



वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय  
नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि ।



तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णा-  
न्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही ॥ २-२२ ॥



# NANDIGHOSHA

8TH ANNUAL HOUSTON CHARIOT FESTIVAL, JULY 18TH 2015



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# NANDIGHOSHA

Vol 8

July 18, 2015

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**Srimant Dash**

An Annual Souvenir of Houston Rath Yatra  
Organized by

**Orissa Culture Center (OCC)**

For more information:

Houston Rath Yatra please visit:

[www.houstonrathyatra.org](http://www.houstonrathyatra.org)

Orissa Culture Center please visit:

[www.orissaculturecenter.org](http://www.orissaculturecenter.org)

# Rathyatra 2015 - Event Schedule

July 18, 2015

TIME	EVENT
07.00 AM - 09.00 AM	Setup for Havan and Pjuja (in the foyer)
<b>07.00 AM - 11.00 AM</b>	<b>Health Fair Setup and Execution</b>
<b>09.00 AM-10:15 AM</b>	<b>Nrusingha Havan and Ratha Vaastu Puja</b>
10.00 AM -11.00 AM	Gita Patha
10:15 AM -11:30 AM	Mangala Arati, Netrostav, Prata Upachara and Naba Jauban Darshan
11:30 AM - 11:45 AM	Dance in front of the Lord by the Younger Odissi Dancers from OCC
<b>11:45 AM -12:30 PM</b>	<b>Jagannatha Parivar Puja - Bandapana</b>
12:30 PM -12:45 PM	Offerings of Chapan Bhog
12:00 PM -01.00 PM	Singing of Jagannathastakam and Gitagovindam and DasaAbatara Sthoratrnam
12:45 PM - 01:30 PM	Lords rest: Curtain Dow
<b>12:45 PM- 02:00 PM</b>	<b>MahaPrasad for Devotees and Volunteers</b>
01:30 PM - 02:30 PM	Waking up Puja and Arati for Lords, Curtain Opens followed by Surya Puja, Dwarapala Puja, Upachara Puja and Ajna Mala
02:30 PM - 04:00 PM	Stage Preparation for Concert
04:00 PM - 04:15 PM	Transition and Welcome Formalities
<b>04:15 PM - 06:15 PM</b>	<b>Sangeet Martand Pandit Jasraj Concert</b>
06:30 PM - 06:45 PM	Odishi Offering before Pahandi
<b>06:45 PM - 07:15 PM</b>	<b>Procession of Deities and Shudarshan Chakra - Pahandi</b>
<b>07:15 PM - 07:30 PM</b>	<b>Brooming Ceremony - Chhera Pahanra Followed by Gurubandana</b>
<b>07:30 PM - 08:30 PM</b>	<b>Rathajatra</b>
<b>08:30 PM - 08:45 PM</b>	<b>Samuhik Maha Arati by all the Religious Organization of Greater Houston Area</b>
08:45 PM onward	Samkirtan, Offerings by General Public
08:00 PM onward	Mahaprasad Distribution
10:00 PM	Wrap up

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# OCC Executives



**Dr. Aditya Samal, MD**

CHAIRMAN



**Dr. Debananda Pati, PhD**

PRESIDENT



**Mr. Somdutt Behura**

SECRETARY



**Mr. Debasis Mohanty**

TREASURER

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DIRECTOR

[www.orissaculturecenter.org](http://www.orissaculturecenter.org)

# 8th Annual Houston Rath Yatra

*The Grand Chariot Festival*

*VPSS Haveli, Saturday, July 18, 2015*

**Coordinator**

**Dr. Gopal Mohapatra**

Event Sponsorship

Dr. Aditya Samal, Debasis Mohanty

Event Participation

Somdutt Behura

Fundraising

Girish Lenka

Community Outreach

Satya Dutta, Dr. Yamini Naygandhi, Dr. Debananda Pati

Media/Communications

Biswadeep Hota, Santanu Patra, Srimant Dash

Chariot Procession

Sai Majhi, Aruni Acharya

Souvenir

Dr. Arati N. Pati

## **Past Houston Rath Yatra Coordinators**

1st Houston Ratha Jatra at India House, Saturday, July 12, 2008

Coordinator: Dr. Raghu Dass

2nd Houston Ratha Jatra at Shri Radha Krishna Temple, Saturday, June 27, 2009

Coordinator: Mr. Manas Pattnaik

3rd Houston Ratha Jatra at India House, Saturday, July 24, 2010

Coordinator: Mr. Manas Pattnaik

4th Houston Ratha Jatra at India House, Saturday, July 16, 2011

Coordinator: Mr. Satya Dutta

5th Houston Ratha Jatra at India House, Saturday, June 30, 2012

Coordinator: Mr. Nirad Sahu

6th Houston Ratha Jatra at VPSS Haveli, Sunday, July 14, 2013

Coordinator: Mr. Satya Dutta

7th Houston Ratha Jatra at VPSS Haveli, Sunday, June 29, 2014

Coordinator: Mr. Debasis Mohanty

# Organizing Team - Rath Yatra 2015

**Coordinator : Dr. Gopal Mohapatra**

<b>TEAM</b>	<b>VOLUNTEERS</b>	<b>LEAD</b>
<b>Food</b>	Suman Samal, Sasmita Samantray, Saumya/Pali, Varsha, Jyoti, Rubi, Trupti, Sarita(Katy), Suchana, Smita, Anu Pani, Pramod M, Dillip, Nrusingha, Arati Rani, Leena, Madhab, Swapna, Arati, Giridhari	Madhab Maharana, Dillip Patra
<b>Ratha assembly/transportation</b>	Somdutt, Sai, Aruni, Sunil, Asish, Debasis Dash, Pradip Samatray, Amit, Hemanjan, Sambit, Kshitish, Kedar, Kshitish, Debi Prasad, Amit	Sai Majhi, Aruni Acharya
<b>Ratha decoration</b>	Shrabanee, Suman, Subhashree, Suchana, Jayashree, Varsha, Ruby, Vani, Anuranjita, Subhalakshmi, Ruchi, Linu, Dikshya	Rosalin Swain, Shrabanee Mitra
<b>Fundraising</b>	Aditya, Atasu, Manas, Gopal, Girish, Durba, Milli, Gyana, Ranjan, Soumya P, Anuj, Linu, Rishab	Girish Lenka
<b>Advertising/Media/Comm</b>	Dipu, Manas, Chetana, Srimant, Santanu, Gyana, Nirad, Soumya, Sheetal Jammi, Deepa, Surath, Somnath, Debi prasad, Jini, Dhara	Santanu Patra, Biswadeep Hota
<b>Interior decoration</b>	Sarita (SL), Swapna, Yamini, Sandhya, Deepa	Susandhya Dash
<b>Logistics and event coordination</b>	Damburu, Arabinda, Pradeep Patel, Manas, Vidya, Tapan, Rajmohan, Amit, Yamini, Reva, Leena, Chetana, Suchana, Sarita, Baba Jammi, Hemanjan, Somanath, Sibasish, Dibyajyoti, Asish, others	Damburu Epili, Arabinda Mishra, Pradeep Patel
<b>Puja and Bhoga</b>	Pali, Sasmita(Bindi), Deepa, Madhavi, Shalaka, Jochhna, Jyotshna, Julie, Subhashree, Julie, Suchana, Arati Rani, Smita, Arati, Debananda, Srimant, Surath, Sarita (SL), Yamini	Arati Rani
<b>Pahandi, Chhera Panhara &amp; Maha Arati</b>	Srimant, Gopal, Debananda, Julie, Suchana, Subhashree, Debasis Dash & volunteers from communities	Srimant Dash
<b>Chariot procession management</b>	Somdutt, Asish, Sai, Sunil, Debasis, Aruni, Ranjan, Manas (Satpathy), Tapan, Sandeep, Durba, Kalyan, Amit	Aruni Acharya, Sai Majhi
<b>Outreach (temples/Communities)</b>	Satya, Suratha, Yamini, Debananda, Arabinda, Srimant, Anu M, Sasmita, Sidhartha, Sourav, Sikha, Tusharika, Josha, Gopal, Nirad, Lakhvinder, Manas	Satya Dutta, Yamini Naygandhi, Debananda Pati
<b>Audio Visual</b>	Somdutt, Siddhartha & volunteers	Somdutt Behura
<b>Costume design</b>	Shrabanee, Sasmita(Bindi), Sarita(SL), Anu M, Swapna, Sarita(Katy), Anu Nayak, Srimant, Debasis D	Anuradha Mohanty
<b>Main artistic event &amp; hosting</b>	Somdutt, Kedar, Deepa, Durba	Somdutt Behura
<b>Souvenir team</b>	Arati, Srimant, Surath	Arati Pati
<b>Finance/Acct/Pricing</b>	Debasish, Roopesh, Somdutt, Aditya	Debasis Mohanty

# Acknowledgements

## **Souvenir:**

Subashish Nanda (Odisha), Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi (MLA, Simulia, Odisha), Ghanem Ghanem (UHD), Manuel Fernandez (UHD), Google/various internet sites (Pictures), Ananta Patel (Houston), Frau Bug (Kiel University, Germany), Asit Mohanty (Odisha), Prof. S. N. Mahji (Chennai), Deepti Rout (Houston), Somdutt Behura (Houston), Debananda Pati (Houston)

## **Sponsors:**

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## **Sponsorships were kindly arranged by:**

Aditya Samal, Girish Lenka, Kalyan Rath, Siddhatha Nayak, Soumya Pathi, Dillip Patra, Chetana Samal, and Manas Pattanaik

## **Stage & Sound:**

Rajesh Harry

## **Sadhi Bandha volunteers:**

Tarun Kusua Das; Umesh Bhatia; Gopal Mohapatra, Srimant Dash, Kedar Nanda, Vishnu Ji, Girish Lenka, Sidhartha Nayak, Nirad Sahu, Kalyan Rath, Aruni Acharya, Pradeep Patel, Vidya Sagar Madi, Vimala Di, Nandan, and Sachin Agrawal

## **Maha Arati 2014:**

### **Temples:**

Hindu Worship Society, Shree Meenakshi Temple, Ashtalakshmi Temple, ISKCON Temple, Govinda ji Gaudiya Math Temple, Durga Bari Temple, Gayatri Parivar, Voice of Sanatan Hinduism, Shri Sita Ram Foundation, Hindus of Greater Houston

### **Priests/Leaders:**

Pandit Bibhudatta Mishra, Pandit K.V. Doraiswamy Bhattar, Pandit Hanuman Swami, HH Bhakti Sundar Goswami, Pandit Puneet Soni, Pandit Dr. Bishnupada Goswami, Mrs. Prabha Barvalia , Mr. Padmakant Khambati, Dr. Arun Verma, Shri Shyam Sunder Prabhu, Shri Saranga Tahakur Prabhu, Mr. Sarad Amin, Mr. Tupil Narasimhan, Mr. Narayan Dave, Dr. Nagan Srinivasan

# Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deb





*Gajapati Maharaja  
Dibyasingha Deb*

Ph.: 06752-22829  
SRI NAHAR  
PURI-752001

12<sup>th</sup> July 2015

*Om Namo Bhagavate Jagannathaya  
Om Sri Gurave Namah*

## MESSAGE

On the most sacred occasion of Navkalevar of Chaturdha Daru Vighras in Sri Purusottama Dham Puri and celebration of His Ratha -yatra, I offer my prayers at the Lotus Feet of the Lord for the welfare of all devotees in Houston. May the Lord guide and inspire us all to firmly tread the path Divine and attain spiritual fulfillment and bliss in this very life.

Loka samasta sukhino bhavantu.



  
Dibyasingha Deb



**STATE OF TEXAS  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**

**Greetings:**

As Governor of Texas, I am pleased to welcome you to the Orissa Culture Center's 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Chariot Festival.

Communities of faith have long served as beacons of hope, sharing their beliefs and bettering their communities through service. Texas' tapestry of cultures and beliefs is made stronger by our vibrant Indian-American communities, whose traditions and unique perspectives enrich our state.

Celebrating unity in diversity, this festival is a time of joy and excitement for a bright future ahead. As you gather to honor and celebrate this special occasion, I join you in paying tribute.

First Lady Cecilia Abbott and I send best wishes for a memorable celebration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Abbott".

Greg Abbott  
Governor

**NAVEEN PATNAIK**  
**CHIEF MINISTER, ODISHA**



**STATE SECRETARIAT**  
**BHUBANESWAR**  
312 - 11-06-2015



**MESSAGE**

I am glad to know that Orissa Culture Center (OCC) Houston, Texas, USA is celebrating the 8<sup>th</sup> Shree Jagannath Rath Yatra in VPSS Haveli, USA on July 18, 2015 and a souvenir "Nandighosha" is being brought out in commemoration.

The culture of Odisha, manifested in its traditional art, architecture, dance and music, has its genesis in Jagannath culture. The essence of this culture lies in its all embracing spirit irrespective of caste, religion or nationality. It is perhaps the only culture, where God's rituals resembles the daily life of human beings and God himself comes out of his abode for the salvation of his devotees.

The efforts of OCC Houston to promote Jagannath culture and celebrate Nabakalebar on July 18 this year are appreciable. This will certainly promote better cultural relations and people to people cooperation. I wish the endeavour all success.

(NAVEEN PATNAIK)



# CITY OF HOUSTON

**Annise D. Parker**

Mayor

P.O. Box 1562  
Houston, Texas 77251-1562

Telephone – Dial 311  
[www.houstontx.gov](http://www.houstontx.gov)

July 18, 2015

Greetings,

As Mayor of Houston, I extend a special welcome to all attending the **8<sup>th</sup> Chariot Festival Shree Jagannatha Ratha Yatra**, a festival where participants will pull the Chariot of Lord Jagannath. The Orissa Culture Center, a nonprofit organization of over 100 non-resident families from the state of Orissa, India, will host the event.

I commend the Orissa Culture Center for understanding the importance of diversity and cultivating goodwill. Houston has evolved into a dynamic city, boasting the most diverse population in the nation, a strong economy, affordable housing and sustainable growth in a wide range of industries.

I thank the Orissa Culture Center for its efforts and hard work to connect cultures with people in our city. Houston highly values its thriving Indian community and the many contributions made by its citizens of Indian descent.

Best wishes for a rewarding festival.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Annise D. Parker".

Annise D. Parker  
Mayor

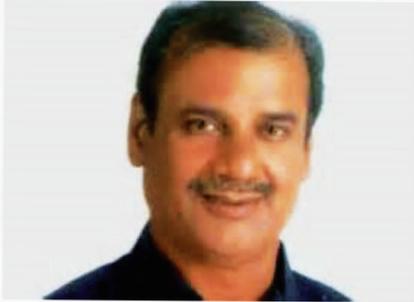


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BHUBANESWAR

Date 22/06/15

**MESSAGE**

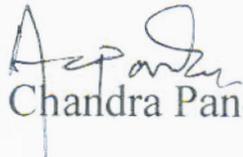
It gives me immense pleasure that Orissa Culture Centre, a dynamic Cultural initiative of Non-resident Odia families based in Houston, TX, United States of America is going to organise Shree Jagannatha Ratha Yatra on 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2015.

The arrangement of such chariot festival, especially on the sacred occasion of 'Nabakalebar' (**Divine Rebirth**)-2015 seems very significant, keeping in view the enhancement of spirit of Odias', in order to strengthen the awareness on the Wooden Deity (**Daru Devata**), universally worshiped as Shree Jagannatha as well as the entwined philosophy of universal peace and brotherhood throughout the world.

The annual publication "Nandighosha" is expected to be a mouth piece of Non-resident Odias' hopes and aspirations to popularise Odia culture with all its flairs and flavours.

I personally appreciate the endeavour and encouraging activities of the friends involved and wish the publication a grand success.

I pray Lord Shree Jagannatha for wholesome welfare of Non-resident Odias' fraternity.

  
(Ashok Chandra Panda)

## Message from Sri Radha Krishna Temple



MAY RADHA MADHABA BLESS YOU ALL

Sri Radha Krishna Temple  
11625 Beechnut Street  
Houston, TX 77072  
[Krishna@srkt.org](mailto:Krishna@srkt.org)  
281-933-8100



# Orissa Culture Center (OCC) and Houston Ratha Jatra

*Debananda Pati PhD - President of OCC*

Orissa Culture Center (OCC) derives its name from a small state on the east coast of India called Orissa (now renamed to pre-British period era, Odisha). Odisha is famous for its cultural heritage as many of its architectural sites are in the UN World Heritage catalogue. Although the state is a little unknown in the world arena, it still serves as beacon of peace, universal brotherhood, and friendship through one of its annual flagship events called Ratha Yatra, better known as Chariot or Car festival at Puri. The event draws more than a million people every year from all over the world of all races, religions, castes, and creeds. Similarly, one of the greatest classical dance forms that India has to offer to the world, Odishi, has its origin in this state. According to Natya Shastra of Bharat Muni, of the many ancient dance forms that emanated from India, Odishi holds the dignity of being the oldest and most ancient.

Similarly, Odia, the language spoken by the people in Odisha is one of the classical India languages with origin from Sanskrit. It is strange that while the event, the language and the cultural art forms that the state has to offer have crossed its natural geographical boundaries, very little is known about the state itself. That has led the Odia community from the greater Houston area to form OCC to spread the message of peace and universal brotherhood through a medium that is considered an asset for the state – the art and culture through its annual flagship event the Houston Ratha Jatra since 2008.

The vision of the organization is enshrined in its vision statement: OCC will be a unique charitable, educational and cultural art organization in the US that will offer center of excellence to foster Odia culture, heritage and tradition to all citizens in the Greater Houston metropolitan areas and beyond, while inculcating rich Odia cultural values to the children and grand-children of the people of Odia origin. It will seek to foster cultural bondage between the people of Odisha and all residents in general and of Odia origin in particular in North America. In doing so it will promote diverse cultural ethos that the city of Houston is trying to foster through many of its programs like Houston Arts Alliance. OCC's missions has therefore been to preserve, protect and promote Odishan Art and culture and the ethos of Universal brotherhood in the USA and around the world.

OCC's goal has been to build a permanent infrastructure to support community events, and a house for its main deity Lord Jagannath (Lord of the Universe) that links its entire cultural heritage on a vibrant fabric. The building will also host a library and museum with a rich collection of books on Odia literature and artifacts that are unique to the state, the most prominent being are those related to Lord Jagannath and Buddhism. It is expected that OCC will become a center for greater Houston Odia community supporting activities such as, spiritual upbringing, cultural events, community service, education, music, dance, and cultural art. It will also become a center to promote Odia language, and preserve and protect culture and tradition among the 2nd generation kids born to parents of Odia origin.

In order to achieve the above vision OCC has organized itself into a professionally run nonprofit organization with a well-structured board, operating executive body and many welldefined functioning committees, following the tradition of some of the best run non-profits in the greater Houston area. Its operations are guided by a well-documented articles and by-laws, and by a quarterly board of directors meeting with meticulous recording of meeting minutes. The organization started as a non-profit in November of 2007 and formally acquired tax deductible 501 (C)(3) exempt status from IRS in 2008. More information on OCC and Houston Ratha Jatra can be found at the following Websites.

[www.orissaculturecenter.org](http://www.orissaculturecenter.org) | [www.houstonrathayatra.org](http://www.houstonrathayatra.org)

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# Divine Demise: Death of a God

*“Vasamsi jirnani yatha vihaya  
Navani grhnati naro parani,  
Tatha sarirani vihaya jirnany  
Anyani samyati navani dehi.”  
~ Srimad Bhagvad Gita, 2:22 ~*

**H**e is the Supreme of the Supreme Beings, but how could He die? He is the ultimate controller, but how could He embrace His own demise? He looks so young and charming but how could He perish? It feels as if He arrived yesterday to the sanctuary of devotion and yet without any age He is leaving.

Without any realization over the past years probably we were all silently fell in love with His timber image. He is so attractive, why? Lord Jagannath does not have the appearance of Lord Vishnu or Krishna or Rama that our mental image paints as the rainbow of perfection. His image is that of a lion and incomplete, without any formed limbs. Still the oversized eyes attract millions. His prominent black eyes absorb the darkness (or kalanka) of the universe and put it on His own face to wash out all our sins. His perfectly circular eyes bring nectar of hopes and smoothness in the tunnel of unaccomplished, a native hunger of our human hearts. Once someone falls deep into those transcendental eyes, s/he is immersed into cosmic love. S/he sees everywhere those two eyes even on the speedometer of a car. With that much attachment, how could we let Him die? That is why, this time she said “I will be the first and follow me”. At the age of 92, Sashimani Devi, the last “Devadasi” of Lord Jagannath died on March 19, 2015. Her death brought an end to an age old tradition of Sri Jagannath temple dance practice at Puri, Odisha.

He died on ashadha krushna chaturdasi, June 15, 2015 (Raja Sankranti). Along with brother Balabhadra, sister Subhadra, and Chakraraj Sudarshana, He manifested Himself in the purest form of truth. In a very private and somber ambience, Lord Jagannath of Houston Dham started His “Paataali Yatra” at 9:30 PM. It was a different kind of journey where the whole Houston city was crying with flash flood and storm warnings. Everybody’s heart was pounding to say ultimate goodbye to their Cosmic Beloved. Now it was all final, a moment of truth. Although Bramha (soul) is Sanatana (eternal), they all slept in deep sleep at “Koili (Kaibalya) Baikuntha” in a beautiful weather with autumn breeze and without a drop of rain.

I do not evaluate myself as a devotee of Lord Jagannath as I lack the superior qualities of His devotees. Personally, over the years, I felt I am bit connected to His appearance. I was reluctant to accept the fact of “Paataali” (burial). When insisted, I tried to maintain a distance, a distance from death and pain. With my naive humanly attachment, I tried to run away from the web of excruciating pain of the fact “Olata Bruksbye Kheluchi Lotani Paaraa”, although someone from behind was whispering “He is reborn, He is back with new vigor and new inspiration”. With Nabakalebara, the New Embodiment, He is impatient to visit us on His beloved chariot, Nadighosha.

Arati N. Pati

Arati N. Pati, PhD  
Editor, Nadighosha

Houston Ratha Jatra, July 18, 2015

# Deities - The Holy Trinity



Lord Jagannath, Puri, Odisha



Sri Krishna, Houston, Texas

**J**agannatha, meaning “Lord of the Universe” is an abstract form of Sri Krishna and Vishnu, is the deity at one of the cardinal centers of India at Puri Dham in Odisha. He appears in the form of “Daru Brahma” (the Supreme Soul in a Sacred Log) and imparts the fragrance of universal love and brotherhood. Unlike the stone images of Hindu Gods, the unique and mysterious icon of Lord Jagannath is carved from neem (margosa) wood. The unfinished image of Lord Jagannath without any identifiable hands and legs is in black color representing sunya or inscrutability. The deity is about 6 feet (1.83m) tall with over dimensional head. His enormous round eyes have three concentric circles-Red on the outer layer, white in the middle, and black in the center. Without any eyelids He is watching the cosmos ceaselessly with malleable love of His embracing hands.

**Balabhadra**, the elder brother of Jagannath appears in the same unfinished sacred log form. He is worshiped as Balaram, the elder brother of Sri Krishna. Lord Balabhadra is in white color representing love, peace, and

enlightenment. The statue of Balabhadra is also approximately 6 feet tall with almond shaped eyes. Both Jagannath and Balabhadra have stump like arms stretching forward at mouth level to snuggle their loyal devotees



Lord Balabhadra, Puri, Odisha



**Devi Subhadra, Puri, Odisha**

**Subhadra** is the darling sister of Lord Jagannath and Lord Balabhadra. She is none other than the youngest sister of Sri Krishna and Sri Balaram. The beautiful princess appears in the middle with closest heart and

soul with Her Brothers. Devi Subhadra’s rejuvenating yellow color represents the creative energy. She is also incomplete. Devi Subhadra’s idol stands about 5 feet (1.52m) tall with oval shaped eyes and without hands and legs.

**The Trinity:** The incomplete forms of the Trinity (Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, and Devi Subhadra) signify the incompleteness of the humankind with all their progress and prosperity. Lord Jagannath is the eternal truth who will one day enlighten the humanbeings with their constant quests of Who is God, What is Knowledge, What is Freedom, What is Bliss, and What is Immortality to attain the pure truth or completeness in the universe.



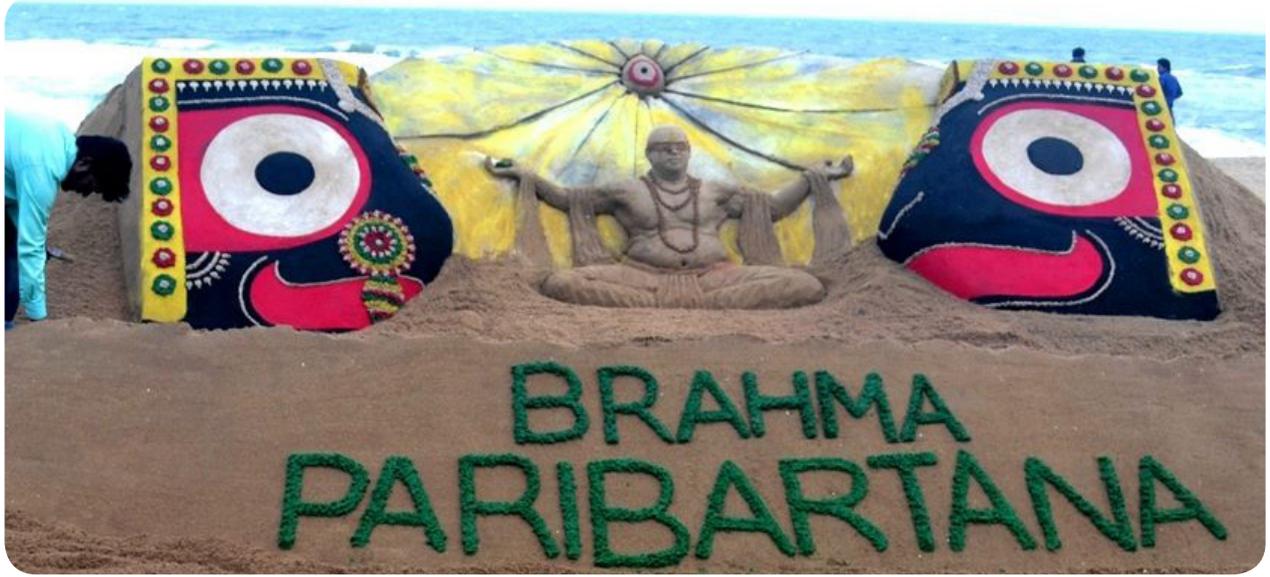
**The Trinity: Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra, and Lord Jagannath from left to right.**



**The Trinity in Suna Beshha “Golden Attire” Houston, Texas**

# The Navakalevara of Lord Jagannath

*Janaki Ballav Patnaik*



Changing the soul of Lord Jagannath by International Sand Artist, Padmashri Sudarsan Pattnaik.

In the Srimad Bhagavatgita, Bhagavan SriKrishna has explained to Arjuna regarding the body and the soul-the soul is eternal, whereas the body is transient. When the body becomes old, the soul discards it and takes on a new body, which is similar to discarding an old cloth to take a new one.

वासंसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय  
नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि ।  
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णा-  
न्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही ॥

Sri Jagannatha, Balabhadra, Subhadra, and Sudarshan do change their images in a similar fashion. The change of Vigrahas is known as 'Navakalevara'. In none of the temples in India where idol worship is performed does exist such a system of renewal of the images. Of course, the system of worshipping wooden idols is rare.



The human body after attaining lustre in youth gets gradually deteriorated on account of old age and finally it succumbs to death. Thereafter, the Jiva accepts a new body to take a rebirth. The Navakalevara proclaims this truth. According to the Gita:

देहिनोऽस्मिन् यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा ।  
तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिर्धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति ॥

There is an old story about the wooden images of Sri Jagannatha. After Sri Krishna left his mortal body being shot at the arrow of Jara Sabar, his body was consigned to fire. While the body was reduced to ashes, the naval portion remained unburnt. It was immersed in the ocean which floated down the western sea and subsequently changed its course to reach the Puri coast of the eastern sea in the form of a piece of wood. King Indradyumna (under a divine command) retrieved this log of wood to construct the idol of Lord Vishnu.

Before constructing the idols, Viswakarma cautioned the king not to open the door before the expiry of twentyone days during which he would be constructing the idols inside a closed room. But after twelve days, when the king and the queen didn't hear any sound of the construction work, they grew impatient, broke open the door and entered the room. They saw to their utter dismay that the maker of the idols had disappeared leaving behind the half-made idols. These idols had no feet,

no ears and hands were incomplete too.

अपाणिमादो जवनो ग्रहीता  
पश्यत्यचक्षुः स शृणोऽत्यकर्णाः ।  
स वेत्ति वेद्यं न च तस्यास्ति वेत्ता  
तमाहुरग्र्यं पुरुषं महान्तम् ॥

But He is all-pervading and all-knowing. The icon of Lord Jagannatha has a special appeal to the devotees over ages which has made them spellbound. They still wonder at the beauty and grace of this unique image. Although Sri Jagannath has been conceived as the image of Lord Vishna, the Bauddhas, the Jainas, the Saivas, the Saktas, the Ganapatya, and the Sauras have all accepted Him as their own presiding deity. In such manner Sri Jagannatha has been prayed in the following verse:

यं शैवाः समुपासते शिव इति ब्रह्मेति वेदान्तिनो  
बौद्धा बुद्ध इति प्रमाणपटवः कर्तेति नैयायिकाः ।  
अह्नित्यथ जैनशासनरताः कर्मेति मीमांसकाः  
सोऽयं वो विदधातु वाञ्छितफलं त्रैलोक्यनाथो हरिः ॥

At the *Simhadwar* the Patitapavana murti was installed to facilitate the daily darshan of Sri Ramachandra Dev, the Gajapati king of Puri who was converted to Islam. Santh Kavir came to the temple at Puri and sang his bhajan:

ठाकुर ! भले विराजो जी  
ओडिशा जगन्नाथ पुरी में ।

Salbeg in his innumerable *bhajans* has also sung the glory of Sri Jagannatha. Normally people believe that the Navakalevara occurs in every twelve years. But according to historical records the Navakalevara has never been held at an interval of twelve years in the past. It is prescribed that the Navakalevara shall be held when two lunar asadha months conjoin in a year. Accordingly, the Navakalevara festivals were celebrated in the past which fell only at an interval of nineteen years.

There are two exceptions. In 1893 there fell two asadha months where the idols of Lord Jagannatha were not changed. Although the wooden images existed, the clothes on the upper portion were only changed which could be called a partial Navakalevara. The queen of Puri didn't allow the Navakalevara to be celebrated on the plea of "cumbersome process and heavy expenses." Of course, the Car Festival was held with much pomp and grandeur that year as it fell during the Navakale-

vara. The second incident relates to the year 1977. The navakalevara of Sri Jagannatha was held under a piquant situation with utter discontentment. A judicial inquiry was ordered to probe into it. Historical records show that there were huge congregations at the time of Navakalevara in the past. According to a description in 'Utkala Deepika' about 2 lakh people had congregated at Puri during the Navakalevara of 1893, a century ago. The Navajauvana darsan was not permitted in 1893. Deepika reported, "The Pandas and Sevakas could not muster courage to safely provide the darshan to such a huge congregation apprehending massive turn out of pilgrims. They were also reminded of the casualties during the preceding Govinda Dwadasi. Therefore, the officials acted judiciously by shutting the doors of the temple to the pilgrims. The most important facet of the Car Festival is to have a darshan of the deities or the Car. Since this has been accomplished without any impediment there is nothing to feel sorry about it". In 1912 the Navajauvana darshan was also not permitted for fear of huge congregation and this was repeated in 1931 and 1969. In 1977 there was a total chaos and mismanagement as the system of "Parmanika" and "Sahanamela" was allowed for "Navajauvan darshan". It is said that the year in which Navakalevara passes off peacefully, it turns out to be auspicious for the state and the country as well. We pray to Lord Jagannatha, to shower His blessings on the innumerable devotees and let the Navakalevara this year pass off smoothly and peacefully.



**Late Mr. Janaki Ballav Patnaik** was an ardent devotee of Lord Jagannath. He was the former Governor of Assam and three-time Chief Minister of Odisha, India. He passed away in the wee hours of the auspicious day of "Aksyaya Trutiya" on

April 21, 2015 while in a tour to attend the convocation ceremony at Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh. He was the chancellor of the university. This article was originally published in the 'Orissa Review' in its July 1996, Nabakalebara Special Issue during his tenure as the Chief Minister of Odisha.

# Ratha Yatra

## Jagannath and his mobile temple at Puri\*

Hermann Kulke, PhD



Fig.1 The three rathas in front of the Jagannath temple, 1971 | Photo © Hermann Kulke

The *ratha yatra* of Puri is India's 'car festival' par excellence and the three temple cars which carry Jagannath, the 'Lord of the Universe', his divine elder brother Balabhadra and his sister Subhadra every year in the month of Asadha (June/July) from their monumental temple to Gundicha Temple, their 'summer residence', are by far the most famous in India (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup>

During *ratha yatra*, when 'the Lord of the Universe' leaves his 'jewelled lion throne' (*ratna-simhasana*) in the temple and merges with his devotees in Puri's Grand Road, (*bara danda*), (Fig. 2), and when his priests, the Pujapandas, pull and push up his heavy wooden

manifestation, (*daru murti*) to his new divine abode (Fig.3), his chariot (*ratha*) transformed into a veritable temple and an open 'divine space' which becomes for hours a much sought after puja place for devotees (Fig.4). The first English Pilgrim Tax Collector at Puri was therefore not surprised to observe in 1806: "During the Rath Yatra the God is seen in the streets and hardly a single pilgrim enters the Temple."<sup>2</sup> As with the great temple cars of south India, Puri's *rathas* are impressive examples of mobile temple architecture in a double sense. Moving from the 'Lions Gate' (*simhadvara*) in front of the Jagannath Temple nearly three km on the "Grand

\*Reprinted from *Imaging Odisha*, edited by Hermann Kulke (Editor-in-Chief, E-mail: hermannkulke@gmx.de), N. Mohanty, G.N. Dash, D. N. Pathy, and P. K. Dash (Managing Editor), Jagatsinghpur, 2013, Vol 1, PP 408-421.

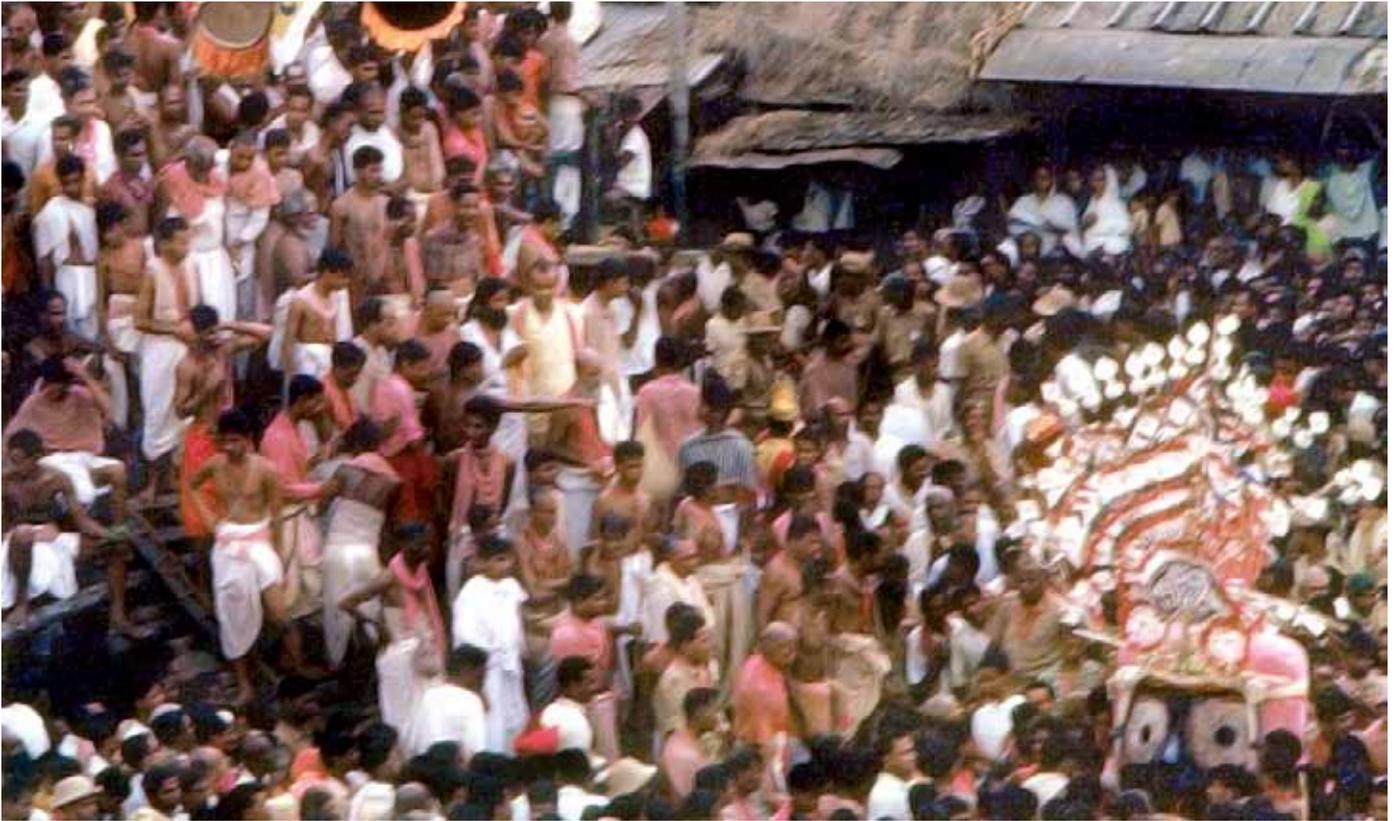


Fig.2 Pahundi bijai: Lord Jagannath is being brought out of his temple, 1971| Photo © Hermann Kulke

Road”(*bada danda*) with its many sacred intermediate stations up to Gundicha temple, the chariots extend the ritual and sacred space of the temple into major parts of the town, thus transforming Puri into a veritable temple city.

But divine chariots are also ‘mobile’ in a metaphoric sense. Each *ratha* is drawn by several hundred devotees, who come from all social strata and includes pilgrims from all quarters of the Hindu world. The *rathas* and their divine occupants move many more thousands of devotees into a state of excitement (Fig.5). It is not only the appearance of the god outside his temple which excites the pilgrims, it is also the crowd’s fascination with the movement of the *rathas* itself along Grand Road. The moment when Balabhadra’s *ratha*, the first of the three chariots, starts to move through the joint efforts of the devotees is the climax of the whole *ratha yatra* (Fig. 6). The pilgrims are further incited by the rhythmic sound of brass gongs, beaten by priests standing in two rows on each car. In the past, female temple servants (*devadasi*) accompanied the *rathas* and danced in front of the procession in praise of their ‘Lord of the Universe’.<sup>3</sup> In the *Kapila Samhita*, a hagiographic text of the sixteenth century, Jagannath himself promises the pilgrims, who attend his car festival, liberation from all sins and the direct admission to his divine abode.<sup>4</sup>

The earliest literary evidence of the existence of the car festival at Puri occurs in the period of the Somavamsa or legendary Kesari dynasty of the ninth to eleventh centuries, the first dynasty of Orissa to be connected by Madala Panji, the temple chronicles of Puri,<sup>5</sup> with the Jagannath cult. The *Anargharaghava* of Murari, a drama of the tenth or eleventh century, mentions the festival (*yatra*) of the god Purushottama (Jagannath) at the eastern sea shore.<sup>6</sup> Scholars agree that this description most likely refers to the Puri car festival. The oldest iconographical evidence of the festival and its temple cars comes from the later Ganga period in the thirteenth to fourteenth century. An excellent frieze of a dilapidated temple at Dhanmandal in northern Orissa depicts a sequence of three temple cars, each drawn by a large number of devotees.<sup>7</sup> The best preserved relief depicts Jagannatha on his Ratha and contains a number of interesting iconographical details (Fig. 7). It shows a car with twelve wheels without spokes. On the platform of the car rises a *mandapa* hall, adorned with a typical Orissan arched doorway (*torana*) which forms the frame for the deity. The roof of the *ratha* has a pyramidal shape with four horizontal cornices and is crowned by a typical ribbed finial pot-shaped *kalasa*-stone. This frieze, thus, clearly shows that the early *rathas* of Puri were modelled after the *pidha* temple type, known mainly from the



Fig.3 Hard work: pandas conveying their Lord to his “mobile temple,” 1974 | Photo © Hermann Kulke

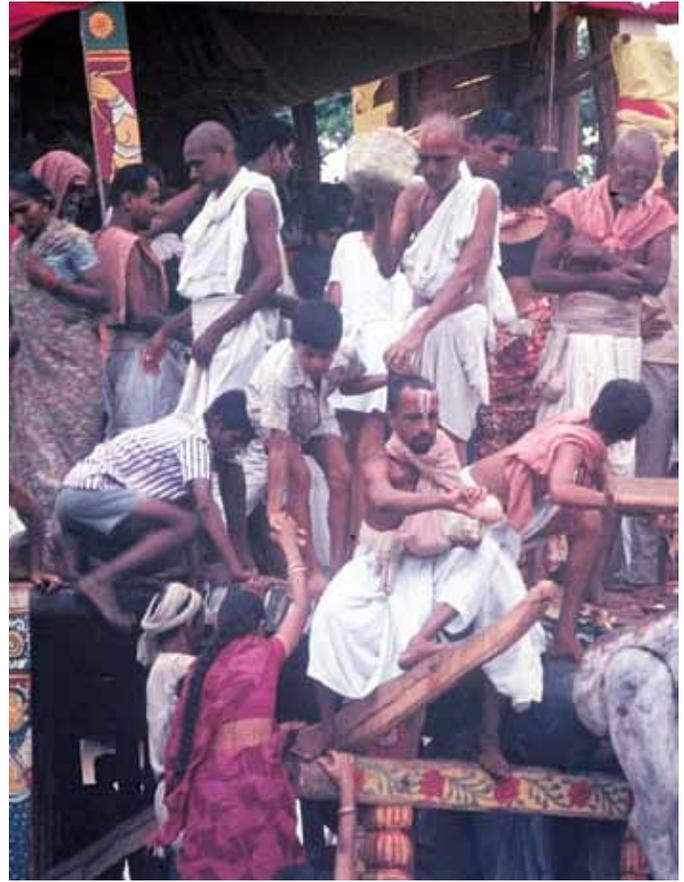


Fig.4 “Rush hour” before the departure of the rathas, 1971 | Photo © Hermann Kulke

frontal *Jagamohan mandapa* halls of the Orissan temples like those of Lingaraja temple at Bhubaneswar or the Jagannatha temple at Puri. The frieze also depicts, before and behind the *ratha*, two umbrellas and standards which indicate the royal status of the deity of Jagannatha. These symbols of royalty are still carried before the Raja of Puri when he approaches the rathas to perform as “First Servitors” (*Adya Sevaka*) of Lord Jagannatha, the ritual cleaning of the chariots. (Fig. 8).

Today, the *rathas* of the three deities are distinguished by size, colour, and the number of wheels. Jagannath’s *ratha* (*Nandighosa*) is 13.5 m high, supported by sixteen wheels; and it is covered with red and yellow cloth; Balabhadra’s *ratha* (*Taladhvaja*) adorned by red and green cloth, stands on fourteen wheels and has a height of 13.2 m; Subhadra’s *Ratha* (*Darpadalana or Deviratha*) in red and black is supported by twelve wheels and is 12.9 m high. The wheels of all three cars have sixteen spokes like their stone counterparts at the world famous sun temple of Konarak. A characteristic of the *rathas* of Puri is their decoration with large pieces of differently coloured cloth. In Puri, the changeable sea wind modifies the contours of the cars (Fig. 9). Contrary to the earliest depiction on the

Dhanmandal frieze, the present *rathas* of Puri resemble the *rekha* temple type of Orissan architecture. This type is characterized by the grand design of the curvilinear spire (*sikhara*) of the main temple towers at Bhubaneswar and Puri, greatly enhanced by the vertical lines of strongly emphasized ribs. Often the Bhaskareswar temple at Bhubaneswar is regarded as the model of the rathas. (Fig.10) K.C.Panigrahi even came to the conclusion that “the avowed purpose of its builders has been to shape it like a pagoda and to provide a permanent stone model for the wooden pagoda (Ratha) which is annually used in the car festival.”<sup>8</sup> This resemblance is particularly evident on pictures which show the *rathas* in front of the Jagannath temple with their coloured cloth covering and their distinct vertical lines.

The annual construction of the cars lasts for two months and has to be completed exactly the day before the beginning of the *ratha yatra* (Fig. 11).<sup>9</sup> It takes place in nine successive strictly ritualized stages in the main street in front of the palace of the Raja of Puri. As the *rathas* symbolize the body of their divine residents, these stages of construction are accompanied by a large number of rituals, mostly performed by the royal priest (*rajapurohit*).

Throughout this time, thirty-two craftsmen are employed, who claim to be descendants of Visvakarma, the divine architect who constructed Jagannath's first *ratha* in the mythological past. These craftsmen have for generations belonged to the same local castes of carpenters, woodcarvers, painters and blacksmiths, and to a group of outcaste labourers. They are divided by a complicated double hierarchy: apart from the different status of their respective castes, they are split up by the different status of "their" *rathas*. Those who construct the *ratha* of Balabhadra, the eldest brother of the divine trinity, hold within their caste the highest position, followed by the craftsmen of Jagannath's Nandighosa and finally by the craftsmen of Subhadra's Deviratha.

Among the major car festivals of India, Puri's *ratha yatra* has two unique features. First, contrary to practice, particularly in south India, Puri's cars are newly constructed each year and then, after the *ratha yatra*, demolished. Only their uppermost portion (*kalasa*), the nine small painted wood carvings which have the function of side deities (*parsva devata*) of temples and the wooden horses attached to each car, are retained to be used again. Secondly, the Jagannath cult of Puri is more directly associated with kingship than most of India's great places of pilgrimage as the kings of Orissa recognized Jagannath as king and overlord of Orissa since the early thirteenth century. Both these specific

features of the Puri *ratha* festival had direct economic and political implications. Economically, they required the regular procurement of an enormous quantity of wood as well as iron and ropes and their subsequent sale after the gods had returned to the main temple. Politically, it meant the absorption of the Jagannath cult and its temple cars into the scope of royal legitimization. Already in the early fourteenth century the *Purushottama Mahatmya* warned that a damage of Jagannath's *ratha* would lead to the annihilation of the whole kingdom.<sup>10</sup>

The close relationship between the Gajapati kings of Orissa and the Jagannath cult of Puri culminated under the Rajas of Khurda who had been able to establish themselves as successors to the erst while "Imperial Gajapatis" after the latter's extermination by Muslim armies in 1568 CE. Their legitimisation was mainly based on their renewal of the Jagannath cult in the years 1590-92 during the reign of Akbar. But already under his successor Jahangir, Khurda lost its privileged status after three devastating attacks under the Mughal governors of Orissa. In the 17th and 18th centuries, Puri and its *rathas* were sometimes even transformed them into a stage or arena of power struggle among the rulers of Orissa as few cases may illustrate.

The first attack in 1609 was led by Keso Das Maru, a Hindu Rajput in the service of Jahangir. A contemporary history of Mughal rule in eastern India contains a detailed

Fig.5 Devotees on the Boda Danda, 1971 | Photo © Hermann Kulke



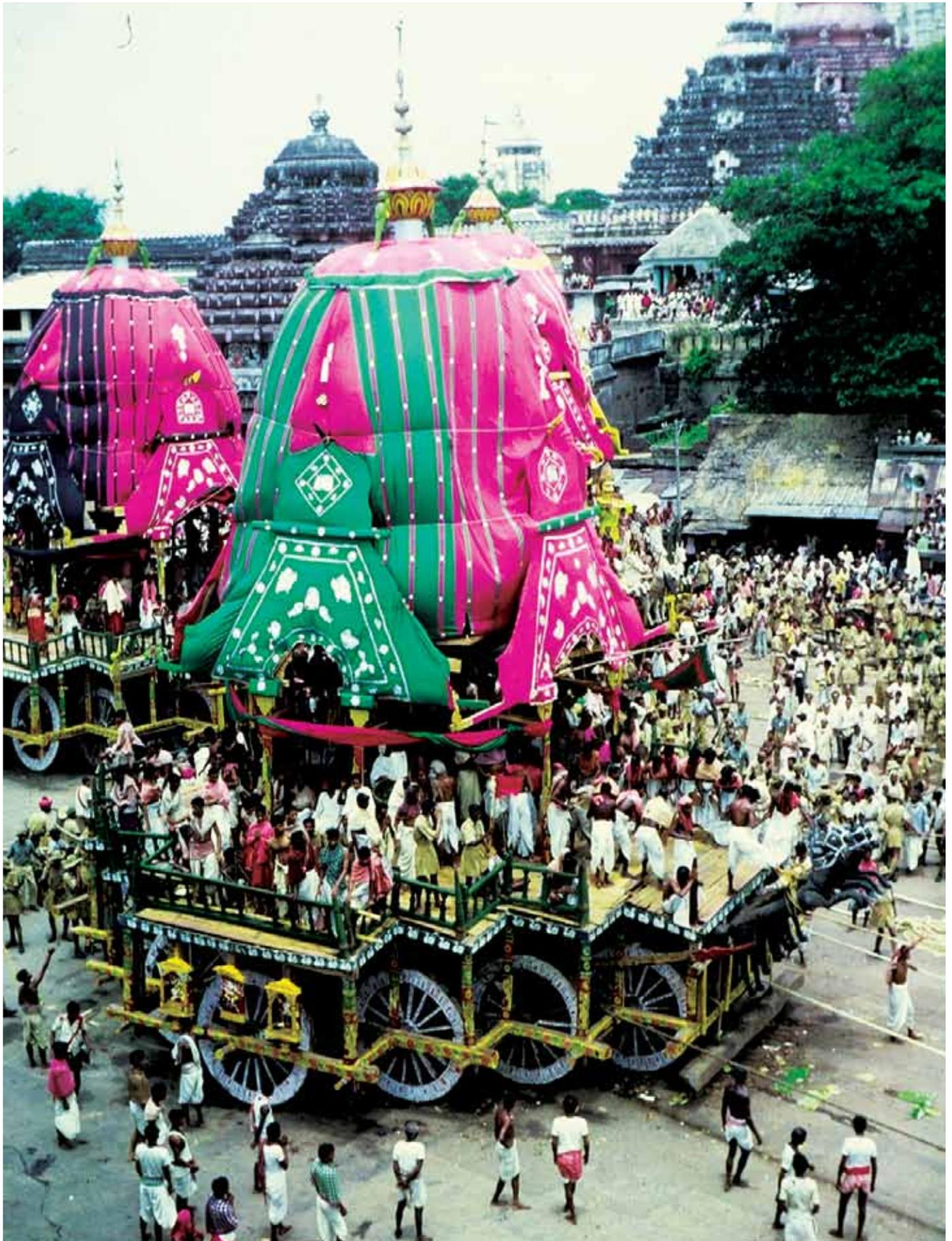


Fig.6 The beginning of the car festival: Balabhadra's car (Taladhvaja) drawn by his devotees,1974| Photo © Hermann Kulke



Fig.7 Part of a frieze depicting Jagannatha on his car: Dhanmandal, North Orissa, 13th-14th century , now Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar | Photo © Hermann Kulke

An ivory comb with Shree Shree Shree Gajapati Maharaja Purusottam Deva inscriptions,  
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston





Fig.8 The Raja of Puri with royal insignia, being carried in a palanquin to the rathas to conduct chera pahamra,1971| Photo © Hermann Kulke

description of his surprise attack on Puri and makes an interesting reference to the use of temple cars for military purpose.<sup>11</sup> Under the pretext of pilgrimage, Keso entered Puri during the car festival with a small band of followers in order to loot the famous temple treasure of Jagannath “worth more than 20–30 millions”. When the Raja of Khurda arrived with his army, Keso entrenched himself in the Jagannath temple. The Raja of Khurda

*“made five hundred to one thousand men ride on each ratha which was pulled by two to three thousand men; and pushed them on to the outer wall of the temple and put the inmates into a very serious plight.”*

But when the soldiers on the cars began to shoot, Keso Das and his men in the Jagannath temple returned the attack with burning sticks and arrows, setting fire to all the temple cars and killing hundreds of Khurda’s soldiers. Although some details of this story are untrustworthy, there seems to be some truth behind it because Puri’s temple chronicle, the Madala Panji too, mentions fierce

fighting with “Kesomaru” during which the temple cars were completely destroyed.<sup>12</sup>

After the Rajas of Khurda had lost their military and political power during these fights, they turned their attention to Puri and systematically enlarged their influence in, and control over, the Jagannath cult and its car festival which played an important role in these struggles. The Muslim governors of Orissa, too, were genuinely interested in strengthening their control over the *ratha yatra* because of the pilgrim tax which formed a substantial part of their revenue. In 1633, William Bruton, an early British visitor of Puri, even reported that during the car festival “one of the Mughal [officers was] sitting in the chariot, upon a convenient place, with a canopy to keep the sun from injuring him”<sup>13</sup>, — obviously to control this most important yearly gathering of pilgrims in eastern India.

The Rajas of Khurda, on the other hand, used the car festival to maintain their influential position in Puri. The festival and its royal rituals afforded an excellent



Fig.9 Jagannath's car (Nandighosa) with blown up cloth in front of his temple | Photo © Hermann Kulke



Fig.10 Bhaskaresvara Temple, Bhubaneswar | Photo © Hermann Kulke



Fig.11 Rathas under construction, 1974 | Photo © Hermann Kulke

opportunity to display their role as successors to the Imperial Gajapatis and *Adya sewaks* of Lord Jagannath among the various Hindu rajas and princes in attendance. For this purpose the Rajas of Khurda issued 'royal letters' (*chamu citau*) to the feudatory rajas of Orissa granting them certain privileges in the Jagannath cult in order to gain their loyalty and political support.<sup>14</sup> A particular honour and distinction during *ratha yatra* was the permission to serve Jagannath on the ratha with a *camara* (fan with a golden handle). The feudatory rajas of Daspalla and Dhenkanal had the privilege to provide annually wood and iron for the construction of the chariots and ropes to pull them in lieu of taxes. But the position of the Khurda rajas in the Jagannath cult was never uncontested. The Mughals tried to extract a maximum of pilgrim taxes and to weaken the Khurda rajas politically. However they never endangered their position as first servitors of Jagannath and main administrators of his temple as they, as non-Hindus, depended on the rajas of Khurda to perform their royal business in Puri in a kind of joint venture.

This situation changed dramatically with the downfall of the Mughals and the conquest of Orissa by the Marathas of Nagpur. As Hindu rulers of Orissa from 1751–1803, they were suspicious of the Khurda Rajas



Fig. 12 Photo of V & A Museum



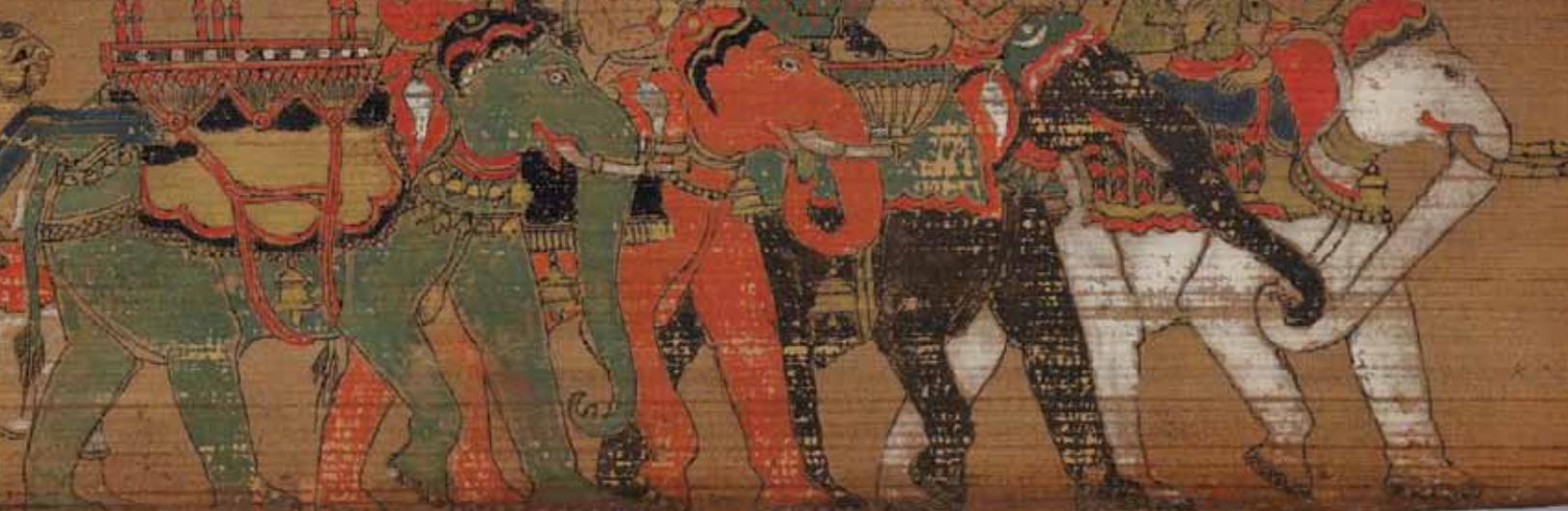


Fig.13 Royal procession at Puri. Rasika Haravali palm-leaf manuscript, folio 21. Courtesy Museum Rietberg, gift from Georgette und Alice Boner. Photo: Rainer Wolfsberger | Photo © Hermann Kulke

and their claim to be the ‘sacred and secret’ rulers of Orissa. Soon after their occupation of Orissa, they put Khurda’s feudatories under their own sway and deprived Khurda of its administration of the Jagannath temple. However, they never tried to finally appropriate Khurda’s rights and ritual symbols of its divine kingship during the car festival. This, however, was exactly what the Raja of Parlakimedi, a feudatory state in south Orissa, tried in 1753, when the Marathas had not yet finally established their rule in Orissa. The rajas of Parlakimedi, claiming to be descendants of the erstwhile Imperial Gangas, had never accepted Khurda’s claim to Gajapati kingship.<sup>20</sup> Raja Narayana Deva saw an opportunity to come forward with his claim to the Gajapati throne and visited the *ratha yatra* with a troop of 2,000 followers and all the trappings of royalty which may have looked like a princely deployment depicted in an eighteenth century manuscript (fig.12). A palm-leaf, of Puri’s temple archive relates the fascinating story:

*On that day [July 12th, 1753], Jagannatha Narayana Deo of Parlapatana (Parlakimedi) had come together with his brother to see the return festival [of the cars] from the Gundicha temple [to the main temple]. On his elephant there was a royal nagara drum, a flag-staff and also a royal seat. The elephant was placed in front of [Jagannatha’s] car and [the two brothers] ascended the ratha [from the back of the elephant] to have darsana (worship). The presents offered by them were taken by the Daitapati priests. During the darsana of the Great Lord on the Nandighosa car a necklace fell from the holy body of the Lord. Narayana Deva asked to be given the necklace but at this moment all priests hid the necklace, gave him tulasi (sacred leaf) and prasada (offerings) and sent [secretly] the divine necklace to the [Khurda] King. [On the next day] the cars reached the Lion’s Gate of the Temple towards the close of the night. Being dressed in royal robes, Narayana Deva and his brother sat on the ratha. On the same day all the priests had a confidential*

*discussion because of the darsana [of the Raja and his brother] in full royal dress on the ratha and the possibility of their entering into the temple [in royal dress]. It was dawn before the discussion was over. Because these two people sitting on the car, demanding to be allowed to discharge the duties (upacara) of the King during the time of the ceremonial return [of the deities from the cars into the temple], this ceremony did not take place. Consequently [only] the three incense offerings (dhupa) were performed on the car and Narayana Deo went away. [On the next day] the deities stayed on the cars. After the three incense offerings had been performed [again], the ceremonial return of the deities to his temple began at 10.30 in the night. Wearing a royal turban and a belt Narayana Deva followed the Great Lord and walked majestically [into the temple].<sup>15</sup>*

Narayana Deva returned to the temple the next day in royal dress and, together with the Maratha General Mohana Singh, worshipped Lord Jagannath. But due to the passive resistance of the priests, he failed to win acceptance as the legitimate Gajapati king. The generous distribution of privileges to their feudatories by the Khurda Rajas during car festivals and the attempt of another raja to capture the *ratha*, show to what extent the temple cars could also become an arena of political contestation. Temporarily, they combined the functions of palace and temple, and the message that rajas and priests announced through them was carried home by thousands of pilgrims even to the remotest villages.

During the conquest of Orissa in 1803, the East India Company was well aware of this importance of the Jagannatha cult and its car festival. In 1804, the British Commissioner at Cuttack visited the first car festival at Puri after the British conquest and reported to his Governor General that during the car festival ‘the priests and pilgrims received me with shouts and clapping hands [and] the general impression both among the priests and the pilgrims is highly favourable to the British

Government' (Fig.13). And he then drew the conclusion from his observation:

On all occasions when the subject of the valuable acquisition of the Province of Cuttack [Orissa] is under consideration, the important possession of the Temple of Juggernaut must stand in a prominent point of view; in a political light its value is incalculable.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore even today Chief Ministers of Orissa and their opponents regularly start their election campaigns with the blessing of the 'lord of the world' at Puri.



## Notes

1. Slightly revised version of "Jagannatha y su templo móvil de la ciudad de Puri", in: J. Guy (ed.) *La escultura en los templos indios. El arte de la devoción*, Catalogue of the exhibition of the Fundación "la Caixa" and Victoria and Albert Museum, London, at Barcelona 2007, pp. 214-223.
2. James Hunter, Collector of Tax, Jugganaut 10.6.1806, to the President of the Board of Revenue, Fort William. (Jagannath Temple Correspondence, Vol. I, Orissa State Archives).
3. F. Apffel Marglin, 1985, see also *Niti*, p. 85f.
4. P. Mishra 2005.
5. A.B. Mohanty 1969, p. 4; see also H. Kulke 1978, pp. 38ff.
6. See G. C. Tripathi 1978, p. 38ff.
7. Now in front of the Orissa State Museum at Bhubaneswar.
8. K.C. Panigrahi 1961, pp. 171
9. R. Hardenberg's comprehensive study on *Nabakelebara*, the great ritual of the renewal of the Puri's wooden deities, contains a detailed description of the rathas, their construction and meaning. R. Hardenberg 2001 and 2009; see also H.S. Patnaik 1994, pp. 118-121. The *Niti*, a manual of the early 17th century of Jagannatha's ritual (*niti*) contains a detailed description of the consecration (*pratistha*) ceremony. The manuscript is being edited by Prof. G. C. Tripathi.
10. *Purusottama Mahatmya* XXV, 64; see also H. Kulke 1981.
11. M. J. Borah 1936, vol. 1, pp. 35-8; H. Kulke 1978.
12. A.B. Mohanty 1969, p. 65. Mirza's fantastic story reminds one of the description of the temple cars given by F. Bernier who travelled in India in the years 1656-68: "A superb wooden machine is constructed, such as I have seen in several other parts of the Indies, with I know not how many grotesque figures. This machine is set on fourteen or sixteen wheels like those of a gun-carriage, and drawn or pushed along by the united exertions of fifty or sixty persons." F. Bernier, 1916, p. 304.
13. Quoted from P. Acharya, 1961, p. 46.
14. H. Kulke, 1992.
15. Orissa State Museum, Temple Archive of the Deula Karana,

V, 1, 61V.

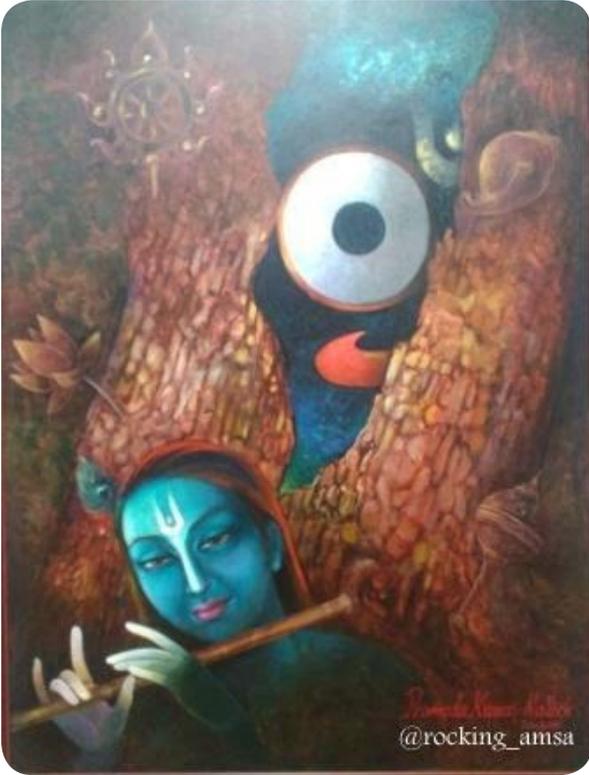
16. John Melville to Shawe (Priv. Secretary to Wellesley) 11.7.1804, Wellesley Papers, Add. Ms. 13611.

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# Nabakalebara Rituals: A Spiritual Analysis

*Asit Mohanty*



'Daaru Brahma' by artist Pramod Kumar Mallick at 'Nilakandara', Bhubaneswar.

**N**abakalebara is a unique ritual of ancient 'Sanatana Dharma' or Indian religious tradition. Although Srikshetra Puri is one among the four revered Dhams of Hinduism located in four corners of India, this distinctive ritualistic tradition is not observed anywhere else. It is because at no other place worshiped idols are made up of 'daru' or wood. As per Indian philosophical tenets this world is manifestation of 'Sthabara and Jangama' or 'Chara and Achara' which denotes conglomeration of the animate and the inanimate. Similarly the Almighty lord also manifests in this world in two ways. One is as Avatar like Matsya, Kachhapa, Baraha, Nrusimha, Rama etc and the other is as 'Arccha' or deities meant for worship. Srimad Bhagavatam also refers to these idols. Lord Sri Krishna tells Uddhaba- Deities are of eight types; they can be made up of stone, wood, metals like iron, silver or gold, can be created from clay or sandal wood paste, can be made up of sand, it can be mural or painting, it may be idol crafted out of precious jewel and can be the image created in one's mind.

In 'Agni Purana' it is mentioned that idols can be

crafted from seven types of materials namely clay, wood, stone, iron, jewels, sandal and flowers. In some other scriptures process to construct idols from the alloy created by mixing iron with gold, silver, aluminum, brass, lead. Except the idol created through mental conception all other idols have a definite life span. They corrode with time. So, these idols have to be replaced from time to time. This is Nabakalebara or alteration of body. Four main idols of Sri Jagannath temple are different from idols of other temples. In other places when the idols corrode they are completely reconstructed, but in Puri Nabakalebara rituals are only meant for the idols made up of 'Daru' or wood. The core materials or 'Brahma Padartha' of old wooden idols are replaced in the new ones.

Intricate essence of philosophy of body and soul described in the Srimad Bhagavad Gita is the foundation of Nabakalebara ritual of Sri Jagannath.

## Essence of the Gita in Nabakalebara

'Kalabera' or body has been described as 'agama-payi' or that manifests and vanishes. Body gets created and also gets destroyed. But 'Atma' or soul remains intact as it is indestructible. It is eternal. In this context there is a much quoted sloka in second chapter of the Gita known as Sankhya Yoga, "Basamsi Jirnani ...". In 1951, Dasarathi of Sambalpur had translated this famous sloka in nine syllable Odia poetic rhythm, "Tejina puruna basana, pindhila paraye nutana, e jirna deha chhadi dei, nutana deha dhare dehi". When worshipped in this world as 'Devata' Sri Jagannath as an idol is also 'Dehi' or holder of a body. So, Sri Jagannath also sheds off his worn out body to take up a new one. Nabakalebara is a practical demonstration of this theory depicted in the Gita.

## Meaning of Kalebara

'Kalebara' means body. There are several other Indian synonyms for it including 'sharira', 'deha' and 'bapu'. The question is despite availability of several words why the word 'kalebara' has been chosen for Nabakalebara ritual? Deeper etymological analysis hints that 'sharira' denotes that which corrodes. Which shows signs of growth or 'upachaya' is 'deha' and that which is

capable to sow seed of life is 'bapu'. Meaning of 'kalebara' is etymologically different from these words. Experts say 'kalebara' word has emerged from 'kale sukre varam sreshtham'. Former Sanskrit professor of Utkal University in his article in the July 2015 edition of the 'Pourusha' has said, "That which is best in 'kale' or as per essence of life is 'kalebara'. It is a synonym of the body which denotes the period when 'sukra' or essence of life is at its paramount state.

Indian philosophy says our body is constructed of seven 'dhatu' or basic materials. 'Sukra' is most subtle and powerful among them. 'Saptadhatu' or seven core materials include 'rasa, asruk, mansa, meda, asthi, majja and sukra'. The body in which 'kale' or 'sukra' is powerful and strong is 'kalebara'. The principle of 'Basamsi jirnani...' of the Gita does not go with this. It hints that 'nabakalebara' is a 'leela' or play of Sri Jagannath. Idols of Sri Jagannath temple are not reconstructed because of deterioration of 'kalebara'; but through this 'leela' the cycle of birth and death in this mortal world are depicted. It shows that there is no reason of fear for death in this mortal world. Body that has manifested is sure to get destroyed. It will come and go. This is the verity of existence.

### **Basis of 'Daru' or wooden idol**

Scriptures indicate that earlier idol of Sri Jagannath was 'manimayi' or crafted out of a precious jewel. Nilamadhav worshiped by Sabara community or tribals before advent of worship of Sri Jagannath was an idol of this kind. But historians like Satyanarayan Rajguru opine that earlier idol of Sri Jagannath was made up of stone. But 'Skanda Purana' and 'Sarala Mahabharata' say when the idol made up of Indranilamani (Indranila jewel) vanished, the lord appeared in the form of divine 'daru' or as a wooden log. New idols were prepared from this divine log, say these scriptures. 'Skanda Purana' further mentions that the lord has taken the form of 'daru bigraha' or wooden idol in holy and enlightening Purushottam Kshetra as part of a leela for the humans.

Chaitanya Charan Das in his translation of 'Skanda Purana Purushottama Mahatmya' has described the word 'daru' to be derived from two Sanskrit roots; one is 'daa' and the other is 'do'. 'Da' means 'darana' or to cut and 'do' means to give. The lord slashes away all our sorrows and provides infinite bliss and happiness, so he has taken the form of 'daru bigraha' as part of his 'leela' among the humans. As part of this 'leela' he takes up new 'kalebara' at definite intervals. Collection

of 'daru' and construction of idols are done through His subtle directives.

### **Thought behind Agnyamala**

Rituals of Sri Jagannath's Nabakalebara begin with 'Agnyamala'. As per the tradition on the day of Chaitra Shukla Dasami day of Indian calendar, four 'agnyamala' are received from the deities Sri Jagannath, Sri Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Sri Sudarshan to start the search of 'daru' for Nabakalebara.

Senior servitor of Sri Jagannath temple, Rabindranath Pratihari in his book 'Sridarubrahmanka Agnyamala Rahasya' has elaborated this word. According to him, this compound word has been formed from two Sanskrit words 'Agnya and mala' that have been joined through 'karmadharaya samasa'. He says 'Agnya' is 'mala' and 'mala' is 'Agnya'. Odia dictionary 'Purna Chandra Odia Bhasakosha' mentions- As a mark of order of any deity the garland of flower sent to the person who will do the job is called 'Agnyamala'. It also means garland used by the deity. This garland of flower is revered as order or directive of the deity.

This 'Agnyamala' tradition of Sri Jagannath temple has scriptural and spiritual basis. It is believed that Almighty God despite being the 'karta' or ultimate doer is only the 'sakshi purusha' or witness. He is also 'akarta'; he never does anything but every thing in this universe happens as per his directive. As 'sakshi purusha' He only silently witnesses everything. So, He is 'Jagat Chakshu' or eye of the universe. So, He has large rotund eyes devoid of eyelids. So, all actions in this world are offered to Him without any desire for their outcome.

In the above mentioned book Mr. Pratihari has mentioned 139 known and unknown 'agnyamala' of Sri Jagannath temple. In the glossary of the book, he has provided a list of 39 kinds of animate, inanimate and 'chalanti pratima' or proxy-idols, who take part in various festivals after getting 'Agnyamala'. As per this list there are 27 such 'chalanti pratima' or proxy-idols and the number of animate and inanimate entities is eight. The person who dons the garb of Ravana for the 'Ravana Vadha' celebrations of Bali Sahi on Baisakha Krushna Dwitiya gets the 'agnyamala' touched to the 'ratnasimhasana' or altar of Sri Jagannath temple. For the coronation ceremony or 'abhishek utsav' on the Sri Ram Navami day, the 'ratnapaduka' of Sri Ram is provided a 'agnyamala'. The rest six times 'agnyamala' is given for 'daru' meant for Nabakalebara as well as to the three

chariots meant for annual Rathayatra. Four 'agnyamala' are accepted by respective 'badagrahi' four idols of Sri Jagannath temple on Chaitra Shukla Dasami. 'Badagrahi' denotes leader of a segment or ritualistic group responsible for the particular deity or chariot.

### **Analysis of 'agnyamala' given to 'daru'**

As per the traditional rituals, after the 'madhyanha-dhupa' or food offering of mid-day on Chaitra Shukla Dsaami, servitor Pati Mohapatra, who is believed to be descendant of Vidyapati collects four 'agnyamala' used on the idols of Sri Jagannath, Sri Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra, and Sri Sudarshan. Three of these are handed over to three respective 'Badagrahi' of Sri Jagannath, Sri Balabhadra, and Devi Subhadra, who are Daitapati servitors. Pati Mohapatra keeps the 'agnyamala' of Sri Sudarsan with him. He serves as the 'Badagrahi' of Sri Sudarshan.

Most important point to note is that after identification of trees meant to become 'daru', these four 'Agnyamala' are offered to respective trees. The 'Agnyamala' of each idol is offered to the tree from which the same idol is to be constructed. It means the 'Agnyamala' provided to three 'Badagrahi' and Pati Mohapatra are not meant for these servitors. They are for the neem trees which are to be chosen. These four 'agnyamala' are transported to Deuli Math at Kakatpur by a bullock cart. One after another, four 'daru vriksha' or trees meant to be 'daru' are chosen and respective 'agnyamala' are offered to these trees. The message behind it is that identification and location of 'daru vrikshya' for Nabakalebara is not done by the servitors who receive the 'agnyamala' or their associates. Sri Jagannath chooses the 'daru' for his own Nabakalebara. Concerned Daita and Pati Mohapatra servitors take part in this whole process only as carriers or couriers of 'agnyamala'.

### **Chakraraj and Chakranarayana philosophy**

After getting 'agnyamala', the team of 'darujatri' or explorers of 'daru' come out of the temple through its Singhadwara and travel to Sri Jagannathballav Math via the Sri Nahar or royal abode of Gajapati Maharaja, the king of Puri. From there they travel to Deuli Math at Kakatpur. During this journey Sri Sudarshan leads the way. This Sudarshan is not the pole like one worshipped on the 'ratnasimhasana'. It is a replica of the Nilachakra placed at the top of Sri Jagannath temple, which is kept in the 'bahara bhandara ghara' or outer store house of

Sri Mandir. But spiritually both the pillar and circular forms of Sri Sudarshan are one and same. A wooden handle is attached to this circular Sudarshan made up of silver. In the 'banajaga' rituals or the process to search the 'daru' trees in the woods Sri Sudarshan plays a key role like that of Sri Nrusimha.

Apart from leading the 'banajaga jatri' team from 'Simhadwara' the prime gate of temple facing east to Jagannathballav Matha and from there to Deuli Math of Kakatpur Sri Sudarshan is also placed on the left side of Maa Mangala during ritualistic 'majana' or consecration of the deity. As per directives provided by Maa Mangala through dreams, 'daru' trees with divine symbols are selected. When a tree gets selected as 'daru', at first Sri Sudarshan is placed at the base of the tree. Then starts the yagna for 'daru chhedan' or cutting of 'daru'.

In this 'yagnashala' or abode of yagna, 'ashtra puja' or worship of cutting tools to be used for cutting the 'daru' are worshipped. These cutting tools include three axes made up of gold, silver and iron and an iron billhook. The billhook is used for sacrificial rituals in which a watermelon is cut down as symbolic sacrifice and the three axes are used to cut down 'daru' tree. These sharp tools are worshipped with 'ashtra mantra'. Sri Sudarshan happens to be the deity of 'ashtra mantra'.

After completion of yagna, its acharyas take the cutting tools to the base of the 'daru' tree and sacrifice of the watermelon is done with chanting of Sudarshan mantra. Gold, silver and iron axes sanctified with the same mantra are used to cut down the tree. The acharyas hand over these axes to the concerned servitors, one after the other while chanting Sudashan mantra. In this process a 'daru' tree is cut down and after completion of this process for one, the same process for next 'daru' has to be taken up. Sri Sudarshan is taken to the base of next 'daru' tree. After cutting, the 'daru' logs is prepared for transportation. It is covered up by traditional silk fabric and one after another they are carried to Koili Baikuntha of Sri Mandir in Puri by hand dragged carts. The cart carrying 'daru' of Sri Jagannath rolls to Sri Mandir in the end and it is led by Sri Sudarshan. During this journey Sri Sudarshan is tightly bound to the front of silk cloth covered 'daru' of Sri Jagannath. 'Bahirbanajaga' or outside rituals related to Nabakalebara concludes when 'daru' of Sri Jagannath reaches Koili Baikuntha of Sri Mandir. With it Sri Sudarshan returns back to the store house.

This proves that Sri Sudarshan plays a key role during ‘bahirbanajaga’ of Sri Jagannath as he is considered to most powerful and destroyer of evils. Sri Sudarshan is not only a weapon held in the right hand of Sri Jagannath, he is also worshipped along with Sri Jagannath on the ‘ratna simhasana’. Sri Sudarshan also finds place on the top of the Sri Mandir temple in the form of Nilachakra. As per Puranic scriptures the first divine ‘daru’ of Sri Jagannath had floated out at ‘Banki Muhana’ beach of Puri. A stone carved Nilachakra is worshipped at the spot, which is known as Chakratirtha. Added to as per yoga and tantra chakras in our backbone and brain are points of consciousness that lead to enlightenment. Sri Sudarshan represents all the chakras in our backbone, so it is worshiped in a shape of pillar rather than a chakra in the Sri Mandir.

### **Gitagovind Khandua and Sri Durga Madhav:**

There is ‘shadhi bandha’ tradition for members of ‘banajaga yatra’ before they start their journey in search of ‘daru’. As per it, after getting the ‘Agyamala’ the three ‘badagrahi’ daitapati servitors and Pati Mohapatra reach the ‘anasara pindi’ through the ‘Kalahata’ door. There the head servitor ‘Bhitarchha Mohapatra’ ties up silk sarees of Khandua variety used by the deities that have has couplet from ‘Gitagovinda’ woven all over it. Similar but comparably smaller Khandua silk pieces are tied up to the heads of other Daitapati servitors, who are members of ‘banajaga yatra’. It is believed that these Khandua silk pieces serve as their armour against all odds during their ‘banajaga yatra’.

During the ‘majana’ rituals of Maa Mangala at Kakatpur a Khandua silk is also placed on the head of the deity.

These ‘Gitagovind Khanduas’ usually contain acouplet from third sarga (chapter) of the Gitagovind of Sri Jayadev of medieval bhakti era. It is “Kansarirapi sam-sara basanabaddha Srinkhala. Radhamadhaya hrudaye tayaja brjasundari”. It means, bearing the bonds of mortal desires in the form of emotions of Sri Radha in his heart, Sri Krishna, the enemy of a demon named Kamsa left behind the beautiful lasses of Gopa to depart. This sloka of the Gitagovind speaks of importance of Sri Radha as the power behind power of bliss of Sri Krishna. It states Sri Radha, the embodiment of emotions, who has dedicated her life to Sri Krishna is the reason behind his joy and bliss. She happens to be the boundary of reasons behind his every leela and Sri Krishna is

always rounded up by this boundary.

Nabakalebara is a inimitable leela of Sri Jagannath. Through Gitagovind Khandua and ‘shadhi bandha’ tradition, powers of Krishna-Radha, Jagannath- Mangala or Durga-Madhav shakti are invoked. It is also believed that when appeased by chanting of ‘Swapnabati mantra’ and Saptasati Chandi, Maa Mangala provides directions to locate the ‘daru’ trees.

### **Mystery of Swapnabati mantra**

As per norms of Nabakalebara, Daitapati servitors continue to chant ‘Swapnavati mantra’ 108 times before their sleep at night till they find out the location of appropriate ‘daru’ tree. Although it is commonly known as ‘Swapnavati mantra’, it is actually ‘Swapna-manabaka mantra. The word ‘manabaka’ means child or a person devoid of Vedic knowledge. Its aim is to surrender before the mother goddess like an innocent, ignorant and simple child and to pray her to provide clues to locate suitable ‘daru’ tree. The meaning of this mantra is “O, the lord Vishnu who rules the universe, hey omnipresent basis of this universe, hey lord of all dreams, I bow down before you. Hey lord of devatas, I am taking refuge before you; please do fulfill the wish in my heart”.

It is to be noted that Maa Mangala is also known by the name ‘Swapnavati’. This name finds place in the ‘Sri Durga Sahasra Nama’. Yet this mantra dedicated to lord Vishnu is named ‘Swapnavati’. It is a obvious question that how can prayers through this mantra can please Maa Mangala, so that she provides clues to locate appropriate ‘daru’ trees. This can be elaborated with support of seventeenth verse of ninth chapter of the Gita. In this sloka lord Krishna says, “Pitahamasya jagato mata dhata pitamahah”. It means ‘I am the father and Mother of this universe; I am the grandfather as well as the ultimate doer’. So, there is no difference between Him and the mother goddess. So, Maa Mangala can be appeased through prayers by mantra of lord Vishnu.

Writer of ‘Darubrahmanka Nabakalebara’ Pandit Antaryami Mishra has pointed out that ‘Swapnavati mantra’ is a Vaishnavite mantra. If chanted with proper dedication and concentration, ‘Darubrahma’ through His own shakti or power, the mother goddess Maa Mangala, provides direction for ‘daru’ in dream. Daitapati servitors of ‘Darubrahma’ take up penance to find location of ‘daru’. Realisation of equanimity between ‘Jibatma’ (microcosm) and ‘Paramatma’ (macrocosm) is the goal and philosophy of Shaktitantra, which is the

practical basis of Advaita philosophy. This is utilized during search for 'mahadaru' of 'Darubrahma'. Maa Mangala awakens the power of soul in them as a blessing for the chanting of 'Swapnavati mantra' and penance. Using the insight of this blessing, the persons doing penance locate the 'Mahadaru'. Everything happens through blessings of compassionate 'Darubrahma' and Maa Mangala. Dreams through this insight lead to real happenings.

### **Idea behind 'Daru' of Neem tree**

Materials that can be used to construct deities have been described in Varahamihir's 'Vrihat Samhita'. In Kashyap's 'Shilpashatra', 'daru' or wood has been described as the best material to construct deities.

In 'Bhavishya Purana' use of wood has been stressed for constructing idols of lord Suryanarayana or sun god. It has been mentioned that logs of peepul, mahua, deodar, sandal, bel, khadir, anchan, neem, sriparna, jack-fruit tree, Arjun, and raktachandan (red sandal) are most suitable to construct idols. But choice of neem tree for construction of deities of Sri Jagannath temple has a deeper meaning.

In 'Bhavishya Purana' it is mentioned 'Nimbadyah sarvavarnanam vrikshyah sadharanah smrutah'. It means an idol prepared from neem 'daru' is suitable for worshippers of all sections of society. This is supported by data provided by another manuscript named 'Pratima Lakshana Soudhagama'. This manuscript says 'Nimba pradhanmetasham pratima cha binirmitou' proclaiming that among all 'daru' neem is the prime one. In Sri Jagannath temple persons of every social class including descendants of Brahmin Vidyapati, Kshatriya king Gajapati Maharaja, and inheritors of tribal Biswabashu play key role in the rituals of the deities. So, idols are constructed from neem 'daru' to make them suitable for servitors and worshippers of every caste and class of society.

### **Significance of Triguna-Ankura**

The yagna performed in the woods for collection of 'daru' is 'banajaga'. Like the yagnas of other auspicious ceremonies, 'ankuraropana' (sowing of seedlings as a mark of beginning) is also an integral part. Three earthen pots are used for it. Through prescribed rituals, four pots named 'Sarab' are considered abode of lord Shiva, four 'Palika' pots are dwelling place of lord Vishnu and

four 'Panchamukhi' pot are for lord Brahma. In these four pots holy seedlings are sown. Three pots dedicated to each of the deities are placed at the four doors of the yagnashala. It means at each door remains 'ankurpatra' (pot with seedlings) of the divine trinity. This divine trinity is considered the reason behind manifestation of this mortal existence of the universe. This also denotes the trinity of three gunas, Satwa, Rajas and Tamas. Conglomeration and equanimity of the divine trinity at the doors leads to the interior of yagnashala, where rituals for a new beginning or 'Nabakalebara' take place. It denotes that real essence of life is beyond the trinity of deities and gunas. The real journey of birth of consciousness starts from the point or door step when one realizes this trinity to be manifestation of single Omnipresence.

### **Union of Vishnu-Laxmi**

Before fire is lighted, acharya of the yagna uses muruja (organic colours in powder form) to draw holy designs at the base of 'yagnakunda' (vessel of altar) and put a bed of kusha grass over it. It is conceptualised that goddess Laxmi is sleeping on this kusha grass bed. Over it 'Vaishnabagni' or lord Vishnu in the form of fire is placed. This fire is considered to be 'virya' or life force of lord Vishnu. So, this yagna denotes unity of Prakriti and Purusha, Mother Nature with the ultimate energy in the universe, object with the doer. It hints at the manifestation of eternal energy to a mortal form on the platform of creation.

### **Explaining Kushmanda (ash gourd) sacrifice**

'Purnahuti' or final offering of this yagna is done through 'Patala Nrusimha mantra'. It follows floral offering and 'gupta niti' or secret rituals at the base of the 'daru' tree. 'Kushmanda Bali' or sacrifice of ash gourd is part of these secret rituals. It can also be termed a symbolic representation of animal sacrifice. Four sticks are attached to a watermelon to make it look like a standing animal. Another small stick forms the tail. This watermelon in animal form is cut down from the middle by the billhook earlier consecrated with 'astramantra'. After this sacrificial offering, the inside material of the ash gourd is cut down into small pieces. These small pieces are mixed with black gram and turmeric to be offered as sacrificial offering to 'Dashadigapala' (protectors of ten directions) and 'bhutas' (spirits moving around). Higher thoughts remain hidden in this ritual. German researcher Roland Hardenberg in his research document on Nabakalebara has opined that 'obliteration

of one existence with birth of another’.

Scholars have always opined that sacrifices were symbolic representation of sacrifice of our animosities before the deities. In a way ash gourd represents human brain. Like the human skull it has a hard outer covering and its inside is watery jelly like. Human brain is the basis of all our mortal experiences, emotions, and actions. Kushmanda sacrifice denotes that when we offer our brain or very basis of our identity to Almighty, a new life begins.

According to Mr. Hardenberg, this ash gourd sacrifice ritual can be linked to another secret fish sacrifice ritual that is conducted after completion of construction of idols and before ‘purnahuti’ by Gajapati Maharaja in the ‘pratistha yagna’. This fish sacrifice or ‘matsya bali’ precedes the ‘jibanyas bidhi’ or process of invocation of life in the idols. For many this again seems to be a symbolic representation of higher yogic and tantric philosophy. Fish or ‘matsya’ is one of the ‘panchamakara’ of tantra. It represents Ida and Pingala nadis inside the backbone, which are intertwined like two slimy fishes. Sacrifice of Ida and Pingala leads way for appearance of Sushumna through which life force can rise to the ultimate level to a new birth of consciousness. ‘Matsyabali’ represents this.

### **Mystery of ‘inverse human’ drawing**

An important ritual is conducted after ‘kushmanda bali’ and before cutting of ‘daru’ tree. On the trunk of the ‘daru’ tree image of an inverted human figure is drawn up. After completion of ‘pratistha yagna’, the holy ash, holy water and remnant ghee of the yagna are massaged over the trunk of the ‘daru’ tree for its consecration or ‘suddha snana’. Then a white cloth is put around the tree trunk. The ‘daru’ tree is worshipped with mantra of the deity whose idol would be prepared from it and the ‘olata-manushya’ or inverted human figure is drawn on the trunk. A bunch of kusha grass dipped in sandalwood paste is used to draw this figure.

This inverted human figure is mentioned in the ‘Srimad Bhagabat Gita’ and ‘Kathopanishad’. First sloka of fifteenth chapter of the Gita is ‘Urddhwamulamadhahshakham ashwottham prahurabyayam, chhandamsi yasya parnani yastam veda sa vedabit’. As per Dasharathi it means ‘this existence is like a peepul tree, its roots actually represent its top, its branches are its originally its base, those who know it real masters of Vedas. ‘Kathopanishad’ also proclaims ‘Urddhwamu-

loabakshkha esoaswothah sanatanah’. It says base of this world in the form of a peepul tree is the abode of Brahma. He is the apex and is indescribable. The existence created by Him, manifests under it.

Our body is also considered as a simile of an inverted tree or ‘olata vrikhya’. Brain is accepted as the base and our appendages as branches. The ‘Sahasrar’ chakra at the top of the brain is accepted as the abode of Param Brahma. Several immortal lyrics based on this metaphor like ‘olata vrikshhe kheluchhi....’ can be found in ancient Odia literature.

If we analyse this inverted human image in context of Nabakalebara, we find that the trunk of the idols are prepared from the main trunk of the ‘daru’ trees. Hands of respective idols are crafted out of major branches of respective trees. Drawing of inverted human figure on the ‘daru’ tree before its cutting is an effort to keep alive the awareness of common mass regarding this spiritual concept of the Gita and the ‘Kathopanishad’.

### **Gold, silver and iron axes**

Axes made up of gold, silver, and iron are coated with ghee and honey and empowered through ‘Sudarshan mantra’ before they are used to cut any ‘daru’ tree. Vidyapati uses gold axe, Biswabasu silver axe, and Biswakarma uses iron axe to cut the ‘daru’ tree. Professor of Sanskrit department of Utkal University, Gopalkrushna Dash has related it with ‘Ashwamedha yagna’ of Indradymna in his article published in the July 2015 issue of the Pourusha. During ‘Ashwamedha yagna’ three types of queens of the king namely Mahishi, Babata and Paribrukti poke needles made up gold, silver, and iron on the body of the ‘yagnashwa’ or the sacrificial horse one after the other. Mahishi uses gold needle, Babata silver needle, and Paribrukti queens use iron needle in this particular pattern. This pattern is repeated in case of axes made up of gold, silver, and iron to cut ‘daru’ tree. During ‘Ashwamedha yagna’ the sacrificial horse is killed while its head faces east and legs face north. Prof Dash points out that in similar manner as per tradition the cut down ‘daru’ tree is made to fall towards east or north.

### **Importance of Nyasadaru**

‘Nyasadaru’ (quality transmitted daru piece) is the most important aspect of Nabakalebara. From the beginning of yagna to end of ‘nyasakarma’ or transmission of qualities through chanting of mantras all important ritu-

als are conducted before this 'nyasadaru'. Its 'abhisheka' or consecration with holy water is done with 108 pots of water by a 'sahasradhara kumbha' (vessel with thousand holes). During this 'abhisheka' Purushasukta for Sri Jagannath, Nilasukta or Rudradhyaya of Yajurveda for Sri Balabhadra and Srisukta for Devi Subhadra is chanted. Then 'nyasadaru' is worshipped with Nrusimha Gayatri and Mantraraj Nrusimha mantra through the method of 'shodasha upachara' using 16 types of holy materials. The 'nyasakarma' or consecration work starts from the next day. Our various body parts are imagined on the 'nyasadaru' piece and these are consecrated with every syllable, word and stanza of Nrusimha mantra. Describing it Jagabandhu Padhi in his book 'Sri Purushottama Tattwa o Nabakalebara' has said "Through this Nyasadaru begets the image and qualities of Srinrusimha. These 'nyasa' are performed thrice for each of the three major deities. After this 'Keshavadi nyasa' is done for Sri Jagannath, 'Srikanthadinyasa' for Sri Bhalabhadra and 'Kalanyasa' for Devi Subhadra is performed on the 'nyasadaru'. It follows at least 30 kinds of 'nyasa' process on different parts of the 'nyasadaru'. Generally 'nyasakarma' starts from fifth day of yagna and it ends on the ninth day. After 'nyasa', 'prana pratistha' or invocation of life is done for the 'nyasadaru' through conceptualisation of prana (breath), mansa (flesh), rakta (blood) and sense organs in the nyasadaru through 'prana pratistha mantra'.

It is noteworthy that this 'nyasadaru' is ritualistically divided into four parts to become covering of 'Brahmakothari' (internal chamber) of idols of Sri Jagannath, Sri Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra, and Sri Sudarshan. Daitapati servitors drag this 'nyasadaru' in a small chariot around the main temple structure seven times before it is taken to the 'nirman mandap' or place of construction of deities. This is the 'gupta rathyatra' or secret car festival of Nabakalebara year that is conducted inside the premises of the temple ahead of the well known annual Rathyatra festival of Sri Jagannath. Pati and Daita servitors are the only participants and witnesses of this Rathyatra. They beat the cymbals, hold the chhatra, chhama and drag the chariot. It is also quite interesting to note that the 'nyasadaru' is part of the 'daru' tree meant to become idol of Sri Jagannath and the chariot for it is constructed as a miniature replica of Nandighosha chariot of Sri Jagannath during Rathyatra. It is also decorated with yellow and red cloth like the Nandighosha. Although manuscripts say it should have 16 wheels, this year the chariot of 'nyasadaru' had eight wheels.

At the 'nirman mandap' Biswakarma servitors di-

vide the 'nyasadaru' into four parts and these are used as 'Brahma kapata' or door of the chamber of Brahma in the idols. After transfer of Brahma or core material from old idols to the new idols, other aspects of the body are added up to the through 'Saptabarana vidhi'. New idols appear for the first time before the devotees on shukla pratipada day in Ashadha month of Indian calendar. On the day following it, the world famous Rathyatra is celebrated. 'Nyasadaru' episode proclaims, although seen as four, the deities worshipped on the 'ratnasimhasana' of the temple are originally one and the same. The same Brahma takes shape of four different entities to be worshiped in the Sri Jagannath temple. It makes introspect into the concept Omnipresence of Almighty.

### **Sri Yagnanrusimha and Darubigraha (idols of 'daru')**

Sri Nrusimha plays a crucial role in all the rituals of Nabakalebara. In this context we can remember Sri Nrusimha described in the sixteenth chapter of 'Skanda Purana'. In its earlier chapter it is mentioned that on the day of Vaisakh sukla ashtami of Indian calendar that was a Thursday which coincided with emergence of Pushya constellation in the sky, first 'daru' or wooden idols of Sri Jagannath, Sri Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra, and Sri Sudarshan had been established in the temple. The eighteenth chapter of the book describes how invoked by mantras of lord Brahmaa, these 'daru' idols had miraculously appeared as Sri Nrusimha before King Indradyumna and lord Brahmaa. Numerous eyes, ears, faces, noses, waists, appendages appeared in this glowing image of Sri Nrusimha. It appeared as if His shine had pervaded all through heaven and earth. It seemed as if like the 'kalagni' or destructive fire He was trying to engulf the whole universe. Witnessing this 'Rudrarupa' or terrifying image, sage Narada asked lord Brahmaa, why has the lord taken up this frightening appearance? When all living beings are worried over coming 'pralaya' or dissolution of this world, why has the lord taken up this scary image? What kind of leela of the Jagatpati Hari is this?

'Skanda Purana' mentions the answer to this question as words from lord Brahmaa in a jovial way with a smile. He said, "Hey Narada, thinking it to be made up of 'daru' or wood, ignorant persons may neglect or disrespect this 'Brahmarupi' (image of Brahma) deity. So, after getting worshipped with 'Paramesthi mantra' the lord has taken up this terrifying appearance. In the past with this terrifying appearance He had killed demon

king Hiranyakashipu. This image is like the 'kalagni' of the colossal glowing identity of the lord. Worship of this deity can provide nirvana to people.

This description of the 'Skanda Purana' expresses that Sri Nrusimha and Sri Jagannath are a single inseparable. Sri Nrusimha is His fierce image while Sri Jagannath is His peaceful and calm image. It passes on the message that everything in this universe whether fierce or calm is manifestation of same energy. This image of Sri Nrusimha described in purana's is used in traditional 'Pata Chitra' paintings of Odisha called 'Yagnanrusimha' with some minor changes. This painting is quite popular.

From beginning till end rituals related to Sri Nrusimha are key elements of Nabakalebara. Even before start of 'pratistha yagna', Sri Laxmi-Nrusimha is established on 'chakrabja mandal' at the Agni corner of the 'yagnashala'.

In other words this seems to remind us that every thing in this universe whether pleasing or frightening is nothing but manifestation of the Almighty eternal omnipresence.

### **Mandalas, Nidraghata and insight into worship of Lord Jagannath**

Although Sri Nrusimha gets utmost importance during 'Nabakalebara' rituals, interestingly Sri Nrusimha is not worshiped on the 'ratnasimhasana' of Sri Mandir. On the 'ratnsimhasana' Sri Jagannath is worshipped as 'Srikrishna Govinda Gopijanaballava' form. This leads us to importance of 'nidraghata' at the 'pratistha mandap'.

Basing on his research and collected data, Jagabandhu Padhi in his book 'Sri Purushottam Tattwa o Nabakalebara' says, "On the first day of 'pratistha karma' ritualistic mandalas are drawn in the 'pratistha mandap'. 'Chakrabja mandala' and 'Swastik mandala' are drawn in the Agni corner, 'Sarvatobhadra mandala' and 'Nabagraha mandal' in Aishanya corner and 'Vastu mandal' in Nairruta corner. Sri Nrusimha as well as other gods and goddesses are established on 'Chakrabja mandala'. 'Nidraghata' is worshipped on the 'Swastik mandala'. 'Snanaghata' or pots of water to be used for 'abhishek' process are kept on the 'Vastu mandal'. Apart from it separate mandalas are drawn for 'ashtadasha matrugana' or 18 mother entities, ten 'Digapala' or protectors of cardinal directions, 'nabagraha' and various other dei-

ties. In the Vayu corner of the 'pratistha mandap' tools of Biswakarma or craftsmen servitors are worshipped in the 'Ashtadalapadma mandala'. A day before start of yagna, the metal idol of Laxmi-Nrusimha is brought from the 'dakshini ghar' of Sri Mandir to be established on the 'Chakrabja mandala'.

But what is the concept behind placement of Sri Laxmi-Nrusimha on the 'Chakrabja mandala' and 'Nidraghata' in the 'Swastik mandala' at Agni corner of 'pratistha mandap'? Elaborate diagrammatic description of 'Chakrabja mandala' and 'Ananta Chakrabja mandala' is found in the 'Sasutra-Mandala Baridhi' written by pundit Artabandhu Mishra. As per it, in these two mandalas Vaishnav yagna as well as 'pratistha' of 'yupa' or sacrificial post, chakra and idols is held. Similarly as per it, during the 'pratistha' of deities, after the holy bath of the idols, all deities, chakra, trishul, and 'yupa' are placed on the 'Swastika mandala'. It is to be noted that 'pratistha' of 'nyasadaru' is a prime event during 'pratisthakarma' of 'daru' idols. After completion of 'abhishek', 'nyasadaru' is also placed on the 'Chakrabja mandala' in 'pithasana' (erect) or 'sayanasana' (lying position). 'Sasutra-Mandala Baridhi' also provides details about 'Swastik mandala' and 'Mahaswastik mandala'. As per it, this mandala is used for slumber of deities after their 'snana' (bath) and presentation of offerings.

Establishment of Sri Nrusimha in the 'Chakrabja mandala' and placement of 'nyasadaru' in the same mandala in 'pithasana' or 'sayanasana' has special significance. Regarding it former professor of Sri Jagannath Sanskrit University Dr Braja Kishore Swain opines "From the yagna conducted after selection of 'daru' till last phase of Nabakalebara rituals overwhelming importance of Sri Nrusimha is quite evident. Despite this worship of deities on the 'ratnasimhasana' of Sri Mandir is worship of 'Gopijanaballava' form. So, here Sri Nrusimha is made 'supta' or inert". Dr Swain, who has also translated 'Niladri Mahodaya' says there is a statement in this scripture that declares at the time need 'Sri Gopijanaballava' can be worshipped in place of Sri Nrusimha. So, Dr Swain proclaims that normal worship of Sri Jagannath is worship of 'supta Nrusimha'.

### **Understanding Achala Mahameru**

In this context a question rises in mind, how can Sri Nrusimha in 'supta' state gets worshipped as 'daru bigraha' on the 'ratnasimhasana'? Moreover, how does Sri Jagannath run the whole universe at his directives

while He sits like ‘achala mahameru’ (inert but great mountain) on the ‘ratnabedi’?

In this context twenty first mantra of second chapter of the ‘Kathopanishad’ has to taken into account. It says “Aasino duram brajati shayano yati sarvatah, kastam madamadandebam madanyo gnyatumarhati”. Translating it in the first part of his ‘Upanishad Prakash’ Er Priyabrata Das has said “Although inert this Brahma reaches out to far, makes everyone active, although in state of inactivity He reaches everywhere”. So, in this Upanishad the lord of death Yamaraj had told Nachiketa that except him how can anyone realise this blissful egoless glowing entity?

This statement of Yamaraj in the ‘Kathopanishad’ hints that unless we understand and realise death we cannot realise and perceive the real eternal omnipresent energy. Nabakalebara reminds us not to fear death and accept it with knowledge to perceive the deathless Almighty. ‘Nrusingha Mantra’ also proclaims ‘mrityor-mrutyu namamyaham’ meaning “I bow down before annihilator of death.”

## Conclusion

Analysis of rituals of ‘Nabakalebara’ indicates that although worshipped as four or ‘chaturdhamurti’, they are really one. Although they are worshiped as Srinrusimha and Gopijanaballava, yet Srinrusimha is ‘supta’ or inert and Gopijanaballava is being worshipped. Although made up of wood, they are not ‘darubigraha’, it is ‘Darubrahma’.

While describing greatness of ‘darumurti’ or these wooden idols, lord Brahma had cautioned Indradyumna not to think them to be just nonliving idols. Similar thought is depicted in the third chapter of ‘Mahapurusha Vidya’. In it ‘Parambrahma’ has proclaimed “I am not of indranilamani jewel or ‘daru’; but to destroy delusions of living entities I will take up shape of these kinds and I will surely emerge as ‘darumurti’ to provide them endless bliss by exterminating their sorrows.”

So, the deities worshipped on the ‘ratnasimhasana’ of Sri Mandir are not ‘daru bigraha’, they are manifestation of ‘Parambrahma’. He has taken this shape for eradication of our woes and to bless us with bliss. We all are nothing but manifestation of the same omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent Sri Jagannatha. If we consider our selves to be living, how can we consider the deity of Sri Jagannatha to be different from us? So, we should never consider these deities as only idols. Through the Nabakalebara rituals depicting cycle of life through life and death of Sri Jagannatha, we feel equanimity with the deity and eternal divinity as we observe that when manifested in this mortal world even deities have to go through this cycle of life.



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**महाम्भोधेस्तीरे कनक रुचिरे नील शिखरे  
वसन् प्रासादान्तः सहज बलभद्रेण बलिना ।  
सुभद्रा मध्यस्थः सकलसुर सेवावसरदो  
जगन्नाथः स्वामी नयन-पथ-गामी भवतु मे ।**

Residing on the shore of the great ocean, within a large palace situated upon the crest of the brilliant, golden Nilachala Hill, along with His powerful brother Balabhadra, and in the middle of Them His sister Subhadra, Lord Jagannatha bestows the opportunity for devotional service upon all godly souls. May that Jagannatha Swami be the object of my vision.



ମହାସୋପେଷ୍ଠୀରେ କନକ ରୁଚିରେ ନୀଳ ଶିଖରେ  
ବସନ୍ ପ୍ରାସାଦାନ୍ତଃ ସହଜ ବଳଭଦ୍ରେଣ ବଳିନା ।  
ସୁଭଦ୍ରା ମଧ୍ୟସ୍ଥଃ ସକଳ ସୁର ସେବା ବସରଦୋ  
ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଃ ସ୍ଵାମୀ ନୟନ ପଥ ଗାମୀ ଭବତୁ ମେ ।



**NAYAK Corporation supports OCC, Ratha Yatra, & Lord Jagannatha Temple in Houston.**

# Navakalebara Ceremony of

## Lord Shree Jagannath

*Dr. Bhaskar Mishra*

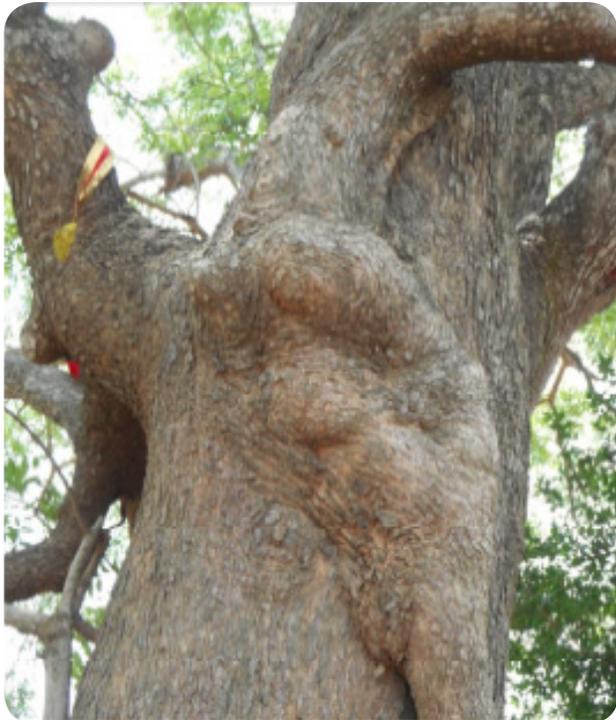
**N**avakalebara is the unique ceremony of 'Birth' and the 'Death' of the presiding wooden images of Shree Jagannath Temple at Puri. The word 'Navakalebara' means the new embodiment, so is called the ceremony which goes for the periodical renewal of the wooden bodydivine of the deities. The ceremony is unique in many respects in terms of Hindu religious worship. It involves a total replacement of the five images (i.e. Shree Jagannath, Shree Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra, Shree Sudarshan and Shree Madhaba) with the new ones and discarded images are given a subterranean consignment as a divine burial in a coppice forest known as "Koili Baikuntha" in the precinct of Shree Jagannath Temple. In conformity with the belief that Lord Shree Jagannath is truly "Living Deity" with an astonishingly ingenuous human touch. He moves through the life cycle of death and birth sequences shedding his old body and getting into the new one in a remarkably unique and mystic ceremony.

In the 'Srimad Bhagavatgita' Bhagavan Shrikrushna has explained to Arjuna regarding the body and the soul. The soul is eternal, whereas the body is transeient. When the body becomes old, the soul discards it and

takes on a new body, which is similar to discarding of an old cloth to put on a new one. Srimad Bhagavatam (XI.27/12) prescribes stone, wood, iron, metal, painting, drawing and pictures, psychic and gems to be used for images. The images of painting/drawing etc. are worshipped for a year. Wooden images are worshipped for a span of twelve years, metal for a thousand, stone for ten thousand years. Under this circumstances the wooden body of the deities needs to be changed.

Traditionally to change daru in the month of when it is a "Leap Month" (Mala Masa) asadha is chosen to be the right one.

The worship of wooden images at Shree Jagannath Temple, Puri apparently suggests the possibility of periodical renewal since their incipient consecration. There is no textual evidence, however, is available to prove the practice of the Navakalebara ceremony. The deities change their divine bodies in the leap month of Asadha; when one lunar month of Asadha is followed by another lunar month of Asadha, it is called as a leap month. The occurrence of leap month depends on the almanac position as per Hindu calendar. Navakalebara which literally means new body being made out of a newly cut Neem tree and is chosen to last till the next Navakalebara.



Lord Jagannath's Daru with elephant's trunk, 2015

The legend of Indradyumna, the king of Malawa is uniform in its description every text like Niladri Mahodaya, Skanda Purana, and Padma Purana. This Indradyumna engaged his priest called Vidyapati to the place of Vishnu where he want to pay his absence after getting darshan. Vidyapati come all the way long to a place at eastern sea coast circle with streams of water that meet the sea. It is a big sand dune and being shrouded with green growth seemed like a green mountain. He met the Savara king Viswvasu and with their help he could succeed in having the rare sight of the Brahma. But after that the Brahma was lost in the sand, Vidyapati went back to Malwa and related to the king Indradyumna regarding Lord of the blue mountain. Indradyumna could know that the image had been lost in the blue mountain at Shrikshetra. With the advice of sage Narada he did sacrifice and could know in the dream the existence of a floating-log touched the shore. In the morning people informed him what he saw in the dream. He went to the shore with Viswvasu brought

the daru and subsequently carved the images of the Lord by Viswakarma. This event is a unique case of its kind where a new frame of images of Lord was searched and the alternative solution could be found out.

Historically, it has been traced out from Madala Panji (Chronicle of the Jagannath Temple at Puri) regarding invasion of Raktabahu and the evacuation of the images at Sonepur where they lay buried underground for 146 years. Thereafter king Yajati brought back the deities and solemnized Navakalebara. The date fixed as 950 A.D. or Tenth century A.D.

The second one being the time of 1568 A.D. after the invasion of Kalapahada (the general of Suleman Karani) Rama Chandra Deva (1) of Bhoi dynasty brought the Brahma from Kujanga Garh and constructed the new images in Neem wood (Daru) at Gopaljew Mandir of Khurda Garh palace wherein Brahma or the kernel of the statue was transmuted from the old to the new one and installed the same at Ratna Singhasan of Shree Jagannath Temple in the year 1575 A.D.

Shree Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra, Sudarshan, and Madhaba of Shri Jagannath Temple are images in a similar fashion. The change of vigrahas is known as "Nava Kalebara". In none of the temples in India where idolatry is performed does exist such a system of renewal of the images. Of course, the system of worshipping wooden idols is rare. The occasion usually fall after a gap of 8, 11, 12 or 19 years span depending upon the occurrence of dual Asadha month. The other Asadha is an extra month which is added to the lunar calendar of the Hindus after every 32 months and 16 days in order to make up for the deficiency of a lunar month (29.5 days) against a solar month (30.44 days), i.e. of 0.94 days every month. The extra asadha month is known as 'Purusottam Masa' all over India. It is also called as the 'Adimasa' whereas the common people term it 'Malamasa'. As per recorded history, this ceremony had been performed as many as 8 times thus far i.e. in the years, 1863, 1893, 1912, 1931, 1950, 1969, 1977 and 1996. The current Navakalebara ceremony is being celebrated in year 2015.

**Astronomical considerations** - The reason of replacement of images in every 12 or 19 years is corrected with some astronomical and astrological considerations. Usually either in the 12th or 19th year, two Asadha months come and as per the temple tradition, when a leap month falls in the month of Asadha it becomes convenient to perform Navakalebara ceremony. The tradition is based on some practical reasons, because of the

leap month or the extra Asadha month, more time factor (3 fortnights) is available for the construction of the new images, their consecration and covering of silken (pata) cloth as well as painting before the temple (Anasara gruha) re-opens on the occasion of the Rath Yatra (Car Festival).

There are two types of Navakalebara. The first one is the construction of images in which the sacred Bhrama the inherent spirit is changed and other Sriangaphita which means renovation of the images. It is revealed that, in the year 1893 there fell two Asadha months where the images were not changed. Although the wooden images existed but the cloth cladding on the upper portion of divine body were only changed which could be called as "Srianga Phita" a partial Navakalebara.

Considering upon the astronomical calculations and the conditions of the wooden images of the deities the ensuing Navakalebara ceremony is finalised and officially declared, preceding some ritual processes in the temple. The ceremony of Navakalebara starts on the 10th day of the bright fortnight of Chaitra. A posse of priests consisted some Daitas, Pati Mahapatra Sevak, Brahmin priests, Viswakarmas (carpenters), Lenka, Kahalia, Deula Karana, Tadhau Karana, and temple police venture out in search of Daru i.e. the tree in the forest. The journey is known as Bana-Jaga-Jatra.

They had to carry lots of material for the ceremonies which they have to perform at every Daru. The materials are transported by some bullock carts. After spending the first night at Jagannath Ballav Math, Puri, they go to Kakatpur and stay at Deuli Matha. Being blessed by Mangala, the presiding goddess of Kakatpur they set out in different parties and directions looking for the Darus.

Looking at the practical need, suitability or advantage factor for the image making and above all the maintenance of the sanctity and sacredness of the tree, all the features must have been developed and included in the Navakalebara tradition. The Neem trees are specially considered for the four deities as per the specific marks, sign and colour of each deity on them. The locations of the Daru (Neem tree) are generally bear signs and divine nomenclatures as follows:-

- (1) A Barun bush in the pond neighborhood. The notion that there must be also a sahara bush is not correct.
- (2) The tree must stand near a river.

- (3) There must be an Ashram (heritage) near the tree.
- (4) There must be a cremation ground near it.
- (5) There must be the four sacred signs of Chakra (wheel), Sankha (conch shell) Gada (Mace) and Padma (lotus).
- (6) The tree should have no branches up to a certain height (probably 12 feet) from the ground and all the branches must be in trees.
- (7) There must be an ant-hill at the foot of the tree.
- (8) There should be nest of birds on it.
- (9) There should be a cobra at the foot of the tree.
- (10) There should be no creeper or parasite on the tree.

At least 5 of these signs must be there before a tree is selected.

After the Daru has been located, Homa (fire sacrifice) is performed until the auspicious day for cutting it. Pati Mohapatra first touched the Daru with a golden axe. Then Daitapati Sevak known as Viswabasu touched with a silver axe. Then the 4 Viswakarmas (carpenters) starts cutting. They soon get tired and want the help of the villagers for cutting the trees.

The Darus have been shaped into the four deities in secret. Actually there were 5 deities who got new bodies. They were Shree Jagannath, Shree Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra, Shree Sudarshan, and Shree Madhab. According to traditional belief the person who transfers the Brahma or the inner contents of Jagannath dies soon after performing the ceremony which is fabricated and not based on fact. The transfer of the inner contents was done in a closed and locked room with the Badagrahi Daitapati and Pati Mohapatra Sevak. When the transfer of the Brahma or inner contents was completed all the Daitapatis of Shree Jagannath Temple started a period of mourning as if a close relation had died. They observed this period of mourning for 11 days and on the 12th day more than thousand persons were fed Mahaprasad for which contributions were received from many sources. All the ceremonies after the bathing ceremony (Snana Jatra on full moon of the Jestha masha) till Netrostava are secret in nature. The period is called Maha Anasar during Navakalebara.

Locations of Darus in the past Navakalebara ceremonies are as follows:

#### **Navakalebara –1912**

- Sudarshan - Fategarh (Puri District)
- Balabhadra - Niali Hata (Cuttack District)
- Subhadra - Potara Mahara Udaypur, Puri
- Jagannath - Pratarudrapur, Nua Sahi, Puri

#### **1931**

- Sudarshan - Deuli Matha (Kakatpur, Puri)
- Balabhadra - Satwikapur
- Subhadra - Niali, Cuttack
- Jagannath - Gabapara

#### **1950**

- Sudarshan- Dalaipur (Cuttack, District)
- Balabhadra - Jalalpur, Kakatpur (Puri District)
- Subhadra - Nuahata (Puri District)
- Jagannath- Palunga, Kanpur (Cuttack District)

#### **1969**

- Sudarshan- Balara, Banamalipur, Under Balipatna, Police Station (Puri District)
- Balabhadra - Plot No. 1285 at Villages Bhakar Sahi, Gada Chari Pada, Balipatna Police Station Puri District
- Subhadra - Plot No. 254 at Villages Kanhupur Govindapur Police Station Cuttack District
- Jagannath - Plot No. 928 belonging to Gobardhan Bramha in village Champajhar, undivided Puri District which belongs to the Ekharajat Mahal, the landed property of Lord Jagannath

#### **1977**

- Sudarshan- Simha Sahi, Niali (Cuttack District)
- Balabhadra - Odasapur, Dhamnagar, Bhogeswara Kandla, Cuttack Dist
- Subhadra - Beraboi, Delanga (Puri District)
- Jagannath- Hata Sahi near Raichakradharpur, Sakhigopal, Satyabadi Police

#### **1996**

- Sudarshan - Panimal, Niali Madhava (Cuttack District)
- Balabhadra - Ramakrushnapur, Salepur P.S. (Cuttack District)

Subhadra - Malda, Astaranga Block (Puri District)

Jagannath - Dadhimachhagadia (Khurda District)

### 2015

Sudarshan - Gadakantunia, Baliana Block, Near Chausathi Jogini Temple at Hirapur, Khurda District.

Balabhadra - Maa Sarala Pitha, Jhankada, Tirtol Block, Dist-Jagatsinghpur.

Subhadra - Adangagarh Majurai, in the premises of Nilakantheswar Temple, Biridi Block, Jagatsinghpur District.

Jagannath - Kharipadia, Raghunathpur Block, Jagatsinghpur District.

The Navakalevar festival, which is an important part of Shree Jagannath consciousness exhibit a perfect balance between the tribal origin and Brahminic Hinduism which was superimposed on it at a later period. Each one is assigned a distinct duty in the multi-formalities, performed during the ceremony, there is neither overlapping nor any possibility of encroachment by anyone over the other. The new embodiment or Nabakalebara ceremony consists of mainly six phases:-

1. Vanajaga- Daitapatis to go in a party to find out the sacred log to bring the divine wood to the temple on a small wooden card after performing fire sacrifice and other secret rituals.
2. The carving or fashioning of the wooden structures of the images.
3. The consecration of the images and placing of "Brahma Padartha" (Life substance) into them.
4. The burial of the old images, the funeral and purificatory rites observed by the Daitapatis.
5. Giving the images their final shape after "Saptabarana" during Maha Anabasara period in secrecy.
6. The new youth audience (Nava Yauvan Darshan) and grand chariot festival (Ratha Yatra).

Navakalebara is the most critical, expensive and auspicious occasion in the consciousness of Shree Jagannatha. In the Hindu pantheon, the culture of Shree Jagannath bears a separate identity. He is one among us and His Navakalebara presupposes the death of old God and the birth of the new God. Divinity continues. The new is old and the old is new when renewed.

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#### **Dr. Bhaskar Mishra**

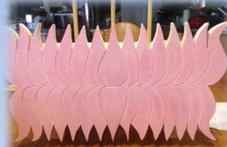
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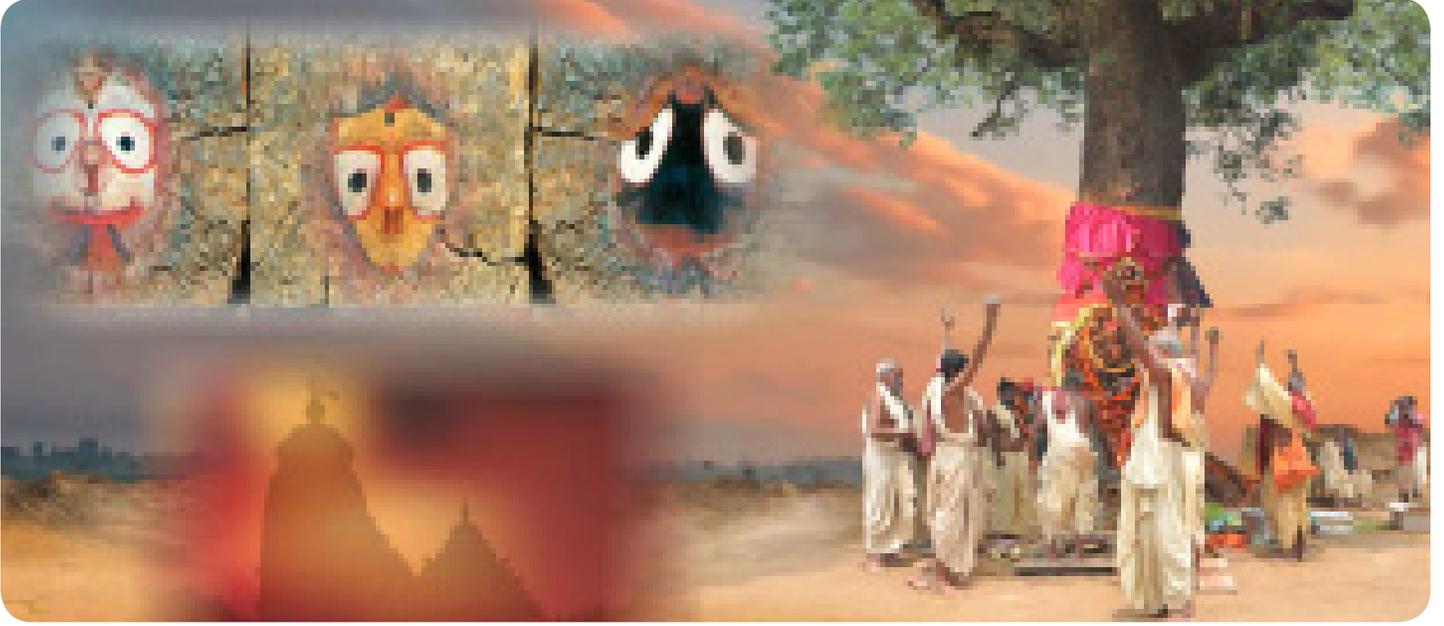
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# Navakalebara

*Prof. S. N. Majhi*



**T**he four main Deities who adorn the Ratna Singhasan of the Puri main Temple are Sri Jagannath, Deva Balabhadra, Debi Subhadra, and Sri Sudarsan. Prabhu Jagannath represents Sri Krishna, Deva Balabhadra represents Balaram (the elder brother of Sri Krishna) and Debi Subhadra (their sister). Sri Sudarsan (in the form of a post) represents Chakra, the principal weapon of Krishna (verily the Vishnu). It is believed that these four deities are modelled under certain primordial concepts which were worshipped in the distant past by tribal communities who lived in the woods (forest). It explains why the Deities are made up of wood. Probably Neem wood was selected for the purpose because of its suitable special characteristics and features as listed below.

Neem trees (botanical name: *Azadirachta Indica*) have mostly straight stems that grow to the height of 49-68 feet (even more) and the diameter of its stem ranges between 8 to 10 feet. It is a hard fragrant lasting wood, moderately heavy with density around 0.68g per cubic centimeter. It is durable even in exposed conditions, not affected by termites or canker worms. Many Neem extracts are effective against a large range of crop pests. Neem oils are aromatic and medicinal. The wood can withstand hand and mechanical work and is good for carving, though may not give that fine a finish. So it is understandable why the forest dwellers had chosen Neem Wood for making their Deities. And rightly this

time tested procedure is being followed at Jagannath temple of Puri since long, probably from its inception.

Since wood is a perishable substance, the wooden bodies of the deities need to be renewed periodically to be in a safe side. At Puri this renewal procedure has been followed at an interval of every 8 to 19 years; when two lunar months of Asadha (June-July) occur during a year. This process of renewing the wooden bodies of the Puri Deities periodically (mostly at an interval of 19 years) is called Navakalebara (in Sanskrit 'Nava' means 'new', Kalebara means 'body').

In this process of Navakalebara every part of the old bodies are changed except one important item. A mysterious substance called 'Brahma Padartha' gets transferred from the old bodies to the new bodies without any alteration. By this act the core essence of the divinity remains intact in the new bodies as it was in the old bodies.

These special substances inserted in the new bodies from their old, invigorates the new bodies with the same divine energy as was before. The Brahma Padartha plays the role similar to the soul in a human body but more divine in its character. The wooden bodies of Deities with Brahma Padartha are known as Daru Brahmas before consecration for regular worship on the Ratna Singhasana. The composite word Daru Brahma is derived from two words Daru (means wood) and Brahma (The

Supreme Soul or Divine Power).

The details of the procedure of the Navakalebara are briefly highlighted below. This includes the search and selection of specific Neem trees for carving the bodies of new Deities, the process for grooming the Daru Brahmas and their installation on the Ratnavedi or Ratna Singhasana (on the day before Gundicha Yatra) for Netra Utsava along with related rituals. The total period of all the activities, mentioned above covers 111 days. Of which the period spent from the start in search of the Sacred trees, transporting the logs to Puri Temple, fashioning new images out of the logs, putting the Brahma-Padartha inside the images, burial of the old images in Koilli Vaikuntha and related rituals takes 80 days.

The servitors called daitas play prominent roles in all these activities. The individuals associated with search party follow strict lifestyles and code of conduct including food intake, sleeping hours etc. Armed with formal sanctions from the presiding Deities of the main Temple as well as from Gajapati (King of Puri), the daitas and the Pati Mahapatra set out for the mission in search of the 4 trees after offering special obeisance to Goddess Managala at Kakatpur (40 kms east of Puri) for getting instruction to locate the specific trees for the 4 Deities. This celestial communication from Maa Managala comes in a dream to Dalapati Daita on that night of special worship. Then after, the search party gets divided into four groups, one each under a leading daita called Badagrahi daita try to locate the dream-directed specific Neem trees for preparing the images of respective Deities under the care of respective Badagrahi.

The Neem trees under the search need to possess special characteristics (on their body and in the neighborhood) for getting selected for the purpose of Navakalebara. These signs, ten in number, are:

1. There should be Baruna bush in the neighborhood of the trees;
2. Each one of the trees should be near some river;
3. There should be a hermitage nearby the location of each of the trees;
4. A cremation ground to exist nearby each of the trees;
5. 4 sacred signs of Sankha, Chakra, Gadha, and Padma to be on the body of the tree;
6. There should be no branches up to a certain height

(12') from the ground;

7. There must be anthills at the foot of each of the trees;
8. No birds' nest on the trees;
9. A cobra must be residing at the foot of each of the trees;
10. No creeper or parasite to be found on the trees;

### **Special Characteristics: Daru Brahma**

Existence of at least five of the above signs quantifies the trees for the purpose of Navakalebara. After selecting the respective trees, each of the concerned groups perform Vanayaga (forest sacrifice) and offer prayers to Narasimha under each tree, then the trees are felled, the trunks cut to required size and brought to Puri temple in a cart specially prepared for the purpose. All logs must reach the temple before Snanapurnima (Jyestha Purnima). Puja rituals are offered in the name of NaraSimha to consecrate the logs. Next 13 days are spent in carving the image of the Deities in secrecy under the strict supervision of respective leading daitapatis (Badagrahis).

After final offering of obeisance by the Gajapati consecration rituals of the new images take place. The Brahma exchanges between the Old and New images take place inside the temple keeping the respective images face to face on the Anasarabasa Pindi. This secret ceremony of Brahma exchange is done on the no-moon night following Snanapurnima in the dark by the authorized servitor (blind folded and cloth covered hands). The old images are then given to the burial at Koili Vaikuntha that night itself and the new images are groomed to continue in the Anasarabasa in the same manner as in the case of old images before.

The Brahma Padartha is a mysterious substance. Till today, nobody knows its composition or looks. But invariably all the servitors who participated in the ritual of Brahma Padartha exchanges say that a special out of the world feeling accompanied by pleasant vibration is felt while changing the Brahmopadartha. During the Navakalabara year, the duration from SnanaYatra to Gundicha RathaYatra is 45 days. The Navayauvana Darshan takes place on the day before Gundicha Yatra, that is 44th day. Added to these 45 days another 3 days are still to go for the Deities to return to the Ratna Singhasana. All these days of involved activities, start-



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Acharya-Va



Cutting of Daru (From A



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Naba Kalebara-19



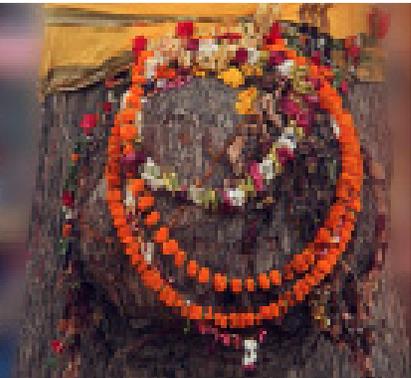
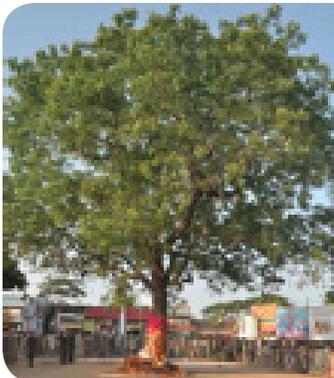
Cutting of Daru



Naba Kalebara-1996



**Special Characteristics: Daru Brahma**



**DaruBrahma – 2015 NavaKalebar**

ing from the Chaitra Sukla Dashami (Yatra of search party for Vanayaga) till Niladri Bije Utsava (returning of Deities to Ratna Singhasana) are eventful glorious days for Jagannath devotees and give immeasurable joy and satisfaction to all those who participated and other devotees who eagerly waited for the outcome. From the available records it is noted that the previous Navakalabara ceremonies were observed in the years 1733, 1744, 1752, 1771, 1790, 1809, 1828, 1836, 1855, 1874, 1893, 1912, 1931, 1950, 1969, 1977, 1996 and 2015. Except for four occasions other Navakalabara events were conducted with a gap of 19 years. Among the rest four, the gaps were 11 years once (1733-44) and 8 years three times (1744-52, 1828-36, 1969-77).

The Chaitra Sukla Dashami (Yatra of search party for Vanayaga) till Niladri Bije Utsava (returning of Deities to Ratna Singhasana) are eventful glorious days for Jagannath devotees and give immeasurable joy and satisfaction to all those who participated and other devotees who eagerly waited for the outcome. From the available records it is noted that the previous Navakalabara ceremonies were observed in the years 1733, 1744, 1752, 1771, 1790, 1809, 1828, 1836, 1855, 1874, 1893, 1912, 1931, 1950, 1969, 1977, 1996 and 2015. Except for four occasions other Navakalabara events were conducted with a gap of 19 years. Among the rest four, the gaps were 11 years once (1733-44) and 8 years three times (1744-52, 1828-36, 1969-77).

Generally, Navakalabara ceremony is mainly observed at Puri temple (Shree Mandira) of Jagannatha and Daru Brahmas are prepared to replace old bodies of the Deities with new bodies, Brahma (the mysterious substance) remaining intact. However, if a new Jagannatha Temple has been planned somewhere in India or abroad, portions of the Divine Darus (having the Deities carved from the Darus) can be gifted for forming the Deities of that temple. **In the Navakalebara year of 1996, a similar divine gift was made to Chennai Jagannatha Temple and this year (2015), the Houston (USA) devotees are fortunate to have such a gift of Navakalabara Daru from Puri on Sunday, August 2, 2015.**

In the event of such Daru Brahmas destined to decorate any newly built temple, there always will be certain unexpected and unexplained favorable developments usually noticed in the environment and activities of the newly built temple before and after the Deities' arrival. Such (one may call them miraculous) events did happen in 1996 in the activities of Dakshinakshetra, the Chen-



Jagannath Temple Chennai, Deities from NavaKalebra 1996

nai Jagannath temple. Two of our Publications ('Baishi Paucha' by Dr. Kabi Prasad Misra and 'Prabhu Kripa' by Prof. S. N. Majhi) have recorded the events as they appeared in reality. Houston devotees may kindly watch the events associated with Lord's activities and developing there. You may find such miraculous activities already taking place for receiving the Deities originated from Navakalebara activities of Puri Dham.

## GLORY BE TO PRABHU JAGANNATH

Below are Few Facts of Navakalebara-2015 Activities:

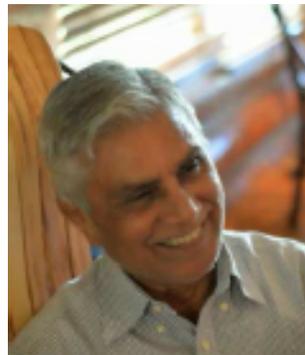
The main daitas (servitors) who (among many others) participated in the Navakalabara ceremony this year ( 2015) and conducted the rituals include: ·

- Sri Haladhara Das Mahapatra (Dalapati of the search party and Badagrahi of Deva Balabhadra) ·
- Sri Ramachandra Das Mahapatra (Badagrahi of Devi Subhadra) ·
- Sri Jagannath Swain Mahapatra (Badagrahi of Sri Jagannath) ·
- Nabakishore Pati Mahapatra (Badagrahi of Sri Sudarshana)

- For Sri Jagannath -Kharipadia (Jagatsimhapur)
- For Sri Sudarshana-Gadakhuntunia (Jagatsimhapur).

This year the Divine Neem trees were located in the following locations:

- For Deva Balabhadra-Sarala Pitha(Jagatsimhapur)
- For Debi Subhadra-Adanga (Jagatsimhapur) ·



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# Mahari Tradition of Sri Jagannath Temple

*Dr. Purna Chandra Mishra*

The worship of Lord Jagannath involved with a number of daily rituals. The rituals of worshipping the Lords are characterized by a royal manner. As a king is meticulously served by his servants daily from morning to night, so also Lord Jagannath is served in the like manner. Hence, there is a dancing ritual in the temple of Lord Jagannath at the time of the Lord's retirement to sleep. There are special *sevakas* (servants) have been employed for this purpose. They are known as

or *Natin*<sup>6</sup>. In Goa they are known as *Bhavin*. But in Bombay the dancing girls are named according to the presiding deities as *Murali, Bhavin, Jagavins, Naikine, Kalavanti, Devali, Matangis* and *Sharnis*<sup>7</sup>. In Orissa the dancing girls of Sri Jagannath Temple are called *Mahari* and *Nachuni*<sup>8</sup>.

In Sanskrit lexicon *Sabdartha Kalpataru*, the *devadasis* are mentioned as *deva paricarika* or attendant of the Lords. In Bengali *Viswakosa* they are



“Mahari or *Devadasi*” and their dance is known as “Mahari nrutya” or “Devadasi nrutya”.

**Mahari dance by Rupashree Mohapatra**

Such dancing girls of the temples are known by different names in all over India. In Tamilnadu they are known as *Devaradiyar, Padiyilar, Taliccherippandugal, Empuremanadiyar, Adukkalaipendugal*; in Kerala they are called *Tevadicchis, Nangainar, Kudikkaris, Muraikkaris*; in Karnatak as *Poti, Jogtis*<sup>1</sup>. In southern part of Karnatak they are called as *Nayaka Sani, Ranga Sani, Muttukatti Kondavlu, Devarasuli, Nityasumangali, Kasabi, Patradevalu*<sup>2</sup> where as in central Karnatak as *Basavi* which are grouped as *Gudi Basavi, Nadikola Basavi, Balgada Basavi, Ura Basavi, Nadikola Basavi* and *Chowri Basav*<sup>3</sup>. In the Andhra Pradesh the dancing girls are identified with *Sani* and *Bogam*<sup>4</sup>. The dancing girls of Assam are named as *Kurmapus*<sup>5</sup>, *Kudipus, Nati*

known as the *deva nartaki* or dancing girls and *devadasi* or servant of the Lords. In *Purnnachandra Bhashakosha*, the Oriya Lexicon, the *devadasis* are termed as the female dancing attendants of the Gods. On the whole, the female dancing attendants who are offered to the Lords are known as “Devadasi”.

In the ancient times the *devadasis* were divided into seven categories. They are known as *Dutta, Hruta, Bikrita, Bhurutya, Alankara* and *Gopika* or *Rudraganika*. Such categories reveal the origin and status of the *devadasis*.

When a scared man offered his daughter to a temple as a *devadasi*, she is known as “Dutta devadasi”. But when a lady was kidnapped and subsequently employed in a temple, she is known as “Hruta devadasi”. Sometimes when a lady was sold to

the administrator or the priest of a temple, she is known as “*Bikrita devadasi*”. If a lady voluntarily worked in a temple as a devadasi, she is known as “*Bhrutya devadasi*”. Some women who devotionally offered themselves to serve the temple are known as “*Bhakta devadasi*”. When a woman after attaining a certain degree of competence, is offered to the temple with ornaments, she is known as “*Alankara devadasi*”. The *devadasis* who were getting remunerations for offering dance and music in the temple in a particular time became identified as “*Gopika*” or “*Rudraganika*”. These classes of the *devadasis* were receiving fixed remunerations and some landed property for their personal use.

The origin of the *devadasi* system should be properly investigated. In the *Kashikavrutti* of Panini, the prostitutes are taken as dancing girls<sup>9</sup>. But it is still doubtful about their dancing performance in the temple premises. At the time of the eminent classical writer of Sanskrit literature, Kalidas (4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) there was some distinct evidences that the prostitutes were dancing in the temples. In the *Meghaduta* of Kalidas, it is mentioned that the prostitutes were dancing in a Saivite temple known as *Mahakala* Temple. Not only that they were dancing exclusively in the Saivite temples but also the prostitutes were dancing in a Sun Temple as mentioned by Gaidhani quoting the description in the *Vikramorvasiyam* of Kalidas<sup>10</sup>. Some information about the dancing girls were found in *Mruchhakatika* of Sudraka, *Kuttinimata* of Damodara Bhatta, *Samayamatruka* and *Srungarmanjari* of Kshemendra, *Ramacharita* of Sandhyakara Nandi, in *Saduktikarmamruta*. From these, it is evident that during the time of Kalidas, there was a tradition of dancing ritual before the Gods.

We can also find the description of dancing rituals in the inscriptions of different parts of India. In the stone inscriptions of *Bhujabeswar* Temple<sup>11</sup> (975A.D.), *Kalipadaswami* Temple<sup>12</sup> (1018A.D.), *Brahmeswar* Temple<sup>13</sup> (1053 A.D.), *Megheswar* Temple<sup>14</sup> (1070 A.D.), *Sovaneswar* Temple<sup>15</sup> (1080 A.D.), *Narendraswar* Temple<sup>16</sup> (1083 A.D.), *Mukhalingam* Temple<sup>17</sup>(11<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), *Jaladhiswar* Temple<sup>18</sup> (1144A.D.), *Agastiswar* Temple<sup>19</sup>(1158A.D.), *Laxmi Nrusingha* Temple<sup>20</sup> of *Simanchalam* (15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), and *Sri Jagannath* Temple<sup>21</sup> (16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), we find the evidence of dancing rituals.

In the *Gita Govinda* stone inscription at the Jaya-Vijay gate of the Sri Jagannath Temple, it is found that Gajapati Prataprudradev of Surya dyanasty had reintroduced the dancing ritual before Lord Jagannath<sup>22</sup>.

From the preceding discussions it is evident that the dancing rituals are prevalent in the temples since the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. In the 16<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. inscription of Gajapati Prataprudradev, it has been

mentioned that the dancing rituals were introduced in the Jagannath Temple during the reign of Gajapati Kapilendradev (1435-1466 A.D). These dancers were from the local as well as from Telenga community<sup>23</sup>. From this we can assure that the *devadasi* tradition began from the period of Kapilendradev in Orissa which was influenced by the South Indian Culture latter. H. K. Mahatab also accept that Kapilendradev in 1450 A.D. has introduced the dance rituals of the *devadasis* from ‘*Dhupa*’ to ‘*Badasinghar*’ (morning *puja* to sleeping at night) in the Jagannath Temple<sup>24</sup>.

In a stone inscription of South India, it can be found that during the reign of Jatavarman alias Virapandya, a dancing girl named Virasekhar Nangai received grant of land for enacting dance on festive occasions.<sup>25</sup> Vacaspati Mishra also refers to the dancing girls who gave performance on the stage<sup>26</sup>. On the Northern wall of *Korangunathan* Temple of Trichinapoly district of Southern India there is an inscription which mentions the provision made for the playing music during the Srivali service by seven persons during the time of Rajaraja I<sup>27</sup>. Besides these, on the south wall of *Pipilikesvara* Temple of Trichinapoly Taluk it is inscribed that the land was endowed to the temple by the purchaser for the maintenance of four artists for singing the *Tirupaddiyam*<sup>28</sup>.

On the north wall of the *Sunderesvara* Temple of Trichinapoly district it is also mentioned that two persons were singing the *Triuppadiyam* hymns during three services (every day) in the temple of Paramesvara<sup>29</sup>.

From the above evidences we can assume that the introduction of *devadasi* tradition in the temple of Lord Jagannath was influenced by the South Indian Culture during the reign of Gajapati Kapilendradev.



Sashimani Devi, the last devadasi at Jagannath Temple, Puri passed away on March 19, 2015.

There is an interesting legend regarding the recitation of *Gita Govinda* in the Jagannath Temple. Once upon a time it was believed that the Lord was fascinated by the *Gita Govinda* recitation of a girl and followed her. In the process garments of Lord Jagannath were torn by this wild adventure. Next day the *sevakas* discovered the torn clothes of the Lord and informed the

matter to the Gajapati. Then the God explained the

incident in a dream to Gajapati. As a result the concerned girl was employed as a *devadasi* in the temple of Lord Jagannath.

According to tradition, the famous Oriya poet Jayadeva had accepted Padmabati, the dancing girl of Lord Jagannath as his wife<sup>30</sup>. The eminent scholar of Orissa Late Kedarnath Mohapatra on the basis of some verses of *Gita Govinda* has proved that Jayadeva was inspired by Padmabati, the devotional dancing girl of Lord Jagannath<sup>31</sup> for composing the monumental work *Gita Govinda*.

The 17<sup>th</sup> century Assamese Poet, Rama Saraswati also describes these things in his long poem entitled 'Jayadev'<sup>32</sup>. The biography of Jayadev by Maitheli Chandra Dutta, it is also mentioned regarding Padmabati the *devadasi* and Lord Jagannath

The dancing ritual is a part of the services (*sevas*) of Lord Jagannath since the time of Jayadev 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The persons employed in these services (*seva*) are known as *Devadasi*, *Mahari*, *Gitagovinda* etc. According to their respective duties they can broadly be divided into three classes such as *Angila* or *Anangia*, *Gahana Mahari*, and *Bhitar gayeni*. The *Anangia* girls were the attendants of the Gajapatis. They were considered as superior to the other attendants in the palace<sup>33</sup>. The *Gahana Mahari* class of dancing girls is at present partially meant for Lord Jagannath. At different occasions they are with Goddess Laxmi. The third category of dancing girls is called *Bhitar Gayani* who exclusively dedicated to Lord Jagannath. They are permitted to go up to the *Kalahat* door of Lord Jagannath.

The surname of these dancing girls is *Devadasi*. Some scholars term them as *Mahari*. These girls resided at *Anga alasa patina*<sup>34</sup>. However, we do not find any such place in Puri Town now. In the record of rights the residence of these girls are recorded as in Baseli Sahi, Markandesvar Sahi, Kundheibenta Sahi, Bali Sahi, and Matimandop Sahi of Puri Town<sup>35</sup>.

At the time of dancing they put on typical Orissan garments and ornaments. They also put vermilion and collyrium as a mark of married woman.

In their respective turn days of duty they used to go temple with all types of sanctity and purity. The *devadasis* were serving at many points in the temple of Lord Jagannath. They used to perform the '*Alasa*' dance at the time of *Sakaladhupa* (morning *puja*). Col. Phipps observed that "this meal lasts about an hour during which period the dancing girls attached to the temple dance in the room with many Pillars"<sup>36</sup>. This many pillar room is identified with Jagamohan or Natamandir. At the time of Lord's retiring to bed after the '*Badasinghar besa*' they stood near the '*Kalahat* door' and were reciting the *Gita Govinda*. In this time

the *devadasis* were singing songs devotionally in a dancing posture.

Besides the daily routine service, they also served during some special festive occasions like *Chandan Jatra*, *Snan Jatra*, *Jhulan Jatra*, *Rukmini haran Ekadashi* etc in the temple. At present, out of so many duties only a few of them survive. The rituals observed in the temple of Lord Jagannath had been stopped after the death of Kokilaprabha Devadasi since 1993. Sashikala the last devadasi of Srimandir only participated as Jashoda on the occasion of Nanda utsab, on *Bhadrab krushna nabami*.

For these services the *devadasis* were granted 18 *Bati* (Nearly 80 Acs) of landed property near the village Usunabarapada and were also given Rs.9/- annually<sup>37</sup>. They had also the right to receive the sacred fire (*vaishnabagni*) from the temple of Lord Jagannath. Once they attained the skill of singing and dancing they were presented '*Sarees*' as a token of appointment.

Lastly, from Madalapanji, official records as well as from other inscriptional sources it can be proved that the dancing girls of Sri Jagannath Temple are known as *Mahari* or *Nachuni*. They are different from the *devadasis* of the South Indian culture. This *Mahari* tradition was introduced in the temple of Lord Jagannath by Kapilendradev, the king of Surya dynasty. He had a noble ambition of providing an opportunity as well as right to women to serve for the Lord. For this noble purpose, the *maharis* of Sri Jagannath temple were maintained a holy and pious life. But in some other temples of the country due to the illegal, irreligious attitudes of some priests, nobles and powerful persons, this sacred tradition became extremely polluted. When the degeneration of the sacred tradition as well as the holy conduct and character of *devadasis* were exploited, the reformists tried to abolish this ancient tradition, for which now-a-days this tradition is going to be abolished from the temples.

#### Foot Note:

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28. *Ibid*- Inscription No. 50, p.22.
29. *Ibid*- Inscription No.141, p.72.
30. Sri N. N. Pradhan, *Oriya Sahityare Jayadev*, Cuttack, 1971, p. 104.
31. Sri K. N. Mohapatra, *Sri Jayadev O Sri Gita Govinda*, Bhubaneswar, 1973, p. 47.
32. Rama Saraswati, *Jayadev Kavya*, Stanza 80.
33. Most probably the girls were so called Anangia because they were able to excite the king erotically. The English equivalent of the word Ananga is the "sexual passion". The other explanation could be that these girls were introduced by the king Anagabhimadev.
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# Jagannath: The Lord of the Universe

*Arati Nanda Pati, PhD*



## ***Jagannath: the Symbol of Unity in Diversity***

Lord Jagannath, the supreme personality of Godhead, the Lord of the Universe is the symbol of universal love and brotherhood. Sri Jagannath, He, who makes the devotees fearless, whose pass-times are like human, and who grants liberation, appears in the form of “Daru Brahma” (the Supreme Soul in a Sacred Log), along with His elder brother Balabhadra, sister Subhadra, and armament Sudarshan on the bejeweled platform of the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD Jagannath temple in Puri, Odisha, India.

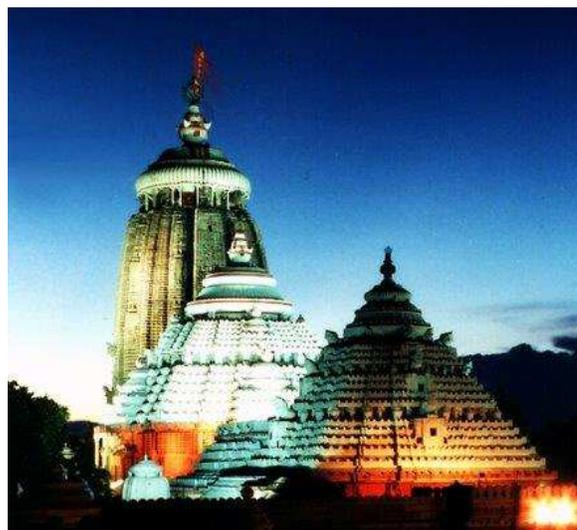
In Sanskrit, ‘Ja’ represents Jagannath, ‘Ga’ represents Balabhadra, ‘Nna’ represents Subhadra, and ‘Tha’ represents Sudarshan. So Jagannath or Jagannath means the union of the four deities in the form of Chaturdha Murati or Four-Fold Form of the Lord. The images of Jagannath, the black color representing sunya or inscrutability, Subhadra, yellow representing the creative energy, Balabhadra, white representing love, peace, and enlightenment, and Sudarshan, red as blood representing life and vitality are the four races (e.g. Black, White, Yellow, and Red) of the world. This representation of the Lord is the unity in diversity.

Lord Jagannath, an abstract form of Sri Krishna and Vishnu, is eternal. History cannot establish His appearance. However, legend says, king Indradyumna installed the wooden form of Jagannath in Satya Yuga (Era of Truth). Interestingly, the most ancient reference to sacred log (Daru) is found in Rig Veda. Vedic commentator, Sayanacharya ascribed the Rig Vedic sukta to Jagannath in terms of Purusottama (The Perfect Being). Jagannath has been mentioned in Uttara Khanda of Balmiki Ramayana. In Mahabharata, Jagannath has been represented to have a seat in Sankha Khetra. In puranic literature, Vishnu Purana, Matsya Purana, Agni Purana, Padma Purana, Narada Purana, Brahma Purana, and Skanda Purana, mention of Sri Jagannath and Purusottama Khetra have been found. Above all, the Jagannath Astakam of Adi Shankaracharya (788 AD-820 AD) is the vital historical literary piece on Jagannath which provides information about the temple and appearance of the deity. In 810 AD, Shankaracharya

visited shrines at Puri and established Govardhana Matha (monastery).

## ***His Abode: An Architectural and Cultural Wonder***

Based on Odisha’s classical temple style, the present Jagannath temple in Puri was constructed around 1135 AD by King Chodaganga Deva and completed by his descendant, Anangabhim Deva in 1198 AD. The city of Puri is also known as Nilachala, Niladri, Nilgiri, Purusottama Khetra, Sri Khetra, and Sankha Khetra. The city is shaped like a conch shell (Sankha) where there is a raised ground known as Nila Shaila or Nilgiri or “The Blue Hill”. On the summit of Nilgiri stands the most revered temple as one of the cardinal centers of pilgrimage, Char Dham, dedicated to Krishna as Lord



Jagannath. The main temple is 65m (214 feet) high and is built on a 10.7 acres land and is protected by the two rectangular walls, the outer wall, Meghanada prachira, with 6m (20 feet) high and the inner wall, Kurmabedha.

The temple has four halls. The outermost is the Hall of offering or “Bhogamandira”. The second is hall for music and dance or “Nata Mandira”, the third is worship or gathering hall or “Jagamohana” and the last and the fourth hall is the Sanctum Sanctorum or the “Bada Deula or Garbha Gruha”. There is a wheel, “Nila Chakra” (Blue Wheel) made out of 8 different metals with a circumference of 36 feet and 11 feet 8 inches high on the top of the temple to protect the temple structure



from thunder stroke and lightning. Every day one person known as Garuda Sevaka or Chunara Nejoga climbs up the imposing temple to hoist new flags on the mast attached to the Blue Wheel. Surprisingly, there has been no report of accident to this day.



There are four gates: the main entrance or east gate is located on the Grand Road (Bada Danda) and is called Lion gate or “Singhdwara”. Southern gate is addressed as Horse gate or “Ashwadwara”, Western gate is known as Tiger gate or “Byaghradwara”, and the north gate has been named as Elephant gate or “Hastidwara”. In front of the main temple there is an 11m tall pillar called Aruna Stambha that was relocated by Chhattarapati Shivaji from Konark Temple. In the passage of main gate there is an image of Lord Jagannath called Patita Pabana or “Savior of The Most Fallen” that was installed by Raja Ramachandra Deb after converting to Islam and receiving his new name Kadar Beg. Baisi Pahacha or twenty two (22) steps at the outer ring of the main

entrance are believed to be derived from the word bahya pahacha or outside step. Devotees pay great respect to these steps. On the right side of 22 steps, the famous Ananda Bazaar is located where Maha Prasad is purchased. Towards the south side of the temple, the thousand year old banyan tree, Kalpabata is standing high and willing to fulfill the wishes of devotees. A 16 pillared open hall, Mukti Mandap is dedicated to important decisions. During Naba Kalebara (New Embodiment) in every 12 or 19 years, when Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra, and Suhadra are newly carved, the old images are buried in Koili Baikuntha, in the western portion of the temple between outer and inner walls. Outside the temple, on the oceanfront the cremation ground Swarga Dwara or “Doorway to Heaven” is located where every devotee of Lord Jagannath wants to be liberated from the material body.



Every morning the temple doors open with Mangala Arati, auspicious lamp offerings at around 5 AM. The rituals for Lord Jagannath’s brushing and cleaning known as Abakasha are done before He is adorned with



one of the 36 exquisitely designed dresses in the temple wardrobe called Beshas (Attires). During the day, Lord

Jagannath accepts 56 different types of food (Chhapan Bhoga), offered six times daily. There are 36 communities (Chatisha Nijoga) divided into 97 classes are dedicated to specific hereditary service to the deities. There are 6000 priests cater the needs of the deities and devotees. The temple houses the largest kitchen in world with 752 sigdis (stove) and prepares food for thousands of devotees every day. Prasad for at least 25,000 people can be prepared in one day and 100,000 people on a festival day. At around midnight, Lord Jagannath retires to His bed (Pahuda) and the temple door is sealed for the next sunrise.

### ***Charming Features: His Heavenly Design***

Unlike the stone images of Hindu Gods, the unique and mysterious icons of Lord Jagannath,



Balabhadra, Subhadra, and Sudarshan are carved from neem (margosa) wood. Based on the myths and legends, the idols of Jagannath, Balabhadra, and Subhadra are unfinished without any identifiable hands and legs. The deity of Jagannath is about 6 feet (1.83m) tall and black in color with over dimensional head. His enormous round eyes have three concentric circles- Red on the outer layer, white in the middle, and black in the center.



The statue of Balabhadra is also approximately 6 feet tall

with white color and almond shaped eyes. Both Jagannath and Balabhadra have stump like arms stretching forward at mouth level. Devi Subhadra's idol is yellow in color and stands about 5 feet (1.52m) tall with oval shaped eyes and without hands and legs. Sudarshan, a cylindrical projection of wood is approximately the same height as the two male deities.

The origin of Lord Jagannath is believed to be tribal. The sabaras, the earliest tribals of Odisha who belonged to the proto-Australoid tribe, were tree worshippers and their rituals involved dancing and singing before the Kitung or Jaganata or God. The association of non-Brahmin priests, called Daitas, who are presumed to be of tribal origin with the worship of the deity, some scholars established that Jagannath was originally a tribal deity. According to Anncharlott Eschmann, the Nabakalebara ritual is a tribal custom. With passage of time the Aryan elements integrated in Jagannath culture as both tribal and Brahminical worshiping procedures coexist even at present at the Jagannath temple, Puri.

### ***Jagannath Culture: Embracing the Humanity with Ineffable Bliss and Love***

Starting from a local deity of unknown tribe, Jagannath manifested Himself as the greatest religious centers of the whole world. He is not meant for any sect or tribe. In the course of time He has become universal and is worshiped by Vaishnavas, Saivyas, Shaktas as well as Buddhists and Jains.

In Vaishnavism, the Jagannath triad is worshiped as Krishna, Balaram, and sister Subhadra. The triad, conceived as one, represents the three attributes of creation, maintenance, and destruction. In Vedic philosophy, they also represent the supreme divine consciousness of Sat (Existence), Chit (Awareness), and Anand (Bliss Absolute). In Saivism, they believe that the original shape of Jagannath was in the shape of Linga. Deity Balabhadra is named as Ananta Vasudeva. Again, the Blue-Mountain (Nilasaila) was a form of Sivalinga, the symbol of creativity for the



Saivas. The Shaktas claim that Jagannath is Bhairava and Vimala is Vairabi in tantra system. Rice offering in the temple is first given to Vimala and then it becomes Maha-Prasad. They accept Subhadra as Goddess Durga who is worshiped daily with Bhubaneswari Mantra in the Jagannath temple. Shakta connotation of Subhadra is also reflected by her chariot, which is called “Darpadalan” (Destroyer of Autocratic Ego).

The followers of Buddhism claim that Jagannath, Balabhadra, and Subhadra represent the Buddha-Sangha-Dharma triad. The iconographic representation of Jagannath without hands and feet is considered as the meditating Buddha. Some believe that the tooth relic of Buddha known as Bramha-Padartha (Divine-Matter) is hidden in the navel of Jagannath idol. The non casteism tradition existing in the Anada Bazar is a factor of Buddhism in Jagannath culture.

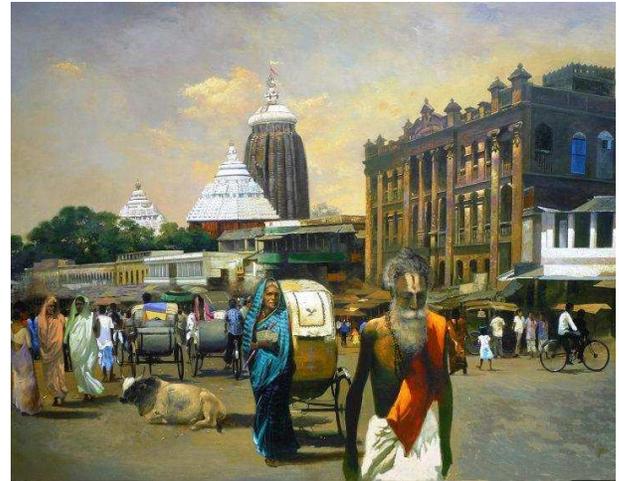
Jains believe that the word “Jagannath” has been derived from the word “Jinanath”. The triad represents the Jain Trinity of Samyak Jnana (Right Knowledge), Samyak Charita (Right Thought), and Samyak Drusti (Right Perception). Jains believe that Baisi Pahacha (22 steps) in the temple ground has been constructed in the memory of 22 Tirthankars or Kevalins. Again, the word “Kaibalya”, the name of the offering made to Jagannath, has been derived from Jainism.



Later when Sikh religion was established, Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion during his visit to Jagannath temple wrote “Gagan me thai” a prayer in the name of Lord Jagannath. This composition has been considered a revered one in “Guru Granth Saheb”. The Sikh king Maharaja Ranjit Singh was a great devotee of Lord Jagannath. He wished to donate the “koh-i-noor” diamond to Lord Jagannath that he recovered after 74 years on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1813.

Santha Kabir and Bhakta Salabega are two Muslim poets who wrote glorious poems in the name of Lord Jagannath. Although denied entry into the Jagannath Temple, Salabega composed many devotional songs with deep intensity and passion. In his honor every year during chariot festival, Lord Jagannath stops

for a while near his Samadhi (tomb) on the Grand Road in Puri near Balagandi.



Jagannath has no Lila except that of a strong bond with His loyal devotees. There are many almanacs of devotees such as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Dasia Bauri, Balam Das who were deeply associated with Him in pure love, devotion, and passion. Jagannath belongs to His devotees in whichever form they want Him. In the honor of poet laureate kabi Jayadev, every evening Lord Jagannath puts on silken robes in His “Badasinghara Beshha” where some portion of the Gitagovinda is woven into texture of these robes. To fulfill the wish of His devotee Ganapati Bhatta, Lord Jagannath assumed the “Hati Beshha” (Elephant Attire) on the Snana Bedi (Bathing

Alter) on Deva Snana Purnima (Full Moon Day of Celestial Bath). It is believed that Lord Jagannath invites devotees from southern India who love to see Him in the form of “Gajanana” with a clear indication that He belongs to them.

### ***Rath Yatra: The Celestial Pilgrimage***

Without legs and hands Lord Jagannath sets out on a grand tour to His aunt’s house in the beginning of July every year. This festival is popularly known as Rath Yatra or chariot festival. Amidst enchanting rejoice, the triad of Jagannath, Balabhadra, and Subhadra leaves its abode to visit Gundicha temple, three kilometers from the Jagannath Temple. Millions congregate in Puri to watch the trinity ride on their grandiose chariots which are newly carved from scratch every year. Lord Jagannath’s chariot, the red and yellow Nandighosh, is 45 feet 6 inches high with 16 wheels. Lord Balabhadra’s chariot, the red and green Taladwaja is 45 feet with 14 wheels. Subhadra’s chariot, the red and black Darpadalan with 12 wheels steps forward between Her brothers with Balabhadra leading the procession. The king of Puri performs Chhera Panhara, sweeps ahead with a golden broom when the deities are installed on the chariot traditionally after a grand procession called



“Pahandi”. The chariots are pulled by 50 m long ropes with ecstatic cries of “Jai Jagannath”. The entire region is filled with an aura of unstoppable, overpowering force of Jagannath, from which the English word, ‘juggernaut’ was originated. Devotees propel ahead to get the opportunity to touch the pious rope to attain salvation in the prominent black eyes of Lord Jagannath where black represents renunciation-the ultimate surrender or relinquishment. Jagannath culture signifies universal brotherhood, love, tolerance, and equality to spread the fragrance of eternal love

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# Puri Shri Mandira and Ratha Yatra

*Dr. Satyabrata Misra*



Rath Yatra in Puri, Odisha, India

**S**hri Mandira Complex at Puri was built by king Anangabhim dev around 1150 A.D. It covers an area of about one acre over Nilagiri Hill nearby the sea beach. It is surrounded by the Meghanad Prachir (655x640x25 cft). There are four gates in its four directions. The eastern gate is called Sinhadwar which is the main entry into the temple. There are 22 steps to cross over into the main compound of the temple.

## **Bhoga Preparations**

To the left there are nine kitchens each being 2500 sq. ft area. There are 752 chullas fuelled by wood to cook Mahaprasad in clay pots of varying sizes. About 1000 chefs work daily preparing 56 items of delicious food (Chapan Bhoga). These bhogas are offered to the lords at different times. Gopala Ballav - 8 A.M., Sakala Bhoga- 10 A.M., Bhoga Mandap Bhoga-11A.M., Madhyahna Bhoga-12.30 P.M., Sayahna Bhoga-7P.M., and Bada Sinhar Bhoga-11.15P.M.. Gopal Ballav is the breakfast comprising of milk, sweets, fruits, butter, yogurt, coconut, and malai. Sakala Bhoga includes bada, enduri, matha puli, kakatua, jhilli, and khicouri etc. Rice, dal, and sabjis are prepared in Madhyahna Bhoga in large scale to be distributed to public.

## **Ananda Bazar**

It is situated at the right where Mahaprasad is distributed to public in affordable prices. It is regarded as the largest single hotel complex in the world. At any time 1000 people may be seen eating Mahaprasad there. Adjacent to the Bazar there is Dola Mandap where Radharani and Lord Krishna swing during Dola festival. The three deities are also given sacred bath at this pendal on Snana Purnima.

## **Temple Design and Architecture**

The design is based upon a mixed Dravidian and Nagara architecture. Its excellence may be judged from stone carvings and construction details. The main temple consists of 4 distinct buildings.

**Bhoga Mandap-** It is a wide hall (18mx17m) for offering of bhoga to the Lords. Its inner walls depict beautiful sculpture and paintings of Krishna-Lila.

## **Natya Mandap**

It is the dancing hall (21mx20m) where devadasis dance face to face with the Lords during sleeping hours.

Jagamohan (Mukhashala)

This is the visitors hall to witness and offer prayers

to the lords. There is Garuda Stambha where devotees lit clay lamps and pray the lords with folded hands. Shri Chaitanya took daily darshan of the lords at its base and paid standing ovations.

### **Viman (Garbha Gruha)**

Ratna Bedi (Sanctum Sanctorum) is situated here which is about 5 ft. high where the three lords sit upon Ratna sinhasan along with Sudarsan.

### **Location of Minor Deities**

Inside the temple complex there are about 100 deities enthroned in small temples. They are Laxmi, Saraswati, Ganesha, Satyanarayan, Vimla etc. Vimla temple is the oldest temple. Mahaprasad is first offered to Maa Vimla before final offering to the lords. Nearby are situated Kanchi Ganesha and Rohini Kakatirtha. At each of the gates there is one Shiva Murti who guides the security of the lords. At the entrance there is Patitapawan (Lord Jagannath) to be seen by all people irrespective of caste, creed, and colour. There are Sitaram and Radhakrushna temple at the southern gate side. Kalpabata is a huge banyan tree where under Jagannath Dash explained Odia Bhagabat to interested audiences. In its vicinity there is Maa Mangala temple where ladies pray to fulfill their wishes. Opposite to the exit of Garbha Gruha, there is Mukti Mandap where learned Brahmins confer on religious texts.

### **Rathayatra**

Every year Rathayatra falls on the 2nd day of lunar fortnight, in the month of Asadha i.e. around 20th June to 15th July. The deities are bathed in holy water upon Dolabedi on Snana Purnima. Then they take rest in the Anabasar Gruha for 15 days for treatment and cure from cold fever. Three days prior to Rathayatra the deities return to their Ratna Sinhasan for public darshan. It is called Netra Utsav.

### **Construction Details and Decoration of Rathas**

The Ratha trios are constructed each year from new wood and the work starts on the auspicious day of Akshaya Trutiya. About 400 cm. of wood is used in constructions of rathas. Each ratha stands upon 18 pillars. Rathas are covered by brilliantly colored canopies. Red-yellow canopy define Nandighosh, redgreen Taladhwaaja and red-black that of Darpa-dalan. Jagannath Rath

is named as Chandradhwaja or Nandighosh (blissful sound), Balabhra's as Tala-dhwaja (strong sound) and that of Subhadra's as Padmadhwaj or Darpadalan (annihilator of pride). Nandighosh is supported on 16 wheels rising to a height of 45 ft. Four white horses drive the ratha which carries the emblem of Garuda atop. Taladhwaaja is supported on 14 wheels and is 44ft. high with emblem of Hanuman atop. It is driven by 4 dark horses. Debadalan is supported on 12 wheels with the emblem of Matangi at the top. It is driven by 4 red horses. It is 43 ft. high. Nandighosh is protected by Narasinha, Taladhwaaja by Shesa Nag and Darpadalan by Banadurga. There are Parswadevatas, Dwara-palas, and Sarathis on each ratha.

### **Pahandi Vijaya**

The process of bringing Sudarsan, Balabhadra, Subhadra followed by Jagannath in that order from the temple to their respective rathas is called Pahandi Vijaya. The deities being tied to ropes are pulled intermittently by daitapati. The deities are decorated by tahiya of flower bouquets. It is a rare privilege to witness this ritual. Musical troops blow horns, beat cymbals and drums at the main gate to welcome the deities.

### **Chherapahara**

Another important ritual is Chherapahara performed by the Gajapati King of Odisha. It is observed after the deities occupy their seats. Like a sweeper, the king sweeps the pedestal with a golden handled broom followed by sprinkling of sandalwood water. This testifies that under the lord there is no distinction between a powerful sovereign and a humble devotee.

### **Journey**

Taladhwaaja, Darpadalan and Nandighosh are pulled one after another with a time lag. About one million of bhaktas throng along Badadanda to witness the marathon journey of their beloved gods. The rathas move from Sinhadwar to Gundicha Ghar, a distance of about 3 miles. All the time Sankirtans, devotional dance and reciting of bhakti hymns fill the atmosphere with jubilant vibrations. Decorated temples, ashrams, shops, and aristocratic buildings on either sides of Badadanda draws a fantastic sight. Well dressed women flock up atop the buildings and balconies to witness the wonderful festival.

## Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

The Madhya Lila of Chaitanya Charitamrita gives a vivid description of Prabhu's participation in rathayatra. He used to visit the deities after a holy morning bath. This is known as Pandu Vijaya. He is accompanied by Prabhu Nityananda, Advait Acharya, Gobindananda, and others. They formed a team headed by Swarup Damodar. They sang and danced uninterrupted before the lords. Chaitanya is quoted as saying "My obeisance to lord Krishna (Jagannath), adorable to all brahmanas, bestower of cows and pious humans and the world's beneficiary. I worship You again and again. Very often he lost himself in total devotion, lay prostrated and became fainted. To protect him the team moved in 3 concentric circles. Lord Chaitanya, Prabhu Nityananda and his close associates remained in the inner circle, Kashiswar, Gobindananda and others in the 2nd circle while King Pratap Rudra Deb, Harichandan and king's ministers moved in the outer circle. The deities seemed to watch the ecstatic dance of lord Chaitanya unfolding the eight mellows of bhaktirasa as the Rathas marched towards Gundicha Ghar.

## Ceremonies at Gundicha Temple

These are not as elaborate as in the main temple. On the 5th day of the lunar fortnight (Herapanchami) Laxmi comes out of the main temple in search of Lord Jagannath. Seeing her coming, doors of the gundicha Ghar is closed by watchmen. Annoyed Laxmi breaks one wood piece from Nandighosh and goes back to the main temple. It may be noted that during the stay of deities, Mahaprasad is cooked and served at Gundicha Ghar.

## Bahuda yatra

It begins on the 10th day of lunar fortnight. While returning on the same rathas they stop at Mausī Maa temple for offering of podapitha (toasted rice cakes). Then the rathas finally stop near the lion's gate. The

deities remain on the rathas for 3 days to give public darshan. On the 3rd day Sunavesha is organized by adoring the deities with golden ornaments and costly outfits. This is a rare open darshan. Three deities then return back to Shri Mandir thus making a glorious end of the festival.

## International Ratha Yatra

It is made international by the tireless efforts of Shрила Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad. The first Ratha yatra took place at San Francisco, U.S.A. in 1967 under the patronage of ISKCON. Now it has spreaded to important cities all round the globe such as London, Paris, Melbourne, Montreal, Newyork, Los Angeles, Singapur, Kualalumpur, and Mexico City.

Dham Rai Ratha yatra: It is the most important festival of Hindu community in Bangladesh.

Mahesh Ratha yatra: It is the oldest festival in West Bengal continuing since 1937. It is observed in Mahesh under Hooghly District. Devotees in large numbers assemble to pull the chariots from Mahesh temple to Gundicha Bari at Seram pur and back. It is a weeklong festival celebrated with a grand fair at Mahesh.

## Lastly a quote from Skanda Purana-

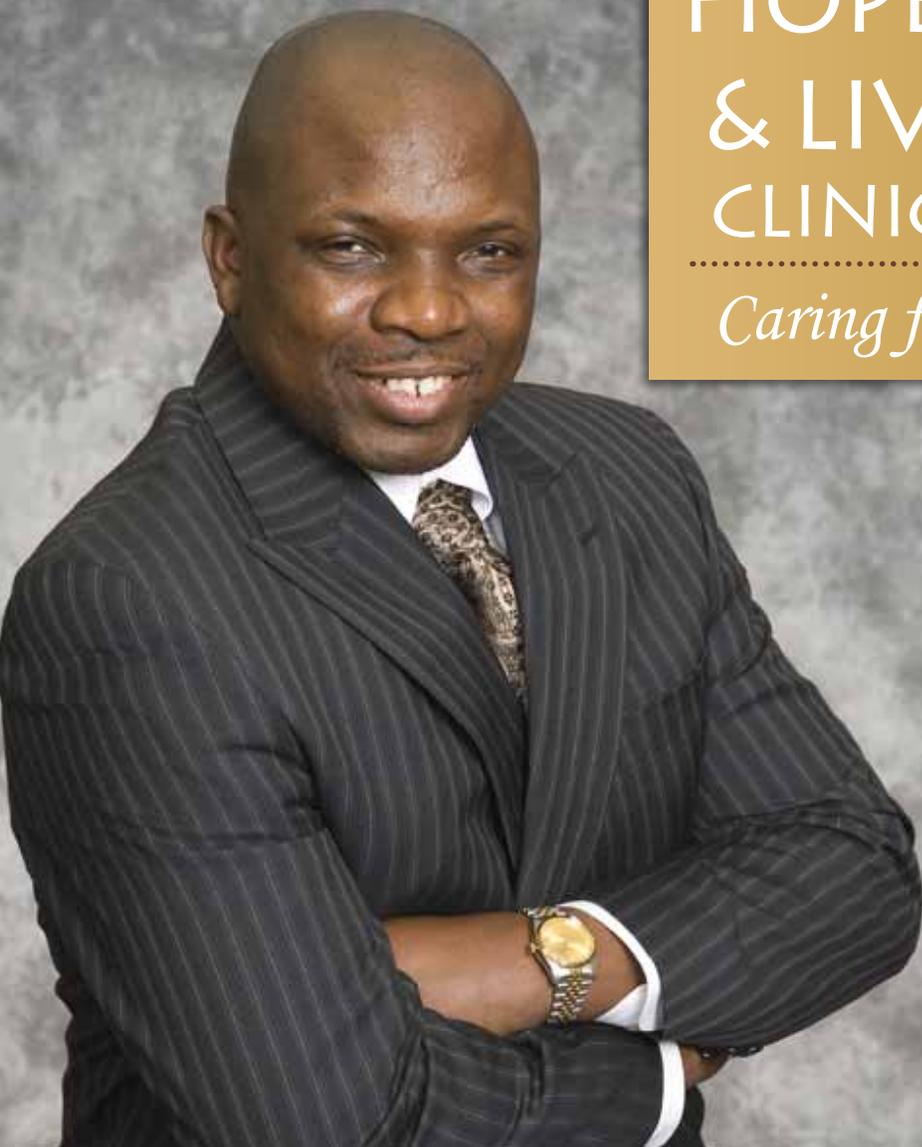
**"Rathe tu Bamanam Drustya Punarjanma na Vidyate."**

One will attain salvation if once visits the lord upon his chariot. Wishing a grand success of Naba kalebar Ratha Yatra at Houston this year.



**Dr. Satyabrata Misra, Retd.**  
**Professor of Chemistry, Ravenshaw**  
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# HOPE DIGESTIVE & LIVER DISEASE CLINIC OF HOUSTON

*Caring for the Whole Person*

by anna charles

cover photo by joe robbins

When Steven C. Ugbarugba, M.D., began his private practice in Houston in 2003, his vision was to not only treat symptoms and disease but to treat each patient with compassion and empathy, as a whole person and spiritual being. Today, with a thriving practice and a new stand-alone location set to open in May, Dr. Ugbarugba, a gastroenterologist board-certified in internal medicine, continues his personalized philosophy of care that has made him a favorite among patients of all ages and walks of life.

## HEALING & HOPE, COMPASSION & UNDERSTANDING

The name of Dr. Ugbarugba's practice, which contains the word hope, says it all. "As a medical student, my goal was to help heal my patients, but also to give them hope," said Dr. Ugbarugba, whose patients call him "Dr. Aruba." "No matter how sick a patient is, there's always a chance for him or her to do well. There's always hope."

Dr. Ugbarugba explained that his patient-centered care is especially helpful in his specialty of gastroenterology. "Medicine has changed. There's more to treating patients than simply prescribing medication. I think of each patient as a whole and treat them with compassion and care. I build relationships with my patients and really listen to them. Patients want and deserve this. When you are suffering with gastrointestinal problems, there's both a physical aspect and an emotional aspect. Conditions can be tied to stress, environment and social issues. I try to take all of these things into account."

## MEET STEVEN C. UGBARUGBA, M.D. ("DR. ARUBA")

Dr. Ugbarugba, a native of Nigeria who speaks fluent English, earned his medical degree in Nigeria in 1988 and completed his residency in 1989 at a teaching hospital there. In 1995 he joined a research hospital in New York City, and then went on to perform a residency in internal medicine at Morehouse School of Medicine in 1997, where he received Resident of the Year Award. Dr. Ugbarugba excelled academically during his training at Morehouse School of Medicine, participated in various research studies and made several publications. Following his residency at Morehouse, he completed a fellowship in gastroenterology at SUNY Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn, New York. During his training, he participated actively in academic presentations, contests and publications. In 2003, Dr. Ugbarugba and his wife, Ola, who lived in Houston while earning her master's degree, chose to relocate to Houston and open Dr. Ugbarugba's private practice in gastroenterology. Dr. Ugbarugba is certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine in the specialty of internal medicine and gastroenterology. He is known for his kindness, compassion and calm, reassuring bedside manner.

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### STATE-OF-THE-ART SERVICES

Dr. Ugbarugba offers evaluation and diagnostic services, as well as treatment. One of his services is colonoscopy screening. "People think this procedure is painful, but over the last few years changes have been made, especially with respect to better sedation and easier post-procedure recovery. Colonoscopies are actually quite comfortable now. There's no reason to fear them. What people should be concerned about are undetected colon cancer and other conditions, not the colonoscopy."

Other services include diagnostic tests and treatments for pancreatic, gall bladder and liver diseases. He also treats hepatitis C and its complications. According to Dr. Ugbarugba, in addition to Hepatitis C treatment, some of the procedures he performs, such as ERCP (Endoscopic Retrograde Cholangio-Pancreatography), are not commonly offered by most gastroenterologists. An ERCP examines the duodenum (the first portion of the small intestine), the papilla of Vater (a small nipple-like structure with openings leading to the bile ducts and the pancreatic duct), the bile ducts, the gallbladder and the pancreatic duct. The procedure is performed using a long, flexible, viewing instrument about the diameter of a pen.

If you or a loved one suffers from GI disorders or biliary disease, call Dr. Ugbarugba's office and schedule an appointment. If you are 50 or older, or have a family history of colon cancer, schedule a screening colonoscopy. Patients from throughout Greater Houston visit Dr. Ugbarugba, and most of his new patients come by word of mouth. If you're ready for exceptional medical care, call today. 

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# Rath Yatra Health Camp

*Dr. Kalyan K Rath MD. & Dr. Durba Mishra MD.*

**R**ath-Yatra symbolises the journey of the human soul (the Charioteer) through the human body (the Chariot) on the spiritual path (Major Highway or Grand Road) of human life towards the ultimate goal of life, the Supreme Soul. We all know from our day-to-day travel experiences that the vehicle needs to be in very good condition, reliable, and un-defective for a long journey to be successfully carried out. Besides that, the skill of the driver and the route selected by the navigator determines the outcome of a difficult journey. Clarity of the goal or destination is also as important as the travel discipline (like obeying traffic rules) for a successful and comfortable journey to reach your goal in time without major accidents. The health of the chariot (Human Body) is an important part of the Chariot Festival or Rath Yatra. For this reason, we organize a free Health-Camp every year during this occasion to remind us that the vehicle of this auspicious journey of life should be properly taken care of and maintained well.

Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. A good vehicle should be stable in all adverse weather, no matter what type of road, traffic, or other environmental conditions, and also give a comfortable experience to the driver and passengers. Similarly, good health should help us to pass through our journey of life stress free by easily overcoming the adverse personal, financial, emotional, and social situations and acts of nature. All aspects of health must be in good condition to live a happy and peaceful life. Our physical, emotional, social, mental, and spiritual health are critical for a happy peaceful, pleasurable, and successful life journey to reach our ultimate goal and understand one's self by understanding the highest truth. Like in any other scientific experiment, the goal is to find the truth by utilizing a proper environment and methodology. Life needs the equipment in the best possible condition to find the Ultimate Truth.

The Health Camp uses the idea of prevention for maintaining good health through health education, early screening, diagnosis, and treatment of some common medical problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, high cholesterol, and obesity. We all know that one ounce of prevention can be so much more

helpful than tons of treatment. Our vehicle stays in good condition and keeps us free of trouble on the road when we give it a regular maintenance with thorough inspection of engine, oil changes, tire changes etc. Similarly, our bodies need screening for all types of common afflictions so that we may treat them in advance before they create major problems that become an obstacle in reaching the ultimate goal in life.



In the Health Camp we have seen many young Indians who have very little information about the medical systems which are provided to aid them in caring for their elderly parents' medical needs when they are visiting the United States. A multitude of Indian parents who visit the USA often experience anxiety due to their health concerns; being in a foreign country heightens their tension. These parents' anxiety is alleviated when they see Indian doctors with whom they can communicate with in their native language and express their concerns and questions freely. The health camp also gives a free health checkup, provides them with beneficial health tips that promote healthy habits and emphasizes the importance of regular medical check-ups.

In the Rath Yatra health camp, we have also noted that many young individuals did not have health insurance; with this camp, many of these people were able to receive free medical checkups and health advice which they ordinarily would not be able to obtain. However, we also see young individuals with health insurance that lack knowledge about the healthcare system in the USA, and are not aware of the benefits they should be receiving. With our health camp, they obtain guidance

about preventive check-ups and how to have a healthy lifestyle, as well as information about medical insurance. One of our future goals is to include a free health camp for young children, and offer guidance to their parents about how to ensure the complete wellbeing of their children along with special emphasis on behavioral and mental health addressing concerns of child development.

Physical health is essential for maintaining other aspects of health. Rath Yatra addresses these other important dimensions of health at a community level by bringing together individuals in a positive social and spiritual environment that promotes universal peace and brotherhood. Sharing joy, happiness, and helping each other through our journey of life takes away our worries, anxieties, and stress, the root cause of our mental illness in the community. Positive social interaction and mental state drives us to a higher intellectual plane which makes us understand the fundamental secrets of life and removes all confusions about ourselves. This clear intellect takes care of the biggest enemy and obstacle of human progress- individual ego, or “I” ness. Spiritual atmosphere in a state of clear intellect lets us see the “self” in every living being. Our individual limited material love grows into an infinite, divine, and compassionate love for everyone. That compassionate and infinite love establishes world peace and universal



brotherhood by taking away individual hatred, jealousy, anger, greed, attachment, and violence for power, position, and control.

Our health camp, which lasts for a few hours in one day cannot take care of the large medical problems in a community. However, it is a big step in our journey of life by reminding us that health is wealth and we must pay attention to all the dimensions of health; this includes mental, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual wellbeing. Just staying disease-free is not enough; a complete state of wellbeing is essential to achieve a healthy, happy, prosperous, and successful existence to realize the ultimate Truth and goal of our life.

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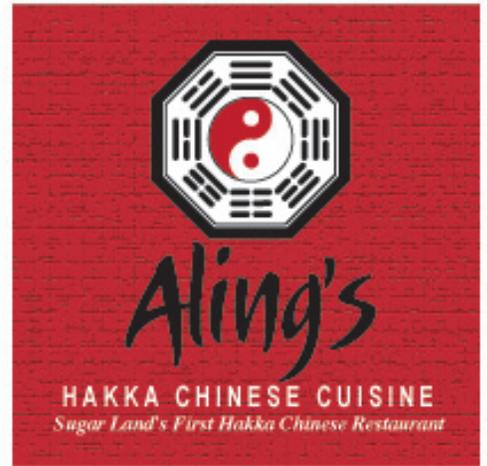


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# Jagganath Rath Yatra

## *Unique Facts but So True in the Mirror of Our Lives*

*Manas Pattanaik*

**J**agannath Rath Yatra is one of the four major pilgrimages of Hinduism linked with The Jagannath Temple Puri, India, the house of Lord Jagannath, His Sister Subhadra and Brother Balabhadra. This event is more than five thousand years old and is highlighted by the fact that the three gods come out of the temple and indulge with their devotees as they embark on a round trip journey (Yatra) to their aunt's temple.

This age old festival is also very dearly celebrated all over the world, in many towns and cities including my home city Houston, Texas. Although this festival is denominated as a Hindu event, its bears the highest form of spiritual significance, transcends all religions and races while touching our day-to-day lives.

Rarely ever or never can we find another holy event that abodes in such supreme divinity and is yet materially so much around us, as if we can speak to it, touch it and play with it. Not sure this is true? Ok let us learn about some lesser known facts about Jagannath and the Jagannath Rath Yatra below and see if you conclude this yourself.

As I narrate these facts below I will make an effort to link them to our day-to-day lives (captioned as "To our lives" next to each fact) and how they are meaningful to us. Hopefully you will realize Jagannath Rath Yatra is not a special privilege reserved only for the Gods but it is for us, by us and with us. Finally, for few of these facts I have linked them to my experiences with some people around me. My overall thinking is influenced by members from my community in Houston that tirelessly work every year to bring Jagannath Rath Yatra to people as well as many others in the greater world that pour endless love to these Gods in their own ways. I also have gathered information from different available sources. Here we go ....

1. Lord of the Universe - Jagannath stands for "Jagat Ka Nath" which mean "Lord of the Universe". So you see, the God here is telling us he belongs to entire mankind and the entire universe. It is not limited to any religion, caste or creed. If any such limitation or perception is created it is only the making of people that

want to subjugate the universal phenomenon to a narrow intellect.

"To our lives" – As my spiritual friend Satya Dutta says, Jagannath is about universal love and brotherhood. What a wonderful way to think about God this way that has the ultimate power to unite mankind.

2. Jagannath Rath Yatra is about a Yatra or journey. The festival is only a 2.5 miles round trip journey that Jagannath and His siblings take in their respective chariots every year. But this Yatra means a lot more. It is a trip in which the Gods come out of the temple and mingle with everyone and together they make the Yatra unique and memorable.

"To our lives" – God is not hidden away in a special place. It is with us and the very fact that god wants to be with us as His equal should tell you that in the purest form, each one of us is a God or have a God in us. You can realize this if you think inside you pure, clear and deep. My friend Debanand Pati and his wife Arati realize this every day as they live with the Gods and take care of them in their own house.

3. Gods that touch all races - Jagannath and his siblings appear in different colors. Those who have visited the Puri temple have seen this or you can also witness this when you come to the Houston Jagannath Rath Yatra that we celebrate every year. Jagannath is black, His sister Subhadra is yellow and His brother Balabhadra is white and the Sudarsan Chakra that goes with them is red. My son Treeank noticed this when he visited the deities in the Puri temple as a 7 year old boy. He asked me how can they be brothers and sister when they have different colors ?

"To our lives" – Expanding on point -1- above, Jagannath and his siblings represent the entire humanity by depicting the body colors of people from different races – black, white, brown and red. We may appear different but we ultimately converge to one underlying power and we are strongly united in the same thinking and spirit. This is a great unifying message for the world and we should never segregate people on the basis their skin colors.

4. God that sees – Even though they do not have fully developed arms and legs the deities of Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra have bright big eyes without any eyelids. This signifies that the Gods are always awake to take care of his devotees.

“To our lives” – As important as ambulatory organs like arms and legs are in conducting our lives what are more important are the eyes that see things to give instructions to brain to move our limbs. If we think about it, using eyes properly and seeing well are strong qualities that can help anyone in a big way – reading a book fast, driving your car safely, and playing your sport well. It has been proven over and over that people who can see well are able to achieve more. The other key learning here is, being alert. If you are spending time on something might as well be fully alert (as you are spending the time anyway) and observe keenly to see well and process the information right. Many times our eyes are open but we are truly not seeing or alert, may be because we are not interested or we are pre-conceived. So why waste your time by being just present ?

5. Rain - There hasn't been a single Rath Yatra day ever when it hasn't rained in Puri!

“To our lives” – This is true in Houston as well. In most of the years we have celebrated, it has rained but the rain miraculously stopped prior to the start of the Rath Yatra. Great things have unique attributes. Many times they may not be apparent but if you observe keenly as per the point made before you can sense them.

6. Journey with the siblings - As said earlier, it is a time when Lord Jagannath, along with his elder brother and younger sister, Balabhadra and Subhadra respectively, are sent to their maternal aunt's The Gundicha Temple in Puri where they stay for 9 days before returning to their home!

“To our lives” – We gain by stepping out of our house and our comfort zone. Taking a vacation to meet your friends and family will not only recharge your battery but will give you new perspective, learning and will always strengthen your bonds with people. Every time we take a vacation, we may be a bit reluctant at the beginning but we always are saddened when the vacation ends and feel good that we took one. Is this not true?

7. Resting in High Fever - The door to the main Jagannath Temple in Puri is kept shut for the last 7 days before the Rath Yatra festival. Apparently, every year,

during this time, Lord Jagannath gets high fever and, it is this fever that calls for a change and hence, the famous visit to their maternal aunt's place!

“To our lives” – It is quite natural to be in trouble or be stuck in a difficult situation during some moments in our lives. It happens to all of us including the great ones. When we face such a situation, we should think out-of-the-box and seek help from others including your close ones – parents, friends or relatives, just as Lord Jagannath did by opting to go to his aunt's house. You see, the answer to problems sometimes may be outside the realm of your thinking and as always more brains are better than just one. You should not be shy or have your ego block you from seeking help.

8. Reaching out - It is the only festival in the world where the deities “reach out” to people by coming out of the temple.

“To our lives” – Our lives should not be restricted to our four walls. We learn and enjoy by coming out of our four-walls. Lord Jagannath and his siblings come out and interact with the world every year to give us this message. The rise of social media and new technologies today have made it possible for us to reach out to the world and make it your home. Today you can connect with many countries and cultures and touch the lives of many people even if you are physically in one location. We live in a very powerful time when our interactions and experiences with others are no more limited by physical location. Our world is greater than ever before and our “reach out” can be powerful than ever before just like God reaches out from everywhere and every time.

9. Breaking the caste barrier - Jagannath Temple is said to be governed by the most stringent Hindus around and is a temple where only Hindus by birth can enter and offer prayers. And, as known to all, Lord Jagannath has His followers are not only among the Hindus but among many other people who've taken the up the ways of Lord. On the auspicious day of Jagannath Rath Yatra, the barriers of caste, religion and creed simply vanish and it is humanity that is worshipped, as people from all religions and castes unite to celebrate this divine event.

“To our lives” – When it comes to important matters caste, class, race and religion really do not matter. These are human creations perhaps instituted during the growth of human civilizations to adopt different ways of living and worshipping as suited to the respective times. The stroke of a genius that produces a marvel in

a sport, the touch of a computer key that unravels a new possibility, the magic of a voice that mesmerizes us, are simply forms of divine working. When these great moments touch us our minds revel and they do not announce to us nor do we ever ask, which caste, class, race or religion they come from. It will be only our loss not those of others, by limiting our thinking to certain sects of human qualification.

10. Lords and their chariots - The three deities, Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra travel in three different chariots—Nandighosha, Lord Jagannath's chariot, has 16 wheels and is as much as 44.2 ft high, Taladhwaaja, Lord Balabhadra's chariot, has 14 wheels and is around 43.3 ft. high and Darpadalana, the chariot of sister Subhadra, has 12 wheels and is around 42.3 ft. high.

“To our lives” – God tells us different sizes and forms are ok and in fact healthy. Having one shape or design would be really boring. Imagine wearing the same cloth every day? Variety brings spirit to our lives and we should learn to appreciate this in us as well as others.

11. New chariots every year - Surprisingly, the chariots are constructed each year anew with new set of wood, and invariably the height and width and every else would be an absolute replica of the past!

“To our lives” – We should re-inspect, re-research and re-build our thinking once in a while to reach our defined goals in our lives – to learn more, to achieve more and to share more. Taking a pause from your daily grind and applying what you have learnt from your actions will inject more power and wisdom to what we do next. Learn to rattle the cage of your life sometimes and you will discover hidden treasure.

12. When Lord resists from moving - Legend has it that Lord Jagannath would be unwilling to visit his aunt's place every time, and creepily, every year, no matter how many thousands of devotees push the chariot, it would simply refuse to move a bit from its place. It's only after hours of pushing that it would finally show movement! Yes, it's kind of funny!

“To our lives” – Change is not easy to come always. Often we get used to what we what we are comfortable with and resist a change. Lord Jagannath is also showing this to us through his initial reluctance to move in the chariot. But then he moves in his chariot to his own delight and those of all the devotees around him. We must

embrace change when it is to our benefit. It opens new door to knowledge and opportunities. A closed mind is a dead mind and the person that has one becomes obsolete sooner or later. The only thing that does not change is “change” itself – so embrace it!

13. The King and his golden mop - Puri still has its official “King”. Lord Jagannath would only come out of the temple after the king of Puri have swept the path himself by his mop made of pure gold!

“To our lives” – There is a greater form of action that transcends standing, power and level of a person. This is demonstrated when the Puri King willingly becomes a sweeper in the Jagannath temple for the God to come out. We have two learnings here. First, we should believe in dignity of labor as no action is too small or petty to be performed. Secondly, the power of “action” is way bigger and more fundamental than the power of the person. President or janitor, both touch and tack their kids to bed every night, and one does perform this in a prettier color or a better flavor over the other.

14. Poda Pitha - After the 9 days sojourn at the Gundicha Temple, the Lords return to the temple, but stops once during the journey. This is because Lord Jagannath can't be back home to His temple without tasting his favorite sweet, Poda Pitha, a unique pancake made in Odisha, on the way!

“To our lives” – We should always find time to do things that matter to us like eating our favorite food or meeting a dear friend. There are two messages for us here. We should always remember our roots no matter how much we have changed or how successful we have become. Secondly, we should take the time to do things that are important. Many times we may have a tendency to defer things, thinking we will catch them later as we feel busy doing other things. Successful and happy people really manage their time very well and always make time for small and big things that are important in the present rather than pushing it off to the future.

15. Heavy rush and injuries - Every year Puri would be filled with devotees from all over the world on this auspicious day who would risk their lives to pull the chariot of their beloved Lord Jagannath. Innumerable people every year are hospitalized as a result of stam-pede.

“To our lives” – Although getting hurt is not a good thing we get bumps and bruises along the way. We need

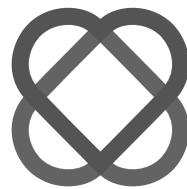
to be careful and apply principles of safety to avoid getting into danger but sometimes we get hurt and we have to persevere it for a bigger cause. This builds grit and character in us. The other point here is, as sweet as it is to get to the final result, like pulling the chariot in the Rath Yatra (you can yourself imagine here another

situation with a successful end in your life), the path, process and pain undertaken make it more memorable.

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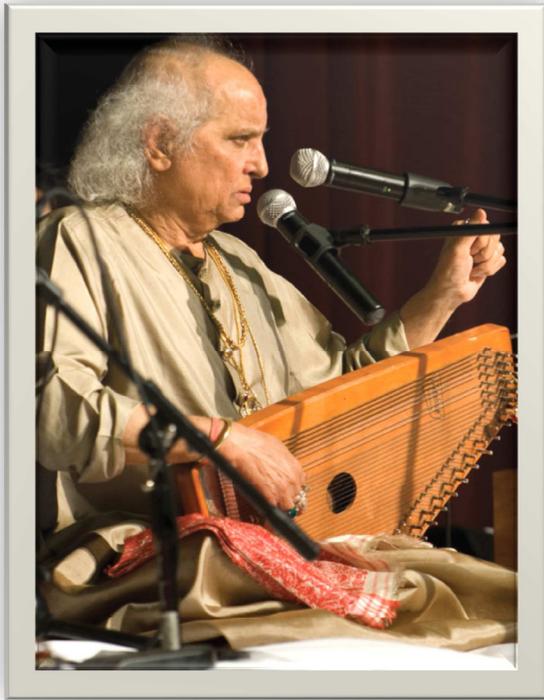
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## PadmaVibhushan Honored, Sangeet Martand **PANDIT JASRAJ**

which traverses masterfully over all four and a half octaves, Jasraj's vocalizing is characterized by a harmonious blend of the classic and opulent elements projecting traditional music as an intense spiritual expression, at once chaste and yet densely colored. This gives his music a unique and sublime emotional quality, reaching out to the very soul of the listener.

Perfect diction, clarity in sur (musical notes), and gayaki (creative musical progression), command in all aspects of laya and rhythm, depth of composition and an unmistakable interplay between notes and words to evoke the desired mood and emotion, are the hallmark of Pandit Jasraj's music. This sensitivity, added to the pure classical approach, has given his singing a lyrical quality, the quintessential of the Mewati tradition of singing.

### **Pandit Jasraj the Guru, the Mentor**

As a member and guru, Pandit Jasraj has already presented to the world an impressive number of illustrious disciples whom he has nurtured and trained in accordance with India's rich tradition of the Guru-Shishya Parampara, the ideal teacher-student relationship. Today, his frontrunner disciples too are zealously carrying the flag of Indian music to every corner of the world.

### **Innovations and Contributions**

Although every performance of Pandit Jasraj is soaked in originality, he is the acclaimed originator of a unique concept that will go down in history as one of his greatest contributions to Indian music! Aptly named Jastrangi, it is a novel Jugalbandi (duet) that is a sensuous fusion of the Yin and the Yang, the male and the female principles. It is a harmonious blend, wherein a male and a female singer, each with individual accompaniments, sing different ragas in their own respective scales, interweaving them into a wondrous whole.

Never content with the tried and the tested, Pandit Jasraj has not only created over a three hundred bandishes (compositions) himself, but has also traversed the uncharted path of singing ancient Sanskrit verses of great saint-poets in pure Indian classical style. This has

**I**ndian Classical Music today is one of the greatest gifts of India to the world. And a blessed few, much beyond their fame and fortune, have devoted their lives to bolster this claim far and wide. While renowned instrumentalists have done it through their chosen instruments, like the Sitar and the Sarod, Pandit Jasraj has done it through that one God-gifted instrument: His Voice.

Pandit Jasraj's achievements are beyond compare more so because vocal music is the most intimate and direct medium according to India's musical treatise and tradition. And almost beyond belief is also the fact that he has carved out his monumental global following without depriving his many million domestic admirers. He has been passionately loyal to his soil, while his music has scaled ethereal heights all over the planet. He has single-handedly paved the way for Indian vocal music to resonate across the world.

### **Humble Beginnings**

Born in a family of outstanding musicians over four generations, Pandit Jasraj was initiated into music by his revered father, Pandit Motiram, until the age of three, when his father passed away. Thereafter he underwent intensive tutelage under his elder brother and Guru, Pandit Maniram. Later, along his turbulent path of hard-earned maturity, he was guided by his spiritual Guru Maharaja Jaiwant Singhji Vaghela.

### **Unique Musical Attributes**

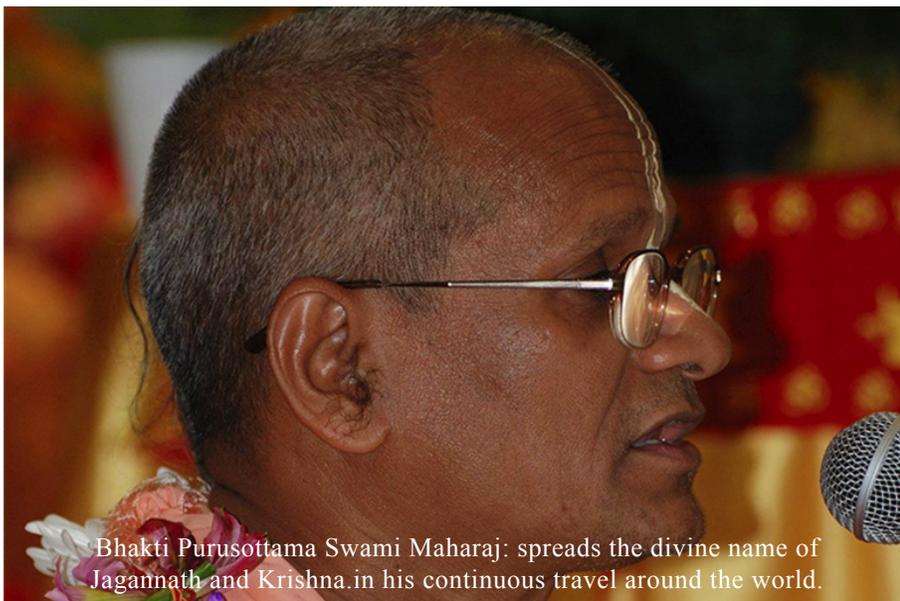
Blessed with a soulful and sonorous voice,

helped create a major spiritual revolution in classical music. Today, he sings these Sanskrit compositions to rapt audiences with divine inspiration.

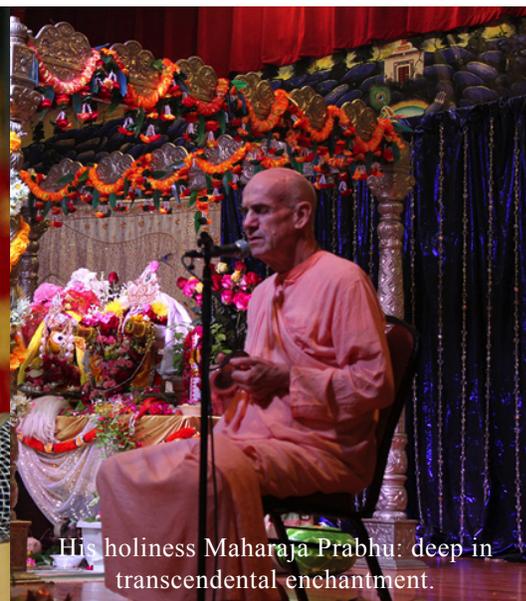
- His deep research in Haveli Sangeet (Pushti Margi Sangeet) has given us some rare and inspired compositions in this devotional genre.

### Honors and Titles

The list of Pandit Jasraj's honors, awards and felicitations ([www.panditjasraj.com](http://www.panditjasraj.com)) is so long and wide in scope that it defies enumeration. Today, as a musician, composer, Gharana torch-bearer and Guru, Pandit Jasraj is at such a pinnacle of artistry that mere association with him raises one's own awareness and esteem. Most would say that attempting to honor this living legend is, in itself, an honor.



Bhakti Purusottama Swami Maharaj: spreads the divine name of Jagannath and Krishna in his continuous travel around the world.



His holiness Maharaja Prabhu: deep in transcendental enchantment.



Maha Arati: An offering to the Lord by Houston religious and temple priests and leaders to bring universal brotherhood and impart the fragrance of eternal love.

# ମୋ ବଉଁଶ ବୁଢ଼ୁ ! ଦେବେନ୍ଦ୍ର ପୃଷ୍ଠି

କିମ୍ବଦନ୍ତୀ କହେ ରାଜା ଇନ୍ଦ୍ରଦ୍ୟୁମ୍ନ ଶ୍ରୀମନ୍ଦିର ତୋଳାଇ ତନ୍ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଶ୍ରୀଜଗନ୍ନାଥୀ ଚତୁର୍ଦ୍ଧା ମୂର୍ତ୍ତିଙ୍କୁ ସଂସ୍ଥାପିତ କରିଥିଲେ । ରାଜା ଇନ୍ଦ୍ରଦ୍ୟୁମ୍ନ ଓ ରାଣୀ ଗୁଣ୍ଡିଚା ପରମ ଭକ୍ତ ଥିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କ ଭକ୍ତିରେ ସନ୍ତୁଷ୍ଟ ହୋଇ ଭଗବାନ ତାଙ୍କୁ କିଛି ବର ଦେବାକୁ ଚାହଁଲେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ରାଜା ଇନ୍ଦ୍ରଦ୍ୟୁମ୍ନ ଈଶ୍ଵରଙ୍କ ବରଦାନ ସ୍ଵରୂପ ନିଜ ବଂଶ ଲୋପ ପାଇ ବୋଲି କହିଥିଲେ ।

ଆଜି ବି ଏହି କାହାଣୀ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଗାଁ ଗହଳର ଲୋକମାନେ ଜାଣନ୍ତି । ବୁଝନ୍ତି କି ନାହିଁ ତା’ ସମସ୍ତେ ଜାଣନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ ।

ଇନ୍ଦ୍ରଦ୍ୟୁମ୍ନ କାହିଁକି ନିଜ ବଂଶଲୋପ ହେବାର ବର ମାଗିଲେ ?

କିମ୍ବଦନ୍ତୀ ଅନୁସାରେ ଇନ୍ଦ୍ରଦ୍ୟୁମ୍ନ ଆଶଙ୍କା କରୁଥିଲେ ବଂଶ ବଢ଼ିଲେ ତାଙ୍କର ପୁଅଝିଅ, ନାତନାତୁଣୀମାନେ କହିବେ ‘ଏ ମନ୍ଦିର ମୋ ବାପା ବା ଜେଜେ ତୋଳାଇଥିଲେ, ଯା ଉପରେ ଆମର ଅଧିକାର ଅଛି’ । ରାଜା ଇନ୍ଦ୍ରଦ୍ୟୁମ୍ନ ତାହା ଚାହୁଁ ନଥିଲେ । ସେ ସେହି ମନ୍ଦିରକୁ ଭଗବାନ ଓ ଜନ ସାଧାରଣଙ୍କ ନିମନ୍ତେ ଉତ୍ସର୍ଗ କରିଥିଲେ । ମନ୍ଦିର ତୋଳାଇବାର ନାଁ ନେଇ ସେ ନିଜ ଭକ୍ତି ଓ ନମ୍ରତାକୁ ଜଳାଞ୍ଜଳି ଦେବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା କରିନଥିଲେ । ନାଁ ବା ଯଶ ବା ଖ୍ୟାତି ହେଉଛି ଗର୍ବ ଓ ଅହଂକାରର କଥା । ତାହା ଭକ୍ତି ଓ ସମର୍ପଣ ଭାବର ବିରୋଧୀ ।

କିନ୍ତୁ ହାୟ ! ଆଜି ସେ ରାଜା ନାହାନ୍ତି କି ସେ ସଂସ୍କାର ବି ନାହିଁ ! ଯେଉଁ ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ ରାଜା ଇନ୍ଦ୍ରଦ୍ୟୁମ୍ନ ଏତେ ବଡ଼ ଏକ ଦେଉଳ ନିର୍ମାଣ କରି ନିଜର ବା ନିଜ ବଂଶର ନାଁ ରଖିବାକୁ ଚାହଁଲେ ନାହିଁ, ସେଠି ଆଜି ଖଣ୍ଡେ ଶଙ୍ଖମର୍ଦ୍ଦର ପଥର ଖଞ୍ଜି ଲୋକେ ଲେଖି ଦେଉଛନ୍ତି, ଅମୃକ ଦାସ ପିତା ସମୁକ ଦାସ ସାକିନି ସମୁକ ଗାଁ...ଇତ୍ୟାଦି । ନାଁ ନେବାର କି ବିକଳ ପରମ୍ପରା !

ଏହି ପରମ୍ପରାର ପରିଣାମ ହେଉଛି ଶ୍ରୀମନ୍ଦିର ସ୍ଵତ୍ଵଲିପି ବା ଇଂରାଜୀରେ ରେକର୍ଡ଼ ଅଫ୍ ରାଇଟ୍ସ । ଏହି ରେକର୍ଡ଼ ଅଫ୍ ରାଇଟ୍ସକୁ ନେଇ ଏବେ ଶ୍ରୀମନ୍ଦିରରେ ଘଟି ଚାଲିଛି ନାନା ବିଭ୍ରାଟ । ମନ୍ଦିରରେ କାହାର ଅଧିକାର କେତେ, କିଏ କି ସେବା କରିବ, କିଏ କେତେ ପାଉଣା ପାଇବ, କେତେ ଖେଳ ବା ଖଞ୍ଜା ନେବ, କିଏ ଘଟର ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ କରିବ, କିଏ ବ୍ରହ୍ମ ସଂସ୍ଥାପନ କରିବ- ଏମିତି ଅନେକ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନକୁ ନେଇ ସେବାୟତଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଏବେ ଅନେକ ବିବାଦ । ଏହି ବିବାଦର ପରିଣତି ହେଉଛି ଚଳିତ ବର୍ଷର ବ୍ରହ୍ମ ବିଭ୍ରାଟ ଉପାଖ୍ୟାନ । ଏପରିକି ଶ୍ରୀମନ୍ଦିର ସ୍ଵତ୍ଵଲିପିରେ ପତି ମହାପାତ୍ରମାନେ ବ୍ରହ୍ମ ସଂସ୍ଥାପନ କରିବେ ବୋଲି ଉଲ୍ଲେଖଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ପାଉଣା ଓ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରଭାବଶାଳୀ ଦଳତାମାନେ ସେହି ସେବାକୁ ସେମାନଙ୍କଠାରୁ ହଟୁପ କରିନେଲେଣି । ଏବେ କେବଳ ଜଣେ ମାତ୍ର ପତି ମହାପାତ୍ରଙ୍କୁ ସୁଦର୍ଶନଙ୍କ ବ୍ରହ୍ମ ସଂସ୍ଥାପନ ଦାୟିତ୍ଵ ଦେଇ ଦାସ ମହାପାତ୍ର ଓ ସ୍ଵାଇଁ ମହାପାତ୍ରଙ୍କ ପରି ଦଳତାମାନେ ସେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକୁ ନିଜ ସଂପ୍ରଦାୟ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ବାଣ୍ଟି ନେଲେଣି ।

ନାମ ଓ ଧନ କମେଇବାର ଏଇ ପ୍ରତିଯୋଗିତା ଭିତରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଗଣମାଧ୍ୟମ ଓ ଶାସନ କଳ ମଧ୍ୟ ପଛରେ ପଡ଼ିନି । ପ୍ରତିଯୋଗିତା ଚାଲିଛି କେଉଁ ଠିକି ଚାନେଲ୍ ନିମ ଗଛ କଟା ଦୃଶ୍ୟର ସିଧା ପ୍ରସାରଣ କଲା, କିଏ ବନଯାଗ ଓ ଦାରୁ ଯାତ୍ରାର ଅଧିକ କଭରେଜ୍ କଲା, କେଉଁ ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ ସମୟରେ ଶାନ୍ତିଗୁଣ୍ଡାଳାର ସହିତ ନବ କଳେବର କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ସଂପନ୍ନ ହୋଇଥିଲା, କେଉଁ ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ ନବ କଳେବର ଭିତ୍ତିଭୂମି ନିର୍ମାଣ ପାଇଁ ସର୍ବାଧିକ ଖର୍ଚ୍ଚ କଲେ, ଏଥିରେ କିଏ କେତେ ଖାଇଲେ- ଏମିତି ଅନେକ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ଓ ପ୍ରସଙ୍ଗ ଉପରେ ଆଲୋଚନା ଚାଲିଛି ସମଗ୍ର ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ।

ରାଜା ଇନ୍ଦ୍ରଦ୍ୟୁମ୍ନ ଓ ରାଣୀ ଗୁଣ୍ଡିଚାଙ୍କ ସଂସ୍କାର, ସମର୍ପଣ ଓ ଭକ୍ତି ଭାବନା ଆଧାରିତ ଶ୍ରୀଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ସଂସ୍କୃତିରେ ଏବେ ବି ରହିଛି ସେଇ ନିଷ୍ଠା ଓ ନମ୍ରତାର କଥା । ଏବେ ବି ଗଜପତି ମହାରାଜା ରଥରେ ଛେରା ପହଁରା କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରୁଛନ୍ତି । ରାଜା ହୋଇ ଅଳିଆ ସଫା କରିବାର ଏହି ପରମ୍ପରା ପ୍ରଧାନମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ ନରେନ୍ଦ୍ର ମୋଦିଙ୍କ ‘ସ୍ଵଚ୍ଛ ଭାରତ ଅଭିଯାନ’ଠାରୁ ଅନେକ ପ୍ରାଚୀନ । ଆଜି ବି ଗଜପତି ମହାରାଜା ନିଜକୁ ଶ୍ରୀଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ସେବକ ଭାବେ ଗଣନା କରୁଛନ୍ତି । ତାଙ୍କ ପୂର୍ବ ପୁରୁଷ ଯଦିଓ ଏହି ମନ୍ଦିର ଓ ମନ୍ଦିର ସହିତ ସଂଯୁକ୍ତ ଯାବତ ପର୍ବପର୍ବାଣୀ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା କରିଥିଲେ କିନ୍ତୁ ସେ ନିଜକୁ ମନ୍ଦିରର ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠାତା ବା ମାଲିକ ଭାବେ କେବେ ବି ଉପସ୍ଥାପିତ କରି ନାହାନ୍ତି । ସେ ହେଉଛନ୍ତି ମନ୍ଦିରର ପ୍ରଥମ ସେବକ । ସେବା ପାଇବାକୁ ନୁହେଁ ସେବା କରିବାକୁ ସେ ନିଜର ପରମ ସୌଭାଗ୍ୟ ଭାବେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିଛନ୍ତି ।

‘କଳିଙ୍ଗୀଃ ସାହସିକାଃ’ର ଖ୍ୟାତି ସହିତ ସହିତ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଜାତିର ଏହି ସେବା ଓ ସମର୍ପଣ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଅନ୍ୟତ୍ର ବିରଳ । ୧୮୦୩ ମସିହାରୁ ଗଜପତିଙ୍କ ରାଜତ୍ଵ ଗଲାଣି । ୧୯୫୪ ମସିହାରୁ ଶ୍ରୀମନ୍ଦିର ପରିଚାଳନା ଦାୟିତ୍ଵ ବି ସରକାର ନେଲେଣି । ଶ୍ରୀମନ୍ଦିର ସେବାପୂଜାଦି ପାଇଁ ଆର୍ଥିକ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ସେ ଏବେ ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଅକ୍ଷମ । ରାଜ୍ୟ ଓ ରାଜତ୍ଵ ହରାଇବା ପରେ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନର ଗଜପତି ନିଜ ବଂଶ ପରମ୍ପରା ରକ୍ଷା କରିବାକୁ ଆର୍ଥିକ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ସେତେଟା ସମର୍ଥ ନୁହନ୍ତି । ତଥାପି ଶ୍ରୀଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ଗଜପତି ଦିବ୍ୟସିଂହ ଦେବଙ୍କ ନିଷ୍ଠା ଓ ଭକ୍ତି ତାଙ୍କୁ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଭିତରେ ବାନ୍ଧି ରଖିଛି । ଭାରତବର୍ଷର ଅନ୍ୟ ପୂର୍ବତନ ରାଜା ମହାରାଜାଙ୍କ ପରି ସେ ରାଜନୀତି ଓ ବ୍ୟବସାୟ ପ୍ରତି ଆଗ୍ରହ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରି ନାହାନ୍ତି କିମ୍ବା ଉଚ୍ଚଶିକ୍ଷା ଲାଭ କରିଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ପେସାଦାର କ୍ଷେତ୍ରକୁ ଓହ୍ଲାଇ ଆର୍ଥିକ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ଲାଭବାନ ହୋଇନାହାନ୍ତି ।

ଏହା ତାଙ୍କର ମହାନତା । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଜାତି ଏଇପରି ମହାନତାକୁ କାଳେକାଳେ ଉଚ୍ଚାସନ ଦେଇ ଆସିଛି ।

# Houston Rath Yatra: 2008 - 2014



Lord of the Universe at Houston Dham ready to visit His Garden Home on His Chariot, Nandighosha.



Pahandi, a royal ritual of Lord Jagannath.



Pahandi of Chakraraj Sudarshan and Lord Balabhadra.



Pahandi a unique stride of Devi Subhadra.



Chhapan Bhog an extravaganza of 56 lavish dishes for the Lord's offering



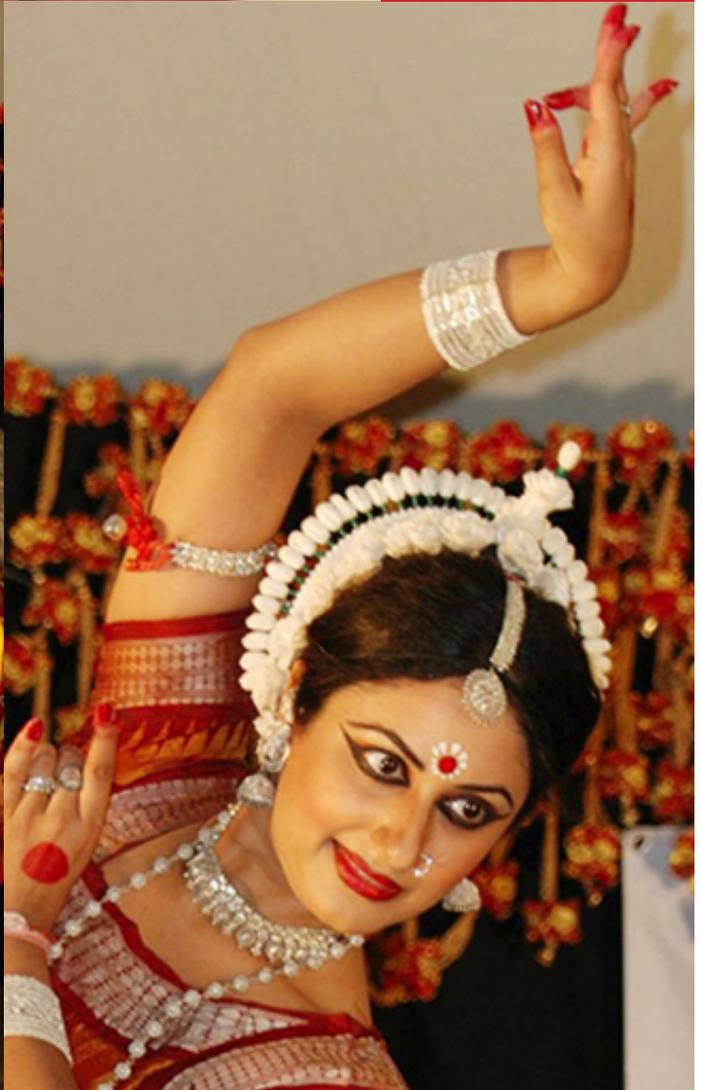
Guruji Chandrabhanu Satpathy



“Pangum Langhayte Girim”  
Enchanted devotion: Odissi by Guru Nityananda Das.



With her little footsteps, she is performing Odissi during Nabajaubana, the most favorite art form of Lord Jagannath. The cultural heritage with its unique attire brings a fresh smile on Lord's face.







**A handmade chariot by OCC volunteers waves  
the flag of universal brotherhood under one sky.**

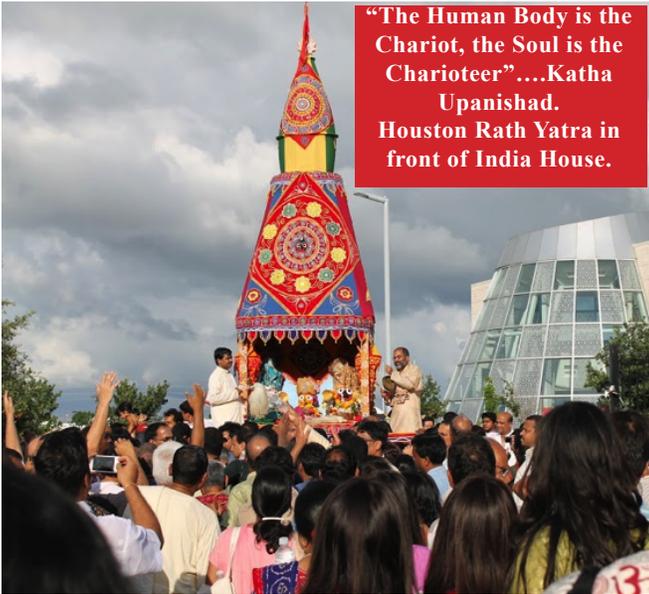
Dimensions: 14 ft X 14 ft, Height: 22-24 ft,  
Base Modules: 3, Wheels: 12



**Bhajan Samrat Anup Jalota: creates a vibration of Himalayan springs in the hearts of listeners.**



**Anuradha Paudwal: a legendary voice in spiritual and Bollywood play back singing.**



**“The Human Body is the Chariot, the Soul is the Charioteer”....Katha Upanishad. Houston Rath Yatra in front of India House.**



**Touching the chariot or hauling the ropes purifies all sins and leads to emancipation from cycle of birth and death.**

**Chhera Panhara (Chhida Panhara): a ceremonial sweeping for Lord Jagannath while standing by Mrs. & Mr. Vijoy Pallod. His Highness Gajapati, the king of Odisha performs this service in public to the Lord as an ardent servant of the Lord of the Universe.**





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