

## FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

### Ratha Yatra

The most famous festival of the state is Ratha yatra or Car Festival which attracts pilgrims and tourists from all over the world. Three large size chariots having huge wheels with Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra sitting there, are drawn from the temple gate by thousands of people. The deities go to Gundichaghar and stay there for eight days at the end of which the return Car Festival (Bahuda Yatra) takes place. One has only to see the vast sea of humanity on these occasions to convince oneself about the influence of religion on the people of Odisha for whom Jagannath is no other than Supreme Brahman, without beginning and without end and the saviour of mankind.

### Snana Yatra

Observed on the full moon day of the month of Jyestha; it is popularly known as Deba Snana Purnima. This is the first occasion in the course of a year when the deities Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra alongwith Sudarsan and Madanmohan are brought out from the temple and taken in a procession to Snana Bedi located in the North East corner of the outer compound of Shri Mandir. The deities are bathed there with 108 pitchers of water drawn from a well (Suna Kua) near the Northern Gate. Here Jagannath and Balabhadra are dressed like Lord Ganesh of the Purans with the head of an elephant.

### Chandan Yatra

This festival takes place in the month of Baisakha and continues for long 42 days. But, generally speaking it is a festival of first 21 days only. The first part of 21 days is known as 'Bahar Chandan' or outer Chandan. During this period, the representative images of Rama, Krushna, Madanmohan, Sridevi and Bhudevi are taken in a procession to Narendra Tank. The images of Siva from 5 Siva temples known as 'Pancha Pandavas' also accompany them to the Narendra tank. There the images play in well decorated boats and worshipped.

### Dola Purnima / Holi

Dola Purnima and Holi, the most famous colourful spring festival, is celebrated in Odisha with some special features. It is a five day affair, especially in the rural areas. The idols of Krishna are worshipped from Dasami (10th day of the bright fortnight) to the full moon day. The idols are taken in decorated Vimans, small wooden temples, carried on the shoulders of bearers from house to house where offering are made to them. The Vimans of several villages are taken in procession to assemble at a particular place. People play with coloured powder called Abira. The festival is specially important for cattle owing to their association with the cowherd boy, Krishna. They are bathed, anointed with vermilion, garlanded and fed sumptuously.

### Makar Mela

Makar Mela is held on the day of Makar Sankranti, usually on 14th January every year in many parts of Odisha. The day is celebrated all over India in various names. But in Odisha it is celebrated with typical Odia fervour distinguishable from other States.

**Dhanu Yatra**

Dhanu Yatra of Bargarh is famous for various reasons. It is one of the biggest street theatres of the world. The city for a month becomes Mathura and the nearby river Jira becomes Jamuna. The village Amapalli turns into Gopa. During this period demon king Kamsa rules the place symbolically. The role is enacted by a person. People enjoy the whole drama and at last the demon king Kamsa is killed by Lord Krishna.

**Magha Saptami**

Magha Saptami is a popular religious festival held at Chandrabhaga (Konark beach). Thousands of pilgrims come to Chandrabhaga for a holy dip. A dip at Chandrabhaga is compared to seven dips in Ganga, it is believed.

**Khandagiri Mela**

Khandagiri Mela is one of the oldest Melas of Odisha held on the foothills of Khandagiri and Udayagiri. Many religious Sadhus congregate here on the occasion. Market of household articles is an additional attraction for general public.

**Joranda Mela**

It is the biggest congregation of believers of Mahima Dharma, held at Joranda in the district of Dhenkanal. Generally the Mela is held in the month of February-March.

**Mahasivaratri**

Mahasivaratri is observed all over Odisha in Shiva temples. Devotees observe fast throughout the day on Mahashivaratri. Mahadeepa (the great lamp) is lit and placed atop the Shiva temple at the dead end of the night. People congregate in thousand at Lokanath Temple, Puri, Lingaraj Temple, Bhubaneswar and other important Saivite shrines.

**Bali Yatra**

To commemorate the glorious maritime trade of Odisha, a big fair called 'Bali Yatra' is held on the bank of river Mahanadi at Cuttack from the full moon day of Kartik for a period of 6-8 days. People float paper boats or banana barks with lighted clay lamps on it in the river, sea, ponds as a remembrance of Odisha's maritime trade.

**Raja**

Raja is a typical Odia festival observed mostly in the coastal districts of Odisha. It is observed three day. It is a festival of fertility. In these three days farmers do not go to plough and girls not required to do domestic work. It is believed that mother earth has menstruation during these days. Special cake named as Podapitha is made. People mostly girls and women enjoy the time by playing and swinging.

**Sital Sasthi**

Sital Sasthi is celebrated all over Odisha particularly in western Odisha. Sital Sasthi of Sambalpur is famous of all. The idols of Siva and Parvati are given in marriage with grand celebration. Then they are taken in a colourful procession. The Puja culminates with the installation of the Divine Couple at the Siva temples.

**Jhoolan Yatra**

Jhoolan Yatra is celebrated mostly in Puri in temples and Maths. It is popular among Vaisnavas. Devottes swing childhood idols of Lord Srikrishna in Jhoolas.

**Nuakhai**

Nuakhai is an agrarian festival celebrated mostly in western Odisha. On this, people eat the produce of their fields with their friends and relatives.

**Ashokastami**

Wooden chariot of 34' height takes Lord Lingaraj from His abode to the Rameswar temple. After a four-day sojourn, He is to his original home with great religious fervour. Ashokastami and this chariot festival is a colourful annual celebration, popular at Bhubaneswar.

**Chadak Mela**

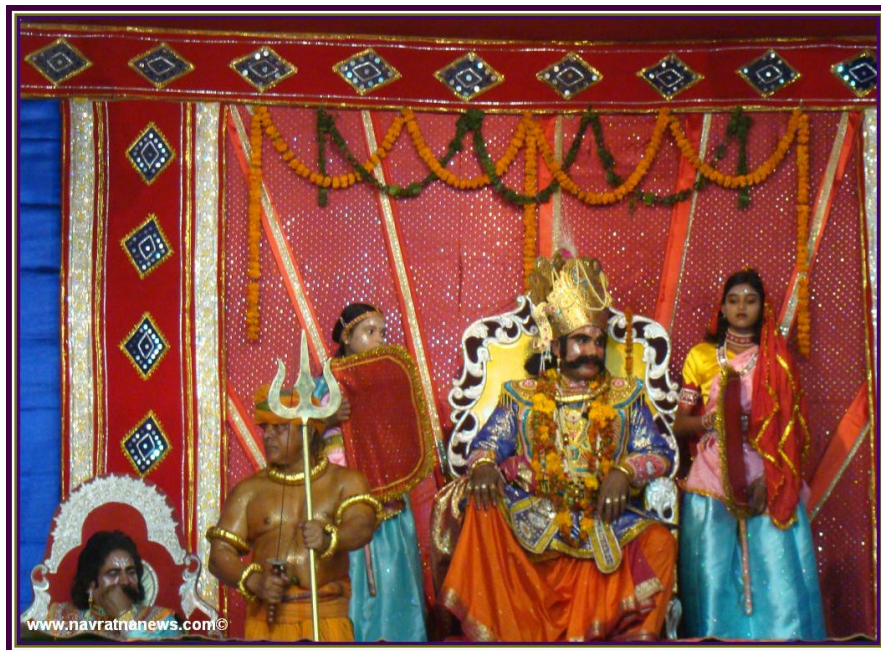
Chadak Mela is held in the month of April preceding Maha Vishuva Sankranti at Chandaneswar with great festivity. The Mela gets lively at the backdrop of beautiful beach and thronged by thousands of people.

**Jhamu Yatra**

Jhamu Yatra is held usually in the month of April (Chaitra) mostly in coastal districts of Odisha. Mother Goddess is worshipped with religious fervour. Some devotees walk on the red hot charcoal and nails. The sight of people piercing their tongues, back, lips is seen.

**Nrusinghanath Mela**

Nrusinghnath and Harishankar are beautiful spots with rich flora and fauna. The place becomes lively with festivities during Mela which is held generally in the month of May. Rural market on the occasion attracts many people from nearby areas.



*Dhanu Yatra, Bargarh*