

# THE NAVAKALEBARA OF LORD JAGANNATH

The term Navakalebara is derived from the Sanskrit words Naba or new and Kalevara or body, literally meaning new body. It is an ancient ritual associated with most of the Jagannath temples. When the idols of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Sudarshan are replaced by a new set of idols the change of Vighrahas is known as 'Navakalebara'. In the temples of India where idol worship is performed there exist such a system of renewal of the images.

The ceremony depends upon the occurrence of second Ashadha month. A year which has two months of Ashadha as per the Hindu Calendar is auspicious for conducting the ceremony. This usually occurs in every twelve to nineteen years. The festival has become the part and parcel of Jagannath cult since 1500 A.D.

The deities are made from a special type of Neem wood known as Daru Brahma. Preparations for the ceremony start in the month of Chaitra. Last ceremony of Nava Kalebar was performed in the year 1996. Next Navakalebara will be held in the year 2015.

We find four distinct stages of rituals from the beginning of the ceremony till new images are made ready for Ratha Yatra. They are (1) searching out the Daru (2) carrying out wooden structure (3) consecration of the images and insertion of life substance in them (4) giving the images final shape.

The countdown to the Nabakalebara of Lord Jagannath starts with the formation of the search party that would go out to locate the 'Holy Tree'. The search party consists of one member of the Pati Mohapatra family, 20 Daitapatis, one Lenka, 9 Maharanas, 16 Brahmans, 3 Deulakaranas, 30 Police Officers and 2 Inspectors of Police.

## The characteristics of the Daru

Deities	Colour	Branches	Mark
Jagannath	Dark	four	Sankha Chakra
Balabhadra	White	seven	Plough and Pestle
Subhadra	Yellow	five	Lotus flower with Five petals
Sudarshana	Red	three	Chakra

Once the tree is located that fulfills all the required conditions, a Yagna is performed in front of it. The cutting of the tree would commence at an auspicious time and with prescribed rituals. The Pati Mahapatra first touches the tree with golden axe followed by the Daitapati who touches it with the silver axe. Lastly, the head wood-carver of the Maharana family would touch it with iron axe. During tree cutting 108 names of God are chanted. The logs are kept inside the temple 'Koili Vaikuntha'. It is the place where the old deities are buried and the new ones made.

When the new deities are made they are carried inside the temple. Daitapatis are the first worshipper of Lord Jagannath, This ceremony takes place three days before the great chariot festival. Once the transformation is complete, the 'Brahman' or the Life Force (also referred to as Pinda) is transformed from the old deities to the new. There are different rules attached to this act. During the mid-night the old deities are carried on the shoulders of the Daitapatis and buried in the Koili Baikuntha before dawn. On the morning of the second day the new deities are seated on the altar, "the Ratna-Singhasana" and the daily routine of the temple finally begins after a lapse of 58 days. And on the third day the new deities emerge from the temple for the biggest chariot festival. Millions of people all over the world gather at Puri to see Nava Kalebara.