

THE NEW MILLENNIUM'S FIRST NAVAKALEBARA

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 Vighras 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.

Banajaga Jatra

Banajaga Jatra marks the auspicious beginning of the Nabakalebara festival of the Lords. The Banajaga Jatra of Nabakalebara 2015 commenced on 29th March. After completion of mid-day rituals at the Shri Mandir, the Shrotriya Brahmins performed the Daru Ghar Anukul Niti in Koili Baikuntha and on receiving the Ajnyamala, four Badagrahis, all the other members of Banajaga Yatra team except the Brahmins, adorned with saree and khandua by Bhitarchha Mohapatra, gathered at the Anabasar Pindi during the scheduled time for the Saree Bandha Niti ritual. When this process was going on, the Brahmins performed the rituals for the construction of Jainashala, Nirman Mandap, Ankuraropana Griha, Daru Griha, Nrusimha Mandap and Snana Mandap at the Koili Baikuntha. Thereafter, the Banajaga team came down to the Grand Road through the Lion's Gate.

The Chakraraj Sudarshan left the Shankareswar Temple at 6.35 am on 2nd April for the Deuli Math followed by others and reached the Deuli Math later at 9 am. The Banajag Jattris were felicitated by villagers on the way at Kundhei, Bajapur and Radhamath Patna. The Deuli Math is located on the bank of the river Prachi in a serene and beautiful environment. Shree Patitapaban and Basudev are worshipped at Deuli Math. It is believed that Goddess Mangala was earlier worshipped in this sacred shrine. The main reason of staying of Banajaga party at the Deuli Math is that they can easily perform the morning rituals in the temple of Goddess Mangala, located 2 km away from the Math, after taking bath in the river Prachi. The Tourism Department had renovated the dilapidated Math. The administration provided all requisite facilities to the Banajaga party during their stay. Mahaprasad was supplied to them from the Shree Mandir every night. Thousands of devotees from distant places rushed to the Deuli Math to have a glimpse of the Banajaga Jattris.

At the Deuli Math, the members of the Banajaga party placed the Chakraraj Sudarshan under a mango tree and worshipped Him amidst chants of traditional hymns such as Vishnu Sahasra Naam, Jagannathastakam, by the Shrotriya Brahmins. Later, the Deuli karan offered the Manager of the Maa Mangala temple Chitrou (letter) regarding the arrival of the Banajaga party. It is believed that Astashakti is placed around Puri for its protection and that Goddess Mangala is foremost among them. Based on the close relationship between Goddess Mangala and Shree Jagannath there is a belief that Goddess Mangala after the special rituals, guides the Banajaga jattris in their search for the holy Daru for Shree Jagannath, Balabhadra, Sudarshan and Devi Subhadra. The members of the Mangala Temple Trust Board, Sevaks and thousands of devotees on 3rd April left for the Deuli Math with Bijee Ajnyamala of Maa Mangala in a decorated procession and reached there at 10.30 am. The members of Banajaga party were formally invited with the Ajnyamala. Thereafter, the Banajaga party went in a procession from Deuli Math and reached the Mangala Temple in the afternoon. The Chakraraj Sudarshan was placed by the left side of the Goddess after which the ritual of Majana was performed where the garland, Mahaprasad, Jhadeilada Tada, traditional sweets and other items were offered to the Goddess.

Places where the Darus were identified

Chakraraj Sudarshan	-	Gada Kantunia, Khurdha
Lord Balabhadra	-	Jhankad, Jagatsinghpur
Devi Subhadra	-	Adhangagada, Jagatsinghpur
Lord Jagannath	-	Kharipadia, Jagatsinghpur

After the completion of the Majana ritual, new sarees, scented flowers and jewellery were offered to Goddess Mangala amidst the Chandi Path by the Shrotriya Brahmins and other hymns by the Daitapatis. Two meetings were held at the level of Chief Administrator to address this matter. The Daitapatis then reached the Deuli Math with the Ajnyamala. The ritual of Banajaga could not be held owing to the lunar eclipse on 4th April.

On the next day morning, after being instructed and guided by Goddess Mangala, the members of Banajaga party were divided into four groups, with each group proceeding in four different directions in search of the Daru. The process of searching for the Daru continued for seven days between 5th-11th April. The members of the Banajaga party explored more than 100 neem trees at different places to ascertain the various characteristics and symbols. The Minister for Tourism & Culture visited the Deuli Math on 6th April and the Chief Administrator visited the Banajaga party every alternative day to discuss about the progress of Daru identification. During this entire period Shrotriya Brahmins went to Mangala Temple for the Chandi Path.

Daru Selection, Cutting and Transportation

During the late night of 11th April, the Dalapati (Leader), four Upadalapati (deputy leader), Badagrahis, the president and secretary of Daitapati Nijog and senior Daitapatis discussed in a closed room regarding the formalization of selection of Darus at Sabarapalli of Deuli Math. Dalapati Shree Haladhar Das Mohapatra apprised the Chief Administrator regarding selection of the Daru of Shree Sudarshan. Chief Administrator during the early morning of 12th April formally announced the location of Shree Sudarshan Daru at Gadakantunia village near Balakati Hirapur square in Khurda district close to Bhubaneswar. Necessary arrangements were immediately made by the district and police administration. The Banajaga party spent the next 13 days there in a spiritual and festive atmosphere.

The team embarked on their journey on 14th April morning onwards from Deuli Math towards Gadakantunia and reached there late at night. A Shabarpalli was constructed at Gadakantunia with all basic facilities for the Banajaga party. Preliminary rituals like Panchakarma, Bhoomisodhan, Daru Pujan were performed there. Evening rituals like Ankuraropan and bathing of Daru were completed in the Sambhar Griha later.

The next day began with sun-worship and a Yajna at the Yajna Mandap. The offering in the sacrificial fire continued the following day and the Purnahuti was performed. Thereafter, Bidyapati with a golden axe, Biswabasu with a silver axe and Biswakarma with an iron axe touched the holy tree and Biswakarma and other Maharanas started Felling the tree with the iron axe in a ceremonial manner.

Meanwhile, the temple administration formally declared regarding the identification of Shree Balabhadra Daru on 17th April, located near Maa Sarala Temple at Jhankad of Kanakpur village in Jagatsinghpur district. After Chaupat of the required Daru for construction of the idol, other parts of the tree were buried in a pit. The wooden cart for carrying the Daru of Shree Sudarshan was consecrated on 21st April. The Daru Shagadi or cart with the Daru of Shree Sudarshan started its journey from Gadakantunia to Puri amid a colourful procession on the Bhubaneswar Puri Road and reached Alamachandi temple near Atharanala at 9.45 pm on 23rd April. The cart of Shree Sudarshan started its journey again the next day in a colourful procession and reached Koili Baikuntha in the main temple.

In the meantime, the rituals of Bhoomishodhan, Daru Snana and Ankuraropana were performed near the sacred Daru of Shree Balabhadra on 22nd April. After performing the sun worship near Sree Balabhadra Daru the day after, the yajna started and the purnahuti (final offering) at the sacred Darusthali of Shree Balabhadra was conducted. The cutting of Daru was completed past midnight and the chaupat work of the Daru started on 25th April. The Daru cart of Shree Balabhadra proceeded to Puri from Jhankad on 28th April at 5.35 pm. After travelling for a short while, the cart halted temporarily for about two hours due to wind, lightning and heavy rain. The Daru cart started its journey again in the evening and stopped over at Jaypur Square for the night.

On the same day owing to the rain, the Daitapatis in search of the Daru site of Devi Subhadra faced a lot of difficulties. The Daitapatis could not stay there as the Shabarapalli was severely affected due to the rain and they had to stay at Adhangagarh Mahadev Temple.

The cart carrying the Daru of Shree Balabhadra continued its travel through several villages and reached the Alamachandi temple on the night of 4th May through Cuttack and Bhubaneswar. It entered the Koili Baikuntha in a grand procession the next day morning.

The Banajaga team for finding the daru of Devi Subhadra proceeded on its journey and passed through several places halting for nights. The Temple Administration formally announced the identification of the sacred Daru of Devi Subhadra on 24th April at Adhangagarh village of Majurai Panchayat under Biridi Block of Jagatsingpur district at 5 am early morning. The preliminary rituals like Bhoomishodhan, Daru Snana and Ankuraropana were started at the site of Devi Subhadra Daru on 30th April. The Daitapatis performed the ceremonial ablution of the Daru and the ritual of Ankuraropana was performed after the Brahmins drew the Mandal at Yajna Mandap. The Yajna continued for two days (1st and 2nd May) near the sacred Daru of Devi Subhadra. Sun worship was started at Yajnashala with the Shrotriya Brahmins chanting Patala Nrusingha hymns offered ghee oblations in the altar. The final offering was made and the process of tree cutting began at 4 pm. More than 50 Maharana servitors were engaged in cutting of the sacred Daru. The divine Daru of Goddess Subhadra fell on the ground in the evening and the Chaupat work continued for two days. The consecration of the cart carrying the Daru was performed on 4th May.

The Devi Subhadra's Daru Shagadi commenced its journey in the evening of 5th May continuing through the CuttackParadeep Road on 7th May. After taking rest, the servitors and the cart started from the Tarini Temple and reached Press Square in Cuttack. The cart again started on 8th May and reached the Yajna Nrusingha Temple near Shree Gundicha Mandir on the morning of 11th May. It reached Koili Baikuntha of the Shree Mandir at 10.35 am the next day (12th May).

The announcement on the location of the sacred Daru of Shree Jagannath at Kharipadia village in Dharadharapur Panchayat of Raghunathpur Block in Jagatsinghpur district was made by the Chief Administrator on 29th April. The Ajnyamala and Chakraraj Sudarshan reached the site of the Daru of Shree Jagannath on 5th May. The rituals of Bhoomishodhan, ablution of the sacred Daru and Ankuraropan were performed on 7th May followed by the rituals of Kalasa Sthapan, oblation, Bhoomipujan along with Panchamruta Sinchan carried out by the Shrotriya Brahmins. After smearing sandal and turmeric paste on the Divya Daru in the evening, the Brahmins performed the ritual of ablution of the sacred Daru with Panchamruta and purified water and the bathing of the Divya Daru.

Sun worship near the sacred Daru of Shree Jagannath was done in the morning of 8th May, after which the Yajna was conducted where the Shrotriya Brahmins made offerings in the sacrificial fire pit by chanting Patala Nrusingh hymns. The final offering was made near the sacred Daru of Shree Jagannath 9th May at 3 pm. The cutting of the sacred tree started at 4.15 pm and the Divya Daru touched the ground at 8.15 pm. The Chaupat work of the Daru was completed on 10th May and the Daru cart was consecrated. The Chaupat and Patali rituals were hindered due to incessant rain on May 11th.

Subsequently, the cart carrying the sacred Daru of Shree Jagannath left Kharipadia amid an overwhelming atmosphere on 14th May. The Daru was welcomed and worshipped at Puran, Odapada, Chhamaniasahi, Raghunathpur Bazaar, Madanmohan Mutt and the Banajaga party spent the night at Nahakani Temple of Ramakumarpur. Starting the journey from Ramakumarpur the next day Sri Daru Shagadi halted at the Sai temple of Bidyadharpur and gradually crossed the Kathajodi Bridge and Press Square. Despite rain, a huge gathering was waiting at both the sides of the road to have a darshan of the sacred Daru.

The Daru cart travelled through several villages towards Puri and reached the Shree Lokanath Dev temple after which it reached the Yajna Nrusingh Temple beside the Shree Gundicha temple. The Daru of Lord Jagannath made its final journey towards Koili Baikuntha on 22nd May from the Shree Nrusingha Temple amidst the sound of traditional music instruments like Ghanta, Kahali, Mridang, conch, along with Sankirttan, ululations and chants of Haribol. The Mahadaru of Lord Jagannath reached the northern gate of the temple Mandir at 12.15 pm. Subsequently, the Bhoi Sevaks and police helped in transferring the Daru Shagadi into Koili Baikuntha.

The Banajaga Jatra concluded with the holy wood or the darus of the Shree Jagannath, Balabhadra and Sudarshan along with Devi Subadhra safely ensconced in the Jagannath Temple. The Banajaga Jatra was completed smoothly and efficiently with all the rituals and without any hurdles. At the Daru location lakh of devotees witnessed the Daru and the rituals. The Temple administration with the help of the district administration made all arrangements like barricading, lighting, parking and traffic control etc at each location.

The cooperation of the district administration of Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Khurda and Cuttack including all the line departments during the Banajaga Jatra was highly appreciated. Elaborate arrangements for Daru barricading, lighting, drinking water and safety arrangement had been made. Lakh of visitors could witness the holy Darus without any major incident.

The Nabakalebara 2015 Schedule

29 March 2015, Sunday	:	Banajaga Jatra commenced
30 March 2015, Monday	:	Journey to Deuli Matha
2 April 2015, Thursday	:	Stay at Deuli Matha
3 April 2015, Friday	:	Worship at Kakatpur Mangala temple
4 April (Saturday) to 17 May 2015 (Sunday):	:	Selection of Daru & other rituals
2 June 2015, Tuesday	:	Debasnana Purnima
5 June 2015, Friday	:	Carving of images
15 June 2015, Monday	:	Transfer of Brahma at midnight
17 July 2015, Friday	:	Naba Jaubana darshan
18 July 2015, Saturday	:	Rath Yatra
22 July 2015, Wednesday	:	Hera Panchami
26 July 2015, Sunday	:	Bahuda Yatra
28 July, 2015, Monday	:	Suna Besa
29 July 2015, Tuesday	:	Adharapana ritual
30 July 2015, Thursday	:	Niladribije

Antah Banajaga (Inner Sacrifice) in Shree Mandir

Soon after the completion of the Banajaga Jatra, the second phase of Nabakalebara began. Called as the Antah Banajag, this is the time where the construction of idols or the Shree Bigraha takes place

along with the Brahma Paribartana or the placing of life substance known as Brahma. During the Deva Snana Purnima on 2nd June, the old idols of Shree Bigraha were given bath with 108 pitchers of water on the Snana Mandap. After completion of the ablution ritual, the rituals of Ankuraropan and Daru Snana were performed in the Karushala of Koili Baikuntha. On 5th June the Yajna commenced signaling the creation of the Shree Bigrahas in the Karushala. The yagna continued for 11 days and on the late night of 15th June, the final offering or the Purnahuti Mahayajna was performed by the Gajapati Maharaja Shree Divya Singh Dev. More than 70 Shrotriya Brahmins from different Shiva temples and Shakti shrines had been invited by Shree Gajapati Maharaja and were engaged in performing the Yajna at the Yajnasnala.

As per the custom, the Shree Mandir was totally sanctified after the completion of Mahayajna in Darushala of Koili Baikuntha on 15th June. The lights were switched off and the four temple doors were sealed. Only the Deulakaran and Tadhaukaran were present at the Baisi Pahacha (22 steps while entering the Jagannath Temple) of the temple at this time. The Shree Bigrahas were brought to the Anasara Pindi in Goti Pahandi style after completion of the Veshas and Majana.

Brahma Paribartan

After completion of necessary rituals in the Anasara Pindi, the ritual of transfer of life substance (Brahma or Ghata Paribartan) was performed. Four Badagrahis performed the Ghata Paribartan ritual of the Lords. Thereafter, the old deities, the side deities, the charioteers, the horses etc. were buried. The Daitapatis came out from the Shree Mandir on the afternoon of 16th June.

Devasnana Purnima

The ritual of Jala Bijee and Jala Puja was carried out in a disciplined manner. As the ubhayatra does not fall on the next day of Nabajauban and the Rath Yatra is to be celebrated on that day, it was decided in the Managing Committee meeting to perform the ritual earlier. The Committee also decided to stop the public darshan and paramanik darshan on the day of Nabajauban Darshan in Shree Mandir inside to avoid stampede like situation. This was in accordance with the recomodations of the Justic B K Patra Commission which was constituted after the 1977 Nabakalebara. The Naba Jaubana Darshan was held a day prior to the Ratha Yatra where the three idols were decked up magnificently in reflecting the splendour of their eternal youth. The deities had remained confined in the Anasara Pindi (recovery chamber) after the grand bath on Snana Purnima on June 2nd, for 45 days. However unlike the previous years, the devotees this time were not permitted for the Nabajauban Darshan of the deities on the eve of the Rath Yatra as per the SJTA's decision as it would have delayed the rituals for a timely and smooth conduct of the Ratha Yatra the next day. The Hon'ble High Court upheld the decision of the Temple Management Committee in a PIL filed for allowing devotees to witness the Nabajauban Darshan.

The famous Shree Gundicha Yatra or the Ratha Yatra of the Lords was observed on 18th July. The Rath Yatra acquires greater significance during the Nabakalebara, when millions of devotees see the Lord's new form after 19 years. To see the Lord thus, on this rare occasion is considered very auspicious. The deities signify Parambramha.

On the day of the Ratha Yatra, after the initial morning rituals of Mangala Alati and Mangalarpan in the sanctum sanctorum, the four deities - Chakraraj Sudarshan, Shree Jagannath, Shree Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra - were brought to the chariots on the Bada Danda (Grand Road) individually through Pahandi by the temple servitors. Passion and excitement ran high among the devotees as the deities had remained indoors for 45 days due to Nabakalebara this time. The Chaturdha Murti was brought to their respective chariots with the performance of pahandi. Although the Pahandi Bijee was scheduled to be held at 10 am it was completed much before at 8.30 am. Then, Chhera Pahanra (sweeping of the chariots) was solemnised by Puri Gajapati Divya Singh Dev followed by sprinkling of holy water and sandal. This is a symbolic gesture by the king to convey the divine message of dignity of labour and equality before God. Besides the Gajapati, Puri Gobardhan Peeth Shankaracharya Nischilanand

Saraswati along with his followers visited the chariots for darshan of the deities. Pulling of Taladhwaja, the chariot of Shree Balabhadra started first, followed by the chariot of Devi Subhadra (Darpadalana). Nandighosh, the chariot of Shree Jagannath started rolling at 5 in the evening. While the Taladhwaj Rath reached Sree Gundicha Temple by 6 in the evening, the Darpadalan Rath halted at Badasankha and Nandighosh Rath stopped at Balagandi Square for the night. The chariot pulling started at 9 am the next day and reached the Lion's Gate of Sri Gundicha temple by 11 am.

The Sandhya darshan of the Chaturddha Murti (four idols) was held on 25th July at the Adapa Mandap of Shree Gundicha Temple. Due to heavy rain, the Sandhya darshan of the Lords was stopped at 7.15 pm. Lakhs of devotees were present to have a darshan of the Chaturdha Murti, inspite of the heavy rains and wind.

The deities had a nine-day stay at the Gundicha Temple thereafter. They returned to the Shree Mandir on the same chariots in the Bahuda Yatra (Return Car Festival) held on 26th July. After the Bahuda Pahandi of deities, the Gajapati Maharaja performed the ritual of Chherapahanra after which chariots began their journey back home. At the Shree Nahara, Laxminarayan Bheta ritual was conducted by the Gajapati Maharaja.

The ritual of golden attire (Suna Besha) of the Chaturdha Murti was observed on 28th July and lakh of devotees got the rare opportunity to have the darshan of the Lords till 12 midnight. There after the golden attire was taken out and other rituals were performed. The Adharpana ritual was conducted on 29th July.

The next day on 30th July, the Niladribije Parva of the Gods was performed after which Shree Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Shree Jagannath ascended the Ratnavedi in Goti Pahandi style on the early morning of 31st July. Thus, the Nabakalebara festival, which started on March 29th, concluded on 31st July after the Niladribije.

Lakh of devotees from across the country and world converged at the pilgrim town to witness the Ratha Yatra as the Chaturdha Murti of Shree Jagannath, Shree Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra embarked on their nine-day journey to Gundicha Temple and back to their abode. Devotees from all walks of life congregated in Puri to be a part of this world famous annual chariot festival and to behold the presiding deities of the celebrated Jagannath Temple during the Nabakalebara. It is estimated that during this period, 58 lakh devotees visited Puri to witness the grand festival. Nabakalebara is a process of making new idols replacing the old ones. So even though the body changes, the soul continues, being indestructible and permanent.