seraphic form of Abhaya Nrusingha represents Sri Balabhadra of the Hindu pantheon. The form of Chakra Nrusingha similarly represents the spiritual form of Subhadra. The form of Laxmi Nrusingha illustrates the divine appearance of Lord Jagannath. In the celestial order of the Divine Creation, the first three gods of the universe, Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswar have also found expression in the forms of Chakra Nrusingha, Laxmi Nrusingha and Abhaya Nrusingha respectively. Chakratirtha is thus divinely glorious as a pilgrim centre in as much as this sacred place is the confluence of myriad beliefs of Jagannath culture. Sri Nrusingha in different forms is worshipped here in a profound devotional discipline adoring the beliefs of all cults of Hindu religion. On the day of Nrusingha Chaturdasi, a divine garland of Lord Jagannath is sent from the Grand Temple to Sri Nrusingha at Chakratirtha as a customary religious practice.

According to a traditional religious belief, once there was an unusual cyclone in Srikshetra

Puri. The Nilachakra of the Grand Temple was displaced from its pinnacle. It wafted across the sky and at last fell at Chakratirtha. Since then, the place over here has been adopted as a holy place of Srikshetra Puri. Accordingly, the place has come to be known as Chakratirtha in the scriptures of Hindu religion. There is another spiritual belief that in the foremost part of the celestial creation, the Divine Disc of the Lord was sanctimoniously installed at this place. It is believed in this connection that the cute wooden form of Lord Jagannath known as Daru was first found floating across the sea near Chakratirtha. The Daru at last nuzzled up at the shore and the same was finally retrieved from this place by the king's sculptors in great pomp and ceremony. Later, the images of the Divine Trinity and Sri Sudarsan were made out of this sacred log and consecrated on Ratnavedi.

The golden image of Sri Gauranga has been consecrated at Chakratirtha. It is believed that as Sri Gauranga at first was not allowed to enter the premises of the Grand Temple for the "darshan" of the three deities, in anguish, Sri Gauranga sat at Chakratirtha and went into deep meditation. Later, he was immersed in the supreme consciousness. The Lord at last came to his vision. The Temple was at last made open to Sri Gauranga and he entered the holy premises singing the glory of the Lord's name. The temple of Sunar Gauranga, as it is known today, recalls the aforesaid spiritual experiences of Sri Gauranga Mahaprabhu.

According to the belief of Hindu devotees, Chakratirtha, as a sacred place of Srikshetra Puri, has another spiritual significance in the scriptures of our religion. The abode of Mahalaxmi's father is situated near Chakratirtha.

The Temple of Daria Mahavir is also situated at this place. It is believed in this connection that Daria Mahavir protects Srikshetra



Puri against the fury of the sea. The duty of Sri Hanuman here is to see that the sea does not cross its limits and enter the peripheral boundaries of Puri. According to a traditional belief, one day Sri Hanuman left his temple at Chakratirtha and went on an errand mission without taking permission from Sri Jagannath. Taking advantage of this situation, the sea here crossed the boundaries of the holy place and caused many damages to Srikshetra Puri. This was a great shock to the monkey god. Since that day, it is said, the monkey god has been sincere and mindful in his duty. However, at the instance of Sri Jagannath, his feet have been tethered and Hanuman has come to be known here as "Bedhi Hanuman." Chakratirtha is also known for the Sadhana Mandir of Matta Balaram Das, a devotee of the Lord.

The holy place is thus linked to Jagannath cult in several ways as described above. The Sudarsana Chakra is not merely believed as a weapon of the Lord. In the system of Tantra worship, the Divine Disc has a lot of spiritual significance. It is considered as very powerful like the Lord Himself and so, the devotees while worshipping the mystic weapon feel like worshipping the Supreme Lord of the Universe for peace and prosperity in life. In the manner of worship as customarily envisaged in this regard, our scriptures have provided a set of rituals for the worship of the Divine Disc. In Kularnava Tantra, it said that Sri Jagannath has been consecrated on Ratnavedi on the mystic mark of Sudarsan Chakra. This is also known as Bhairavi Chakra in the system of Tantra worship. The mark of Bhairavi Chakra is also conceived for the worship of Sri Devi as the delusive and the motivating force of Paramatma in the vast network of His cosmic creation. The Bhairavi Chakra virtually represents Devi Mata in all esoteric performances in the Tantric order of worship. The Bhairavi Chakra in this sense is no different from

the divine image of Devi Mata in the observance of the prescribed rituals in the Grand Temple of Puri.

According to Ahirbudhynu Sanghita, Lord Vishnu had devised the Sudarsan Chakra for annihilation of the demons on earth. The Chakra in this scripture is described as the fierce and dreadful form (Ugra Rupam) of Lord Vishnu. It is also stated here that the Chakra is His activating force. As the devotees know, Lord Vishnu appeared in the half-animal and half-human form in one of His divine incarnations known as Lord Nrusingha. This was a dreadful incarnation of the Supreme Lord. Sri Nrusingha had appeared then with Sudarsan Chakra to magnify His dreadful fearfulness in his divine past-time on earth. It is therefore described in Puranas that whenever the Lord incarnated in His frightening appearance, He appeared with Sudarsan Chakra in His possession. In view of this analogy, Sudarsan Chakra, in many ways, is said to be divinely linked to Lord Nrusingha as His invincible divine missile. The Chakra is thus the mystical symbol of Lord Nrusingha. As such, while worshipping Sudarsan, devotees invoke the divine force of the Celestial Disc as the symbolic expression of Sri Nrusingha Mahaprabhu and chant appropriate incantations in sacred adoration. Sri Sudarsan is also depicted as the moving idol of both Sri Nrusingha and Lord Jagannath. This is the reason why at the time of car festival, Sri Sudarsan is first carried to the chariot of Subhadra in slow steps during the divine procession (Pahandi Uchhav) of the Grand Temple. When the image of Sri Nrusingha was first established as the foremost deity of the temple, the mystic mark of Sudarsan had been conceived then as His inseparable peripheral image and accordingly Sri Nrusingha with the mark of the Divine Disc had simultaneously surfaced in the Grand Temple prior to the appearance of the Divine Trinity.



Sudarsan Chakra is worshipped in a pole-like form on the left side of Lord Jagannath. It is said that the Lord had devised this arrangement to crush the ego of the Divine Disc. There is a popular belief that at the time of car festival as Sri Jagannath travels all by Himself leaving Mahalaxmi in the Temple, Sudarsan in anguish takes His seat by the side of Subhadra in Her chariot for the entire period of the sacred celebration and returns to the Temple only when the Lords return to Ratnavedi after conclusion of the car festival.

According to a legend in Jain religion, the place where Risabha Deva is worshipped is, also, known as Chakratirtha. According to this view, in good old days, the idol of Risabha Deva was being worshipped at Chakratirtha in Srikshetra Puri. This was considered as a sacred place in Jain religion. Even today, there is a similar place in Anandpur Subdivision in Keonjhar district of Orissa. This place is adored as the sacred idolatry-citadel of Risabha Deva and is also known as Chakratirtha in that area. There is another legend on this subject. Pradyumna was the eldest son of Lord Krishna. He was most lovable and affectionate to every member in the royal family. He was named as the crown-prince and the heir-apparent of Jadu Dynasty to ascend the royal throne of Dwarika. When the Divine past-time of the Lord was over in Dwapar Yuga, He made preparations on his own to depart to Golak Vaikuntha. Not only this, He also made all necessary arrangements to devastate His own clan and all the members of the royal family to end the "Yuga" in His celestial past-time. This was felt necessary as His sons and successors and other members of the dynasty had grown arrogant and disdainful in their manners and behaviour on account of huge concentration of wealth and power in their disparaging possession.

When the process of devastation continued and His clan came under the catastrophic operation, Pradyumna some how managed to

escape the gruesome extinction. The Lord came to know of this. Immediately He sent His Sudarsan Chakra. Pradyumna was beheaded in no time. A voice was then heard from the sky that the place where the Lord's Chakra would fall would be known as Chakratirtha and the Chakra would be consecrated here with the divine pennon of the Lord flaunting in the sky aloft. This place would be known as Chakratirtha glorifying the popular mission of the Lord's incarnation on earth. It is believed in this connection that the Sudarsan Chakra of the Lord had fallen in Srikshetra Puri. Since that day, this place has come to be known as Chakratirtha, a sacred pilgrim centre of Srikshetra Puri.

As described in the Bhabisya Purana, Sudarsana, after the advent of Kali Yuga had descended on earth as the Amsa Avatar of Lord Vishnu. He was named as Nimbarka. The Nimbarka community propounded in India the philosophy of dualism in religion befitting the need of the time. It believed in the separate existence of both the matter and the spirit in the cosmic creation. It also believed in the existence of the individual and the Supreme Spirit. We have now a branch of Nimbarka Sampradaya in Srikshetra Puri as in many parts of India.

Sri Sudarsana is thus an important deity in the Bhakti and the Tantric cults in India. The Divine Disc, as described in the scriptures, has the effulgence of a million luminous suns and is as resplendent and invincible as the overpowering and vivacious Trident of Lord Shiva. Chakratirtha is thus the seat of worship of both Sri Nrusingha and His Divine Disc. It is a Tirtha Pitha signifying one of the many important pilgrim centres of Srikshetra Puri. It is believed that, by worshipping the divine weapon at Chakratirtha, one will have one's wishes fulfilled with liberation in life.

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