

LORD JAGANNATH : THE LORD OF THE UNIVERSE

The Indians, particularly the people of Odisha, owe a lot to Lord Jagannath. He is the Lord of the Universe, about whom the Vedas are silent. Sometimes people are puzzled about the mystery that surrounds the Lord. He is a great 0. You add 0, with 0, the result is 0. You deduct 0 from 0, the result is 0. You multiply 0 with 0, the result is also 0. Zero is nothingness. It is also the fullness; it represents the completion of a process. The Lord is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. He is all pervading and is the Lord of the Universe. The Holy Trinity, Lord Jagannatha, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra represent three races; black, white and yellow being the colour of the races. They are of three qualities (*Gunas*) : *Sattwa*, *Tamas* and *Raja*. Jagannath Cult transcends all barriers of caste, community and religion. It preaches the cult of equality, fraternity and brotherhood. Therefore, the annual Car Festival of Lord Jagannath is gaining popularity in the country and abroad.



People of almost all religious faiths find their own ideas and concepts in the Jagannatha Cult.

Lord Jagannatha has drawn devotees from all faiths and creeds. Saints and prophets have bowed to Lord Jagannatha. Nanaka, Adiguru Sankaracharya and Shri Chaitanya have visited Puri to get the mercy of Lord Jagannatha. Puri has also been visited by Ganapati Bhatta of Maharashtra, a devotee of Lord Ganesha, who wanted to see Ganesha in Lord Jagannatha. The Lord fulfilled the desire of the saint, and on Devasnana Purnima every year, He appears in 'Ganapati Vesha'.

Lord Jagannatha is the Lord of the Universe. Salabega, a Mohammedan, was very dear to the Lord and has written a number of *bhajan*s and *janan*s expressing his deep devotion to Lord Jagannatha. Dasia Bauri was born to a lowly family. The Lord had extended His great arm, 'Baliar Bhuja' to take a coconut offered by a low-born man. Hadi Dasa, a blacksmith was a great believer. It is heard that the Lord would go to Chhatiabata (In Badachana Police-Station of Jajpur district) to dwell there for a few days as He was highly pleased with the devotion of Hadi Dasa.

There are many such stories. It is believed that Lord Jagannatha goes to Badrika (Jammu and Kashmir) early in the morning to take his bath. He then proceeds to Dwaraka (Gujarat) for His early *vesha* or morning adornment ; at noon He proceeds to Puri for His lunch and in the night, after witnessing

Devadasi dance and hearing *Gita Govinda*, which is dearest to Him, goes to sleep at Rameshwaram (Tamil Nadu). Saints and devotees of all faiths including Nanak Panthis, Ramananda Panthis, Shri Rama Krushna Mission and a host of others have established their Ashramas at Puri. Adiguru Sankaracharya has established four *dhamas* in different parts of the country. One at Badrika (Jammu and Kashmir) another at Dwaraka (Gujarat) a third at Sringeri (Kerala) and of course one at Puri. During the Car Festival, the Gajapati Raja does *Chhera Pahnra*, (Cleaning the chariots with a golden handle broom). Except him, Shankaracharya of Puri alone is permitted to visit the holy Trinity in their respective chariots.

What about Lord Jagannatha, Who is a mysterious God ? Why is He black ? Some people believe that Lord Jagannatha is a great void. In their opinion, as the colour of the sky is black and as Lord Jagannatha is a great void, He dwells in 'Mahasunya'. Therefore the colour of Lord Jagannatha is black. Another question comes to the mind that why Lord Jagannatha is immovable (*Madala*) ? The answer is that the *Jiva* performs *karmas* but Param Brahma does not. As Lord Jagannatha is Param Brahma, He has neither hands nor legs and He does not perform any *karma*. Therefore He is static. Why are the eyes of Lord Jagannatha round shaped ? As He is Mahasunyabasi and looks to the entire world through this 'O', His eyes are round - shaped.

What has He not done to keep the prestige of the Odias during the Kanchi war ? The two brothers, Lord Balabhadra and Lord Jagannatha, had to perform the role of ordinary soldiers. They had to mortgage a gold ring with Manika Gauduni, from whom they had to drink curd on their way to Kanchi. At last Gajapati Purusottama Deva won the battle.

It is said :

Dolescha Dolagovinda Chapescha Madhusudana, Rathetu Bamanam Drustwa Punarjanmam Na Bidyate.

If you behold Lord (Dolagovinda) in the wooden palanquin during Dola festival, in boat in the Narendra pond during Chandana Yatra (Madhusudana) and Lord Jagannatha (Bamanam) in the chariot, there will be no rebirth and you will be free from the cycle of birth and death.



Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath at Snana Vedi