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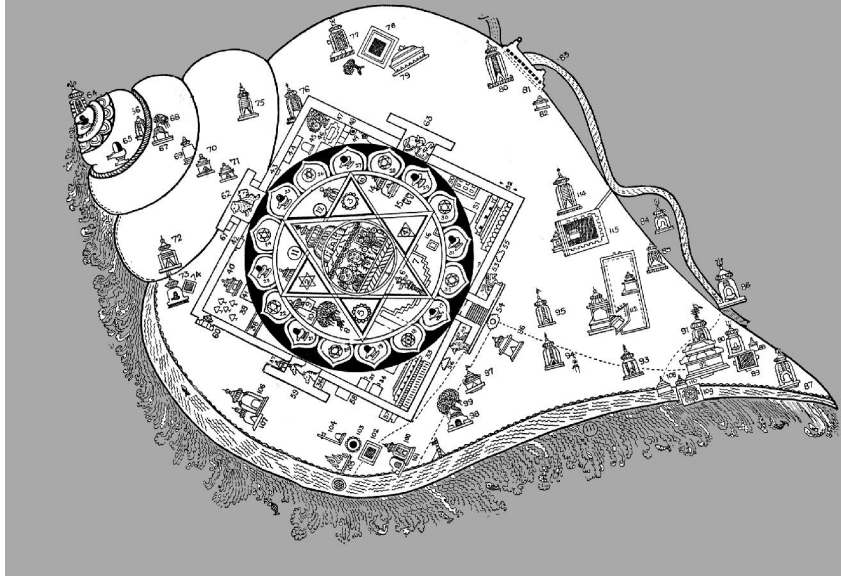
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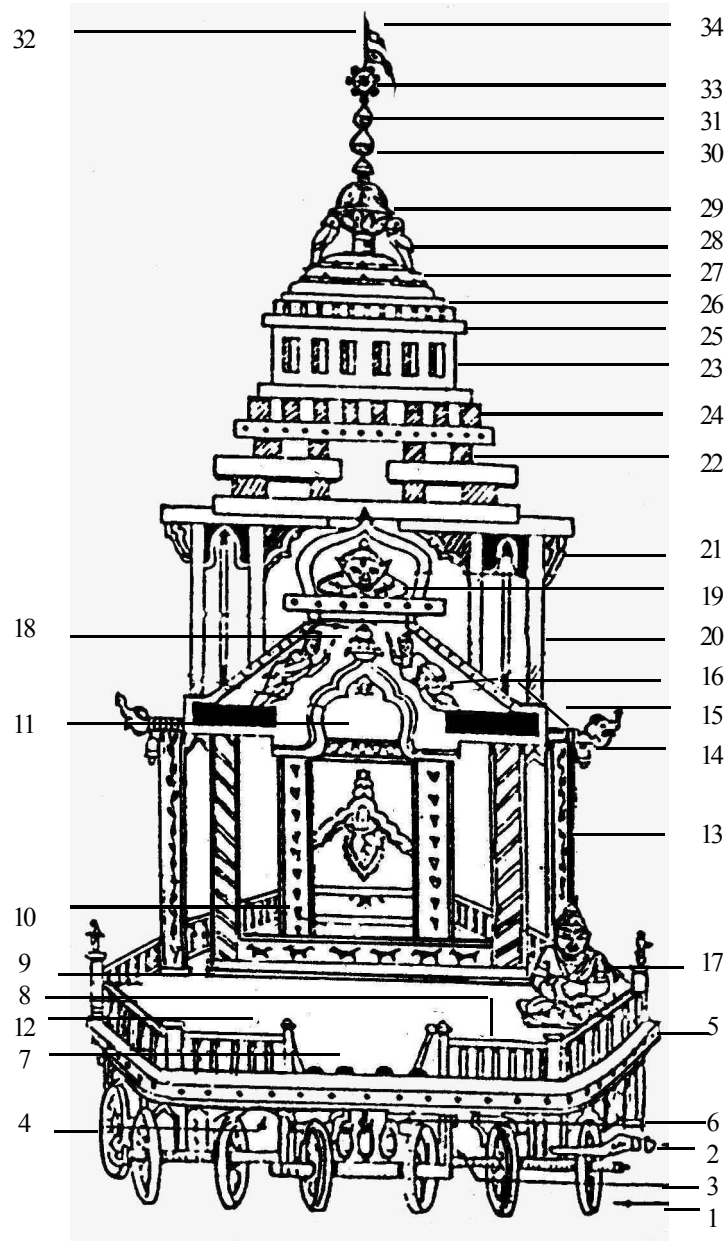
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## THE PARTS OF A CHARIOT



- (1) Chaka or the wheels (2) Dandia (3) Ara (4) Banki (5) Hansa Pata (6) Kani (7) Sankha-dwara (8) Jali (9) Gaipata (10) Singhasana (11) Kanak Mundai (12) Bhumi (13) Sola Nahaka (14) Makara Danda (15) Basanta (16) Duar Ghoda (17) Sarathi Pida (18) Kumbha Pati (19) Rahu Pati (20) Athanahaka (21) Banki (22) Pida (23) Rusi Pata (24) Danda (25) Para Bhadi (26) Khapuri (27) Pada (28) Olata Sua (29) Dadhi Nauti (30) Kalasa (31) Kasthi (32) Danda (33) Chakra (34) Copi Ketana or the flag.

## *Editor's Note*



Exhibiting a sweet blend of spiritual and material world, Odisha is unique in many ways. We have a simple populace, varied cultures, dialects, tribes, temples, mountain ranges, a long coastline and above all Lord Jagannath at Puri. According to legend, “Jara Savara unwittingly killed Srikrishna, mistaking his feet to be ears of a deer. While the mortal remains of Srikrishna were dedicated to the ocean, a few bits of them were treasured by the Jara Savara. On being remorseful Jara Savara began walking till he reached the shores of Kalinga and settled down in forest in an area subsequently known as Kantilo. The relics became the object of worship of his dynasty and Viswabasu was the direct descendant. Those who accept the legend as true believe that the relics are still there in ‘Navi Padma’ transferred from one image to another when the Navakalevara or the new embodiment of the deities takes place at an interval of 8, 11 and 19 years. We believe, Shree Jagannath like the transmigration of human soul from one body to another leaves His old sheath and enters the Navakalevara, the new body. Shree Jagannath, Shree Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Shree Sudarshan known as Chaturddhamurtis change Their bodies to new ones during the Navakalevara. The deities signify ‘Parambrahma’. Navakalevara is a process of making new idols replacing the old ones. So the body changes while the soul being indestructible remains usual.

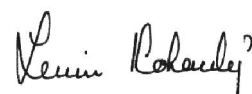
The wonderful coordination within the State Government led by popular Chief Minister Shri Naveen Patnaik and within the State Government, temple administration and the Sevayats has conducted the process of Navakalevara from Banajaga Yatra till Brahma Parivarttan in a sacred manner. The whole world as also all of us within our State eagerly await the Lord’s mingling with the masses during the Ratha Yatra. The Rath Yatra is a grand culmination of a series of celebrations spread over summer and monsoon months. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of bright fortnight of the month of Ashadha the deities come out of the temple in a spectacular procession called Pahandi. The deities adorned with Tahias are pulled in rhythmic moment to the beat of cymbals and chanting of the names of the holy Trinity in chorus by the devotees in frenzied ecstasy. After the deities are seated on Their respective chariots starts the Chhera Panhara by the Gajapati Maharaja. The most exciting part is the pulling of the chariots by lakhs of people along Bada Danda, the Grand Road. The chariots move slowly until they reach the Gundicha temple where the deities

rest for a night adorned with Dasavatar costumes. They enter the Gundicha temple in the next day morning in the usual Pahandi style and stay there for 7 days. On the 10<sup>th</sup> day of bright fortnight of Ashadha, the return of chariots or the Bahuda Yatra takes place.

The State Government has made significant progress in the sphere of fiscal management. Our State was considered to be debt stressed with the debt GSDP ratio as high as 51 % in 2002-03. Now it has come down to 14% of GSDP in 2014-15. The best part is our own revenues are sufficient to take care of committed expenditure like salaries, pensions, interest payment and debt repayment which is a rare achievement. The onset of the millennium's first such event provides a unique opportunity for the Government. The State is preparing elaborately to receive several million devotees during the ensuing Nabakalebara and Ratha Yatra. For the convenience of the pilgrims and tourists, Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Naveen Patnaik unveiled Malatipatapur Bus Terminal, Fly-over connecting Malatipatapur and Puri-Konark Marine Drive, State of Art Women and Child Care Centre, Fire Service Centre and for the first time in the country 22 automatic number plate recognition cameras have been installed. For the safety and security of the visitors, the CCTVs are now functional as well. All these besides the State Government's magnanimous effort to bring a smile on the face of everybody by implementing the flagship programmes like AAHAAR, Niramaya, Biju Expressway, Biju Pucca Ghar Yojana and many more such pro-people programmes. Much of the paraphernalia and rituals amidst which Shree Jagannath dwells are human. Therefore, the State Government has completed many projects for the welfare of the local people, visitors, tourists and pilgrims visiting our State during this period having a humane approach. The Jagannath Cult is, therefore, the foundation of Odia culture and tradition and Shree Jagannath is our supreme identity.

I would like to thank Hon'ble Chief Minister and the multiple team involved for the smooth coordination of the Navakalevara and the Ratha Yatra. My heart-felt gratitude to Hon'ble Minister, I & P.R., Chief Secretary, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, I & P.R., Director, I & P.R. and the Director, Odisha Govt. Press for having facilitated this wonderful publication. I would also like to thank the panel of esteemed writers and the readers of this priceless publication. I would like to appeal each and every Odia to also act as change makers and do their part by taking care of visitors who come all the ways at the call of Lord Jagannath.

*Jay Jagannath.*



Editor, Odisha Review



Linked with Ratha Yatra or Car Festival assuming new bodies by the deities is another festival which is known as Nabakalebara. In other words the unique ceremony of death and birth of the presiding wooden images of Sri Mandir at Puri is Nabakalebara.

According to Hindu religious belief and worship the ceremony of Nabakalebara is unique in many ways. It is the new embodiment of the wooden body divine of the deities which is a periodical renewal. It is not observed annually. Once in 12 years or more or in such years when Joda Ashadha comes the Nabakalebara rites are

observed. This means the deities cast off their old wooden frames and assume new wooden frames.

When the old wooden bodies are relinquished and the new wooden bodies are assumed with the transfer of Brahmapadartha into the new divine bodies then the order of the spiritual metamorphosis is completed to which we term it as Nabakalebara.

Generally varying from nine to nineteen years at long intervals such occasions arise as it is unavoidable subject to decay of Neem wood used for the construction of the images in such a span of time. In a ritualistic manner Nabakalebara is performed in the Sri Mandir when it comes in the

## Nabakalebara of Chaturddha Murttis

*Dr. Gourishankar Tripathy*



Hindu almanac though the function is an expensive affair.

In other words when it is felt absolutely necessary for changing the images of the deities, then the function of Nabakalebara is performed.

In short Nabakalebara means New Body. It is a compound word. Naba means New and Kalebara means Body. Apart from *Bhuvan Prakash* and *Vishnudharmottarapurana* which prescribed four types of idol that can be made for worship, *Srimad Bhagavat Mahapurana* prescribed eight types of images to be worshipped. (XI. 27/12)





They are stone, wood, metal, painting, drawing, sand pictures, psychic, and gem which are used for images. For a year the images of painting and drawing are worshipped. For about 12 years wooden images are worshipped, whereas metal for a thousand years and stone for ten thousand years.

Asadha month has been chosen to be the right time to change Daru taking it as Mala-Masa or (Leap month). But to choose the double Asadha month for Nabakalebara what is the reason behind ?

Many scholars of repute without mentioning any reason or without quoting any authority have termed Asadha as Purusottam Masa which is famous among the Vaisnavas. Generally Mala-Masa is known as Purusottam Masa which may occur in any month. This had nothing to do with Jagannath Purusottam or Asadha month only. For change of form there are some other reasons which are given below.

- 1) When the images of the triad had been carved and installed by Indradyumna it was the month of Asadha only and hence for this purpose Asadha is taken by tradition as per the legend. By one manuscript found from Krupasindhu Savara in Savar tribe from Namanegoan Panchyat by Shri Anirudha Das, this information is supported.
- 2) **SNANA PURNIMA:** On the full-moon day of bath of the triad along with Chakraraj Sudarshan over the bathing pedestal, on Jyestha Purnima the triad is said to suffer from fever after the bath. Then Lords undertake treatment from the doctor as a result of which the gods remain in the *anasara*. Lords get back their good health after 15 days and people have their *navajauvan* Darshan which is called rejuvenation.

For the process of change of the form or frame naturally more time is required with the Mala-masa of Asadha for new painting and repair etc. for the outer sheath of the frame. There are two aspects in this process of change. One is ritual and the other is spiritual.

(a) **RITUAL:** For the change of form there are a lot of formalities observed one after the other.

**First:** Search of Daru which is very very important.

**Second:** For the journey the bright tenth day of Chaitra is chosen at least sixty five days before the festival of bath. Before the day of *snana*, the aim is to bring the required Daru or log of wood.

As a token of recognition of their work the Daita as Visvvasu Pati Mohapatra as Vidyapati receive the blessings and garland of the Lord along with the sari of Jagannath from the temple administration.

**Third:** In this case Gajapati is the Real *kartta*. Of this work he is Yajamana. He used to delegate the charge of his work through the Rajguru to Brahmans and to the Sevakas.

**Fourth:** After the formation of delegation for the work the group shall remain in Jagannath Vallava Matha which is a monastery of Puri.

**Fifth:** Then the group shall proceed to Kakatpur about fifty miles away from Puri where Goddess Mangala is the presiding deity.

**Sixth:** In order to get information regarding the Daru for the deities, they offer Mahaprasad and Sari of Sri Jagannath to Goddess Mangala.

**Seventh:** Remaining at Deuli Matha at Kakatpur they will have their *Japa* of *Swapnavati* Mantra to get an indication of Daru in their dream.



Durga Sahasranaam shall be read with austerity by the delegation.

**Spiritual :** The transmigration of soul from one body to the other is practised here in Nabakalebara as said in Bhagabat Geeta. When an image is broken or destroyed another new image is usually installed by discarding the old one in the orthodox Hindu tradition as the destroyed image is considered unworthy for worship.

For the continuity to be maintained Nabakalebara is an extra-ordinary ceremony where *Brahma Padartha* from the old frame is transferred to the new image and there is no such parallel ceremony elsewhere in the world. In the wake of natural calamity deliberate destruction or natural decay of enshrined image, Nabakalebara ceremony started after a discussion by the pandits and astrologers of repute. The choice of wooden icon is subject to decay and natural deterioration where the necessity of renewal is inherent.

The materials used for an icon could be clay, metal, stone, wood, gems, paintings etc. In accordance with 'Hayasirsa Samhita' seven materials can be used for making an image. They are clay, wood, iron, gem, stone, sandal paste and flowers etc.

For the preparation of images there are suggestions in different ways in different texts.

The use of Kasta or Daru is recommended by the texts like *sattavata Samhita*, *Isva Samhita* and *Padma Samhita* etc. for the preparation of images.

For the attainment of wisdom, peace and good luck wooden image shall assure as proclaimed by *Padma Samhita*. In accordance with *skanda Purana*, Darubrahma shall remove all sorrows by bestowing eternal bliss.

It is a subject of much speculation for the origin of the worship of the wooden image of the triad at Puri and the scholars differ about the time as to when it had been decided and started. There is no specific evidence to speak about the time of worship of the wooden image in Srimandir.

As per the tradition recorded in "*Shankar Vijay Makaranda*" during the visit of Adi Sankarcharya (788 A.D.-820) to Puri he defeated the Buddhists and established *darumurti* of Sri Jagannath. In connection with the donation of one malakara Narsimha temple inscription in Puri proves the existence of trinity in the 12th century during the time of Chodaganga Deva and his son Kamarnava. These icons are probably wood.

Indradyumna legend has been referred to in Brahma Puran and Skanda Puran etc. in this connection. Wherein it is affirmed that in the first phase the deity was worshipped in the form of stone image as Nilamadhava. Later on Daru Murti was installed. As the figure resembles the present wooden image of Jagannath the structural evidence of the Konark temple of 13th Century suggests that wooden icon of Jagannath was prevalent. It clearly proves the worship of the wooden icon of Jagannath at Puri from the interpretation of "yad daru ..." as the wooden image of the deity in the Rig-Veda and the literary evidence of the *Purushottam mahatmya* of *Skanda Puran*.

Since their first consecration the worship of wooden images at Puri apparently suggests the possibility of periodical renewal for which there is no textual evidence to prove the practice of the Nabakalebara ceremony. In several sources the famous Car festival is mentioned but there is no reference of Nabakalebara prior to 15th/16th Century.



The specific mention of Nabakalebara has not been mentioned in *Skanda Purana* eventhough names of all principal festivals are there in the *Purushottam Mahatmya*. But the practice of covering wooden image with cloth resin etc. with surface painted with colours is referred to in the text. For fresh decoration, since then, every year the old covers are replaced by new ones. This tradition continues at present. The wooden frames are repainted. Final touches are given to the eyes which is called Netrotsava. For the pilgrims to see the new youthful form of the triad, the day prior to Ratha Jatra is reserved.

In 16th Century A.D. the Madala Panji was compiled. It is the palm leaf chronicle of the temple. According to Madala Panji, on the eve of invasion of the so called Raktavahu the deities of Sri Mandir at Puri were removed to Sonepur secretly and kept concealed underground. The images were considerably damaged as a result of that. Yayati Kesari became surprised at the condition of the images. He was then the king of ORISSA. He arranged to construct the new images with the help of Daitas and Pati Mahaputra etc. of the Lords. During the time of this Kesari king, it seems to suggest that Nabakalebara ceremony was held.

For the earlier period the accounts of Madala Panji are generally based on traditions only. Hence these cannot be accepted as historical facts until corroborative evidences come to lime-light. The context and circumstances of the rite of Nabakalebara can be indicated by such tradition only. The occasion for replacement and renewal arises only after the destruction and damage of the images.

Till 1568 Orissa remained independent. By Muslim rulers Orissa was attacked at times during the Gang-Gajapati period (1078 A.D. - 1540 A.D.) but such invasions were without much

consequences because Orissa was very much powerful.

During his Orissa campaign in A.D. 1361 Firuz Shah Tughluq destroyed the temple of Jagannath along with other stone images as per the Muslim chronicles. But that temple was at Varanasi Katak. The great and grand temple of Sri Jagannath at Puri was completely unaffected as per the scholars. Hence the worship continued without any break.

There is no direct reference to the practice of Nabakalebara in the medieval Odia literature. There is a story in the *Mahabharat* of Sarala Das in Odia. After the *Mahaprayan* of Sri Krishna by the arrow of Jara Savara his body was thrown into the sea. In the form of a wooden log, the same appeared at Puri sea coast ultimately. It was the *Pinda* of Sri Krishna. According to the text, it was 21 *dandas* in height and 5 *dandas* in breadth. By the Savara and Brahmin, the Daru was brought to the temple. Three images were made from the same log of wood. Though no specific reference reflects the contemporary practice of making of the images.

Depending upon the necessity hence it cannot be rejected outright the theory of making wooden images from time to time.

When the original frame of Jagannath was destroyed by Kalapahada in 1568, Nabakalebara ceremony was thought of which is probable. In Odia and Persian chronicles the history of this turbulent period is recorded.

In accordance with Madala Panji first the images were renewed at Kujanga. Then it was renewed at Khurdha the capital of Ramachandra Dev and then finally at Puri in 1590 A.D. around. For this Ramachandra Dev was called the second Indradyumna.

The *Brahma Padartha* received by Bisar Mohanty was placed in the new images brought



from old images in order to establish the continuity of the cult.

In his *Nityakarma Pradip* Sri Narasimha Vijapei (1525 – 1580 A.D) expressly refers to the change of images. As to the religious merit of the worship of the new images at Puri in place of old images established by Indradyumna in the text doubt is raised.

Hence he who builds a temple or makes an image earns permanent fame has been mentioned in *Brahma Puran* clearly. That Vishnu will never leave Purushottam even if His temple and image are broken Indradyumna has been told clearly. Hence in the change of image special *punya* is obtained in Purusottam Kshetra. This type of assurance is given by the Lord Jagannath in no other Kshetra except Puri to his Sevakas.

For the renewal of the triad Akbar's policy of religious toleration and liberal attitude to the Hindus and Hindu Rajas provided the required climate.

Orissa passed under the Nawabs of Bengal after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 though Orissa was a province of the Mughal empire since 1607 with a Muslim Subahdar at Cuttack. Fabulous wealth of the Jagannath temple attracted the greed of the Muslim rulers and Hindu adventurers alike to attack the temple for economic gains during this critical period. Necessitating renewal of the images on return to the grand temple, often the deities were removed to safer places.

To consolidate the cult the establishment of Maratha rule in Orissa in 1751 provided opportunities of course. In order to revamp the administrative system of the temple attempts were made after the British conquest of Orissa in 1803. In 1809, 1828, 1855, 1874 and 1893



Nabakalebara was held as per the British records and newspaper reports.

A large number of pilgrims came to Puri in 1893 to witness the Car festival according to Utkal Dipika on account of Nabakalebara. There was double Asadha in that year. As the Maharani of Puri did not agree to this, Nabakalebara of the triad did not take place according to the time honoured custom which was actually to be performed.

There was partial Nabakalebara in place of full scale Nabakalebara. This involved the replacement of the silk cover and not the old Darus which were retained as before.

Due to the occurrence of *malamasa* in the month of Ashadha Nabakalebara ceremony was held in 1912. Utkal Dipika reported the Nabakalebara *vidhi* of this year observed by Daitas.

In 1931, 1950, 1969, 1977, 1996 Nabakalebara ceremony was held with pomp and splendour.

Four images of the temple are completely replaced by new ones in this ceremony. The old images are not cremated but buried in Koili Baikuntha in the premises of the Jagannath temple. Also the Sarathis, the horses and *Parsvadebatas* of the old chariots were buried. New ones are made for use in the new wooden chariots.

For the deities the Darus are to be chosen carefully. Out of fresh and new Darus the images that are made not to be stored for the next Nabakalebara.

Daitas, Patimohapatra, Brahmin priests have important and significant role in the entire process of Nabakalebara. With silk cloth cover it has become a long standing tradition not to see the Daru as the iconography of the images largely



remain unchanged. In the rites of Nabakalebara the worship of Narsimha and use of Narasimha Mantra indicate the intimacy of Sri Jagannath with Sri Narasimha.

The role of Narsimha in the Nabakalebara ceremony is appropriate as Sri Narsimha emerged from the Stambha.

The identity between Sri Jagannath and Sri Narsimha is further emphasized by the fact that Brahmins advised Indradyumna to worship Jagannath with the mantra-*raja-Narasimha-Mantra* according to the scholars like G.C. Tripathy, H. Kulke, and A. Eschmann.

“There has never been nor will ever be” a mantra-*raja* more effective than this.

For making the divine statues of the grand temple at Puri Neem wood is preferred to any other wood. *Bhabisy Puran* indicates a definite spiritual reasoning in this regard describing the neem-wood which is considered the best and most auspicious wooden material for structuring the statues of the Lords in general.

Secondly from the scientific point of view, neem wood is highly durable and it is not easily and ordinarily destructible due to attack of insects. Darus for the divine deities are therefore collected from suitable neem trees in accordance with the spiritual exposition. According to *silpa sastra* there should be definite divine marks and divine symbols as laid down on the neem trees selected for the purpose. With specific scriptural specification the neem trees should be located at proper places.

Many other historical or mythical clues are unfolded through the ceremony of Nabakalebara apart from the other aspects mentioned above. This occasion takes us to the customs of the past. In connection with the daily, occasional and annual rituals the tribal Savaras were performing all the sacred activities through



this ceremonial practice. The most authentic testimonies of the tribal origins of the deities are the predominant roles of the Daita-patis in the ceremony of Nabakalebara.

As one of their family members and the guardians how the simple and faithful tribals were treating Lord Jagannath or Nila Madhab is clearly known through their simplicity. From the later rites of the Hindus in the ritual performance the non-Aryan tradition and from the Aryan superimposition as well as the forest-based rites have been clearly bisected through this ceremony. Its primitive design and form as well as Daru, the most important may be, as the wooden image is a very common raw material of the images of the deities along with the stone image of the tribals.

For generations the stone images are maintained whereas the wooden images are mostly replaced at regular intervals. A new wooden image is ceremonially made and selected usually on the occasion of the annual ceremony. Such practices of replacement are prevailing in case of wooden images or poles among the Kandhas till today.

Use of wooden images or pillars for the deities are still found in practice among the Saora and many other tribal societies also.

It is confirmed from the ethnographic information that the use of wooden images or pillars is comparatively more primitive practice than that of stone. About the essential features of Sri Jagannath cult existing in the initial phase in the past, the ceremony of Nabakalebara reminds us all on the whole.

To get into the holistic and elaborate practice of the Nabakalebara ceremony the following points may be discussed.

- (a) Role of Shakti cult centering round goddess Mangala at Kakatpur which is a tribal tradition.



- (b) Rites in the temple and rites of passage with a touch of tribal tradition.
- (c) Rites in the forest which is also a tribal tradition.
- (d) Rites in the temple as per Aryan tradition.
- (e) Rites in the temple with associated Sevayats as Aryan and tribal tradition.

To search for Daru divine permission or Ajnamala is to be taken from the Lords where Sevayats are involved in the temple.

Outside the temple the following rites are to be observed.

1. To ascertain the location of Darus the party is to go to Goddess Mangala at kakatpur.
2. Location and character of the Darus are to be ascertained.
3. To the destined sites of sacred trees to go in a procession.
4. Near the sacred trees to perform the fire sacrifice.
5. The sacred trees are to be felled down and subsequently to be processed so as to make them the required holy logs.
6. For the transportation of the sacred Darus to the temple premises to arrange the wooden carts.

**Inside the Temple the following rites are to be observed :**

- 1) For making wooden images sculptural principles are to be followed.
- 2) The images on Daru are to be carved.
- 3) There will be consecration of the images for which the following points are to be taken care of.
  - a. Preparation, b. Abhisek, c. Nyasa, d. Fire Sacrifice, etc. *Brahma padartha*

is to be inserted into the new frames from the old frames.

- 4) Old images are to be taken from the throne to Koili Baikuntha.
  - a. There are dual principles which are to be observed.
    - i) Purity and pollution, ii) auspicious and inauspicious, iii) sacred and profane
  - b. Mortuary rites which are otherwise known as rites of passage.
  - c. Old images are to be buried.
  - d. Purificatory bath of the Deities for ritual impurity.
  - e. There will be final touch in paintings and wrapping of clothes.

**Then the Recognition of Tribal Tradition "Anasara"**

At the outset there is a primary need to know about the necessity of such a great and grand ceremony while enquiring about the facts and events regarding Navakalebara. The ceremony indicates the periodical replacement or renewal of wooden images as highlighted earlier as it is a ceremony of new embodiment or Navakalebara of the Lords of the Sri Mandira at Puri.

Sri Aniruddha Dash has discussed as per *Bhuvan Prakash* which is a noted *silpa- sashtra* about four types of images 1) painted images, 2) images made of wood, 3) images made of metals, 4) and images made of stone.

Once in a year the painted type of images are repainted or renewed according to *Silpa Sashtra*. Once in every 12th year the wooden images are to be replaced. At an interval of one thousand years the metal images are to be renewed. Once in every ten thousand years the



stone images are to be renewed similarly. Every month the clay images are also said to be replaced.

The first two types of renewal are applicable in case of the four images of Sri Mandir at Puri as the images are made of wood primarily and they are also painted. Every year the painting is carefully renewed whereas the replacement of wooden images are done at an interval of some years. By astronomical and astrological considerations this is to be specially determined.

### Considerations based on Astronomy

Some astronomical and astrological considerations are connected with the reasons of replacement or renewal of the images. As per the temple tradition when a leap month comes in the month of Asadha it becomes easy and convenient to perform Navakalebara ceremony. This is done usually either in 12th or 19th year, sometimes it falls in 9th year also. On some practical reasons this tradition is based. During the leap month or extra Asadha month three fortnights more are available for the construction of new images. On the occasion of Car festival, their consecration, covering of patta cloth as well as painting are to be completed before the temple reopens.

Following the *Mahasnana Purnima* the great bathing ceremony on the full moon day the deities are taken to *Anavasara Pindi*. For the devotees the sanctum remains closed. Annual repairs as well as repainting of the images are completed during this period. The deities are said to be sick during *Anavasara*.

For Navakalebar ceremony all the extra months are not selected. This is decided usually in the 12th or 19th year keeping in view the condition of the images. On astronomical calculation such practical issues and views are based.

To take note of astronomical calculations the Hindu almanac is unique. This includes thirteen months in a year. It is based on scientific calculations although it is associated with religion for practical purposes.

For the months or years we have two types of calculations. One is lunar month and the other is solar and there are years corresponding to each of them.

As a result of difference between the solar year and lunar year the situation of leap month emerges. One solar year includes 365 days and 6 hours whereas the lunar year completes 354 days and 9 hours. A difference of 11 days occurs as a result deducting 3 hours. The difference becomes equivalent to a lunar month after 32-33 months as a result. This extra month is known as leap month astronomically. In Odia this month is known as *Adhi-Masa* or *Mala-Masa*.

Either from Purnima to Purnima or from *Amabasya* to *Amabasya* the days are to be calculated and connected in this respect.

1. The particular months will be called leap month or *Adhi-Masa* if in any lunar month there will be no occurrence of *Sankranti* of the sun having the movement from one zodiac sign to another.
2. Then the first lunar months of both the new moon days is called *Adhi-Masa* and the other one is called a *Suddha-Masa* (which is pure and auspicious) if in any solar month, two new moon days occur.

From Chaitra (March-April) to Bhadraba (Aug-Sept) generally leap month occurs which is really very significant to note.

According to Aniruddha Dash a few more additional information are found centering round the astronomical calculations. As per the



Barhaspatya reckoning of years the dual ASADHA fell invariably within the intervals of 8, 11, and 19 years the Indian ephemeris between the years 1000 to 1800 A.D. are to be scrutinized centering round “Indian Chronology”. There was only one occasion during this long period of 800 years when the interval was 27 years. For 19 years 24 occasions, 18 occasions for 8 years and 16 occasions for 11 years.

We may take the average of  $12 \frac{2}{3}$  years as the interval period of the Nabakalevara ceremony in consideration of the aforesaid differences. Between 1714 and 1874 dual Asadha occurred ten times out of which the interval periods were 8 years and 11 years twice only. As an interval period of 19 years dual Asadha occurred for the remaining 8 times. As per the calculation of Dr. Sewell the dual Asadha occurred in 1714, 1733, 1744, 1752, 1771, 1790, 1809, 1828, 1836, 1856 and 1874 A.D. From the old records no details regarding Navakalebara ceremony are known during the above mentioned periods except on a few occasions.

### Temple Rituals

After some ritual processes in the temple the *sewayatas* go in a party to search for the sacred log or Daru in the forest considering the astronomical calculations and conditions of the wooden images of the deities when Navakalevara ceremony is finalized and officially declared. For fetching the sacred “Darus” the temple *Sewayatas* start on the 10th day of the bright fortnight of Chaitra (March-April) which is known as BANAYAGA YATRA for 65 days (about two months) and return before Snana Yatra the great bathing ceremony of the lords, scheduled on the full moon day of Jyestha (May-June)

About 50 members of Daitas from the original tribal *Sewayats* of the Lords enter the temple on the 10th day of the bright fortnight of

Chaitra after the noon rituals and wait outside the sanctum. [According to G.C. Tripathy all 28 Daitas in between morning and noon rituals]

Pati Mohapatra after entering the sanctum would offer Pooja to the deities and seek divine permission for Navakalevara ceremony in order to search and fetch the sacred log.

Pati Mohapatra collects four garlands after the prayer specially prepared for the four deities that day by the gardener and offered by the Pooja Pandas in the morning rituals to the deities.

These garlands are known as “Ajna Mala” which are the garlands of divine authorization.

For himself he keeps the garland of “Sudarshan” and offers the other three garlands to the three leaders of the Daitas of Daru searching parties as follows.

1. BADA-BADA-DAITAS having family title DASA MOHAPATRA for the deity BALABHADRA
2. MAJHI-BADADAITAS having family title “DASA MOHAPATRA” for Subhadra.
3. Mahaprabhu nka DAITA having family title Swain Mohapatra for the deity Sri Jagannath.

Another Sevaka Bhittarachha Mohapatra presents three silken sarees about 6 meters long woven with the verses of Gita Govinda to the Daita chiefs after the Ajnamala is offered. Small pieces of sarees about 2 meters long are offered to other Daitas who are accompanied with the chief. On forehead of each member of the party Mekapa a temple Sevaka applies sandal wood paste and vermilion. On the heads of Deula Karan and Tadhau Karan





Bitarachhu Mohapatra ties the sarees. Behera Khuntias are also offered saree at the Jay-Vijaya gate of the temple.

To Padiya Karan, 4 Visvakarmas and the Lenka cotton sarees are presented.

The team comes out in a procession amidst the royal umbrella, the music of conches, trumpets, gongs etc. to the place of the Gajapati Raja after receiving the Ajnamala. The team is greeted by the Raja. Two plates containing coconuts, arecanuts, gold, coloured thread and rice to the Rajaguru are offered by the king.

Rajaguru keeps one for himself out of the two plates received and the other one is presented to the leader of the Daitas by Rajaguru.

The whole process is called “GUA TEKIBA”. For starting the Daru-searching activity, this process symbolizes formal order or direction which has been interpreted as an auspicious occasion for sacred Daru collection.

For Jagannath Ballav Matha the team starts accompanied by Rajaguru. For final preparation the team stays there for a day and a half. For goddess Ramachandi the party sets out in the mid-night or in the early morning by foot for a Darshan of the Devi. To take rest they come out to the dancing hall of Konark temple. Only beneath the shade of a tree they are restricted to take rest on the way. Once a day the party has to take “Habisanna” during the expedition and fruits only they can take if necessary.

The expedition party proceeds for goddess Mangala at Kakatpur by walking on bare foot. In the compound of Deuli Matha the party stays which belongs to Ramanuja Vaisnavas maintained by Emar Matha at Puri. Under the trees the members of party sleep praying to Lord Jagannath. Lord Sudarshan is installed in the Matha soon after their arrival. To inform about



the party messengers are sent to the temple of the Goddess Mangala in advance.

As Vanayaga yatra usually the expedition of the party is known. This may be from the time immemorial as a result of which the name is coined as Vanayaga Yatra party as this is meant to search for the Daru from the forest.

To invite and receive Sudarshana the Vana Yatra party consisting of the members of the trustee board come forward in a procession with the Agnyamala of Goddess Mangala as soon as they get the information.

Near the throne of Mangala Lord Sudarshan is installed. After reaching the temple the priests of Mangala temple and the Daitas perform “Majana” before the goddess and Mahaprasad of Sri Jagannath is offered to Devi along with new sarees, bangles and vermilion brought by the Vanayatra party. On the Mangala temple a flag is fixed by the party. To inform the location of the Darus the party prays to Goddess Mangala.

According to Sri G.C. Tripathy, the Acharya Brahmins and Pati Mohapatra shall remain in the Mangala temple. Other members of the party come back to Deuli Matha. The aforesaid members of the party will sleep in the Mangala temple. About the location of the Darus Mangala instructs them in the dream as it is said. The verses of “Swapnavati” would be muttered 108 times by Pati Mohapatra, Acharya and Rajguru before they go to bed in order to get instruction and direction from Goddess Mangala, who is worshipped regularly if no instruction is received within three days with devotion, would pray to goddess Mangala deeply.

First of all the Daru of the Lord Sudarshan is collected after receiving the instruction in dream from the goddess Mangala serially it is further



followed to collect the Daru for Subhadra, Lord Balabhadra and lastly for Sri Jagannath. With the cult of Jagannath it is inferred that Goddess Mangala is intimately connected which is known from the above practices.

In almost all rites and rituals of Sri Jagannath His Savar servants predominate. Their habitation sites are usually called as Savarpallis when the Daitas along with the Sevayats stay at Deuli matha. Since long this practice might have been developed. The leading role might have been taken by the Savars in the collection of Darus usually from the forest situated near the habitation sites of their Savar brothers.

According to A.Dash Mangala is equally connected with the tribals harijans etc. with higher caste of people of Orissa. For the Odia traders or sailors she is considered to be the presiding deity as she is believed to stay on the “Manga” of the boat. Hence she is said to be as Mangala. To propitiate Her during crisis Savaras have been mentioned in the myths of Mangala Oshas. For the Savaras and equally for the Harijans it is believed that she is the presiding deity in this context. In and around the forest Mangala must have been propitiated in most of the Savarpallis.

In day today practice or in all crisis Mangala must have been worshipped and propitiated by the Savars. On this basis the solution is very clear. When the *daitas* are in need of suitable Darus for the Lords of Puri temple they must be propitiating their forest deity Mangala for help as per their indigenous practice. Hence Daru expedition is rightly known as “Vanayaga Yatra”.

We find certain clues on the matter. In the past Mangala shrine might have been located near Savarpallis or villages in the thick jungle area and she might have been worshipped in a crude form.

The following characteristic features and locations of Darus may be presented which are a collection of Tripathy (1978), Dash (1968), Mishra (1969) and Khuntia (1969).

### General Characteristics

1. Tree – Nim
2. Colour – Dark or dark red
3. Trunk – a. It should be straight having height of 7 to 12 cubits.  
b. It should have four main branches.
4. i. The tree should be by the side of a river or pond.  
ii. Must be standing on the crossing of three paths.  
iii. By three Mountains it should be surrounded.  
iv. It should be surrounded by trees like Bilva, Sahada and Barun.  
v. Nearby there should be a cremation ground.  
vi. A shiva temple should be there nearby.  
vii. In the neighbourhood there should be some hermitage.  
viii. It should be away from human settlement.  
ix. In a swampy place it should not stand.
5. Branches and Body
  - i. It should be free from parasitic plants and creepers.
  - ii. Nests of birds should not be there.
  - iii. Must not have been struck by lightning or partially broken by storm.
6. Other Marks
  - a. There should be an ant hill near the tree.
  - b. The snakes must be living around and guarding the tree.



7. Essential Marks : The trunk of Neem tree should have at least two of the four signs of weapons of Vishnu namely Sankha and Chakra.

Features are found to be interrelated very much mentioned above on analysis. For the image making and for the maintenance of the sanctity and sacredness of the tree all the features must have been developed looking at the practical need, suitability and advantage factors included in the tradition of Nabakalevara. For Navakalebara it is considered as a sacred tree the moment someone discovers the marks or weapons of Vishnu on the Neem tree. By fixing a red flag on the tree people with all devotion maintain its sanctity and the local devotees make it free from all human interference. Location of the ant hill also gives it a sacred character. The tree is free from any birds nest on its branches with the presence of the snake hole on the ant hill.

It may refer to the maturity of the tree and the longevity of the logs for the features like dark colour without any inconvenience the straight trunk is mostly meant for the smooth image making. As a supporting condition the location of a river or pond side may be taken along with where the tree can grow well smooth and straight. For taking care of the sanctity of the tree frequent vigilance of the local people and the location of the crossing paths may be suitable. To refrain it from human interference presence of a cremation ground and mountains on three sides may be considered as supporting features. As protective function from all three sides the mountain barriers may also render to provide a natural surrounding to it where the tree is also approachable for the purpose of Daru collection from the fourth side. It may be added to the sacred characters of the immediate environment of the Neem tree with the surrounding of the sacred trees like Bilva, Sahada

and Barun that helps to maintain its sanctity by the people far and near. In a similar manner the location of a shiva temple nearby may also be interpreted. Such Neem trees are worshipped by the people as a result of which the trees are taken care of most often. To be free from parasitic plants and creepers such features may also help.

Such plants and creepers to grow under it may also be prevented by the location of the ant hill. To maintain all such activities the location of a hermitage in the neighbourhood is required if there is. To get a straight and smooth log without any crack the damage caused by storm or lightening are usually taken into consideration which should be more suitable for image making.

Amidst the performance of elaborate rituals on the occasion of Nabakalevara it may be interpreted that swampy location may not help the tree to grow well which may create a very unhealthy surrounding to collect suitable and good Daru for image making.

There are specific features for each deity besides the general features. As per the specific marks sign and colour of each deity on them these neem trees are specifically considered for the four deities.

### **SPECIFIC CHARACTER FEATURES**

Daru of Balabhadra:

- Colour of the bark should be white or light brown.
- There should be seven branches.
- Plough & pestle sign / mark.
- Upper branches must be looking like the hood of a cobra – specific feature.

Daru of Subhadra:

- Colour of the bark should be yellowish.
- There should be five branches.



- c. Lotus with five petals – sign / mark
- d. No specific feature

Daru of Sudarshan:

- a. Colour should be reddish
- b. There should be three branches.
- c. Chakra – sign
- d. No specific feature

Daru of Jagannath:

- a. Colour of the bark should be black or dark.
- b. No specific feature
- c. Sankha and Chakra – sign / mark
- d. Features are followed very strictly.

A few interesting facts are to be analysed and explored specifically from the location of Darus of the deities taking into the specific sites of the Darus in the past few Navakalebara ceremonies of 1912, 1931, 1950, 1969, 1977 and 1996.

It is observed from the above mentioned years that almost all sites of Darus either belong to Puri or Cuttack district. Hence one may ask from common sense how and why the Darus of the deities are confined to these two districts only. About the location of Darus the instruction comes from the Goddess Mangala in dream as it is said. If this is a fact how can it be confined only to these two districts mentioned above so far as the location of Darus is concerned. This is really something interesting to note in this regard. There are neem trees in other districts of Odisha also. Goddess Mangala seems to be pleased to the aforesaid two districts only.

The Daitas must be visiting to their forefather's Sabarapallis which must have been a forest clad region to find out suitable Darus. The

concept of a sacred geography enters into discussion in this connection. Either Prachi valley or Ratnachira valley region comes under broadly for all the past sites of the Darus of the deities.

In respect of religious beliefs and practices these areas have been maintaining certain specialities as established by sacred zones according to some scholars. To help in a long way for maintaining such belief and practice there are numerous religious institutions, temples and monasteries in these regions. Adjacent to the sacred centre Puri, moreover those two valleys are located keeping Jagannath cult at the centre the whole region may be said to form a sacred geography.

Required for the Puri temple ritual or tradition the people produce vegetables and many other items in those two regions. With sacred profession of doing some sort of good service to the temple of the triad thus the people are closely associated. Hence the location of Darus in these two sacred valleys can be explained properly and similarly if we interpret in a similar manner. Keeping in view the Nabakalebara ceremony of the Chaturddha Murti people do give much preference and value to grow a suitable sacred Neem tree in this region in general. People immediately take care of it for the Lord Jagannath whenever a Neem tree is observed with suitable and valued features attaching a red flag and worshipping it for years together and by waiting for the most cherished occasion of Nabakalebara. In this regard the people are encouraged by the temple Sevayats. This is a long tradition for generations in this sacred zone for growth and maintenance of potential Neem trees. The most suitable ones are finally selected for the purpose may be through the rituals as well as instructions in dreams. Other possible reasons if any we cannot also deny. For the point of view of distance, human labour and expenditure, collection of Darus



from these two sacred valleys is very much convenient as they are nearer to the sacred centre of Puri temple and the temple of Mangala in comparison to other districts of Odisha. One may express doubt about the instructions of Mangala in dream, in the light of the above facts.

The dream is analysed only to know about the auspicious omens of the Daru in accordance with G.C. Tripathy.

### Vanayaga ceremony or Rituals at the Daru-Site

The following rituals are conducted in the forest by the Daru expedition party after the Daru is located.

1. Sudarshan is installed under the tree in order to ward off evil.
2. Purification of the areas done by cleaning the bushes and shrubs. After sweeping the place is purified by smearing with cow dung and clay.
3. Bath of the Brahmin and Acharya is done for purification.
4. With 108 oblations of Ghee fire sacrifices will be done under the tree.
5. By sprinkling sacrificial water ritual bath of the tree will be conducted mingled with sandal paste and vermilion. Then flowers shall be offered by wrapping around by new cloth.
6. The tree is worshipped after Agnyamala of the deity is placed on His or Her Daru.
7. A sacrificial pavilion is constructed on the western side of the Neem tree having thatched roof with four gates. Under a canopy a fire altar will be there. The pavilion would be of size (12 x 12) or (16 x 16) cubits. This is known as Yagnyasala.

8. On an east-west direction some varieties of seeds are sown. Main part of the ceremony starts after germination.
9. In the Yagnyasala Pati Mohapatra, Acharya and Brahmin will stay. Huts constructed on the southern side is known as Sabarpalli shall be occupied by the Daitas.
10. Havisanna once a day would be taken by the party. To know the final decision of the deities, the members in the Yagnyasala spell the verses of "swapnavati" 108 times before sleeping. The next morning the character of the dream shall be analysed usually.

### Performance of Fire Sacrifice

Mainly because of the fire sacrifice the Vanayaga ritual is considered to be very crucial on the second day.

There are two types of rites. One is Aryan and the second is tribal.

### Aryan Types

- a. In the pitcher of North east corner, Sri Nrusingha is the presiding deity where one thousand three hundred nine oblations and *bali* is to be offered.
- b. Vedic deities are Agni, Vayu, Barun, Surya, Prajapati, Savitri, Viswadevah etc. to whom nine oblations each are offered.
- c. To the western corner Durga is in the pitcher to whom one Bali is to be offered.
- d. In different spots there would be thirty two pitchers where other deities like Kali, Ganga, Bhairava, Kshetrapala, Eight Vasus, Naga & Nagini, Navgrahas, Ganga, Yamuna, Digpalas, Parswa Devatas shall be there. Oblations are to be offered to them.



Also offer of Bali is to be made of turmeric powder, curd, meat, puffed rice, barley flour and black beans etc.

- e. Special deities for whom the tree is meant for any one of the Chaturddha murti of Sri Mandir to whom fifty four or one hundred three oblations are to be offered.

### Tribal Type

This is spirit worship. Outside the pavilion of fire sacrifice in ten directions Bhutas or spirits are to be offered *balis* containing the crushed mixture of white gourd, ginger, turmeric powder, curd, barley flour, black beans etc.

Also on the sacred fire Bhutas or spirits are to be offered as above.

The rites of the fire sacrifice is predominantly an Aryan or Hindu tradition on the whole as has been observed above. On the primitive or tribal practice of collecting a Daru which might have been superimposed or added by the Hindu tradition. The elaborate Brahminic rites must have been associated involving the different deities of Sri Mandir after the cult has been patronized by the kings and the temple.

In the propitiation of deities on the second day rituals there are certain other activities in addition to the above mentioned Aryan and tribal elements which are stated as follows.

1.
  - a. By the friction of stones fire is produced which is purely tribal also through fire wood.
  - b. From the house of a local Vedic Brahmin fire is brought which is purely Aryan.
  - c. Fire of Lord Vishnu is called Vaishnavagni which is Aryan.
2. Offering of meat in Bali is purely and predominantly tribal.
3. Use of axes of gold, silver and iron is both Aryan and tribal.

4. Propitiation of deities is purely predominant by Vedic and Aryan Sanskritic verses.
5. Gate keepers and priests of the pavilion are Aryans mostly Brahmins.

### On Third Day of Felling Down of the Sacred Neem Tree

Felling down of the sacred Neem tree is dominated by the tribal rites to some extent and tribal Sevayats whereas the fire sacrifice rites are dominated by Aryanrites and Brahmin priests in this connection.

### Rituals on the Third Day

1.
  - a. After extensive worship of the sacred tree, three axes made of gold, silver, iron would be worshipped by Acharyas and Brahmin priests in Astra Mantra.
  - b. With several *upacharas* the tree is worshipped by Acharyas in Vanaspati Mantra.
    - i. From sacrificial altar, it will be smeared with ashes.
    - ii. Keeping its head downwards with the help of Kusha (which is a grass) a human figure is drawn on the tree.
    - iii. The tree is to be touched covered with a white cloth by Acharya Vidyapati etc. including Pati Mohapatra in Narayana, Vishnu and Basudev Mantra.
    - iv. The tree is to be protected by Patala Nrusingha Mantra.
2. The spirits or Bhutas or Brahma Rakshasas are worshipped to leave the tree by Brahmin priests if there is any.
3. There will be symbolic animal sacrifice as the sword would be ritualized by "Khadga Mantra." By inserting four stickers to make legs a white gourd is made like an animal and



into two halves it is sacrificed by a sword. With turmeric powder, black beans, field rice, barley flower etc. are offered to Dikpalas after they are mixed with chopped pieces of gourd.

4. a. Through the prayers of Acharya Lord Vishnu is informed about the tree felling for Him. The Acharya feels himself as Vishnu and the carpenters as Viswakarmas.
- b. In Sudarshan Mantra, the golden axe is offered with sandal paste, flowers, clarified butters and honey through the Acharya.

The roles of Vidyapati and Viswavasu with golden and silver axes respectively are of later origin as mentioned by G.C. Tripathy (278:249) although with reference to the Sanskrit text of “Vanayaga Vidhi” it has been tried to get it confirmed. Due to royal patronization the use of golden and silver axes might have been added later according to many scholars. After the Chaturddha Murti were brought to the temple and worshipped with Aryan and Brahminic rites the Sanskrit text must have been adopted or referred to only. In all rites the Savaras must have been given priority in the beginning. But later on the services of Vidyapati and Viswavasu might have been reduced to only certain symbolic rites in order to make the process more systematic with the utilization of the expertise of the specialized persons like Brahmin priests and carpenters. Without any confusion, during the Anasar and Nabakalebara ceremonies their predominant roles have been confirmed.

### Transportation of the Sacred Daru

A cart is made which must be 8 “hastas” or twelve feet in length for transporting the sacred Daru to the temple. The body of the cart including axle and wheels are usually made of Kendu tree, tamarind and Bata tree respectively. Covered with coloured cloth the Darus are tightly tied. From the source to the temple the cart is pulled by the

devotees only and exclusively. On the way the devotees and people greet the cart with great devotion having music and dance etc. Through the north gate the Darus are taken inside the temple.

Before Snana Purnima or the great bathing festival all the four Darus must reach the temple. The temple is closed for the public after this festival. According to Tripathy (1978:251) some rites are performed on the next day of the bathing festival in order to counter the evil eye as a result of their exposure to the outside world or may be due to some contamination. In tribal or rural Odisha this may be interjected as one of the common beliefs.

According to Jagabandhu Singh (1964:525) there are certain definite measurements and shape that are to be followed by the carpenters (Maharanas) and Viswakarmas for the construction of Chaturddha Murtis as follows.

One Yava = one inch or 2.5cms

One Bhag = 2.625 (in case of Jagannath & Balabhadra)

### Shree Sudarshan:

Height is 84 Yavas and colour is red.

Shape is Gadakruti (shape of a club) and Gada Yantra.

Body proportion and measurement

Length – 21 yavas.

### Devi Subhadra:

Height 52 ½ yavas and yellow colour

Padmakruti (shape of a lotus)

Padma Yantra

Face – 17 Yavas

Hair – 3 ½ yavas



Middle part – 12 yavas

Lotus feet – 17 yavas

Each hand – 15 yavas

Side arm – 17 yavas

### **Sri Balabhadra:**

Height 85 yavas and colour white

Sankhakruti (shape of conch shell) and Sankha Yantra.

Face – 31 yavas

Upper part of the face – 5 yavas

Chaturbandha – 11 yavas

Chest – 9 yavas

Middle part – 10 ½ yavas

Each hand – 24 yavas

Nostril – ½ yava

Lower part of the nose – 8 yavas

Upper part – 18 yavas

Forehead – 1 yava

Hair – 5 yavas

### **Sri Jagannath:**

Height – 84 yavas and colour black

Wheel shape – Chakrakruti & Chakra Yantra.

Upper part – 14 bhag

Lower part – 18 bhag

Lotus feet – 15 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> yavas or 15 <sup>10</sup>/<sub>16</sub>

Hand – 18 yavas

Side arms – 8 yavas

<sup>1</sup>/<sub>10</sub><sup>th</sup> of the arms – nostril

Lower part of nose – 12 yavas

From lower part to the head – 25 <sup>12</sup>/<sub>16</sub> yavas

Size of the face – 30 yavas

The place of Brahma in the Hrudaya – 14 yavas

There is a little variation noticed in the measurement presented by G.C. Tripathy (1978:253).

Nirman Mandap is made after the great bathing ceremony is over to which the Darus are brought in.

About 13 days time are given to the carpenters who are in charge of image making. On the Chaturdashi late night of the Suddha Ashadha the change of Brahmapadartha takes place.

For inserting the Brahmapadartha or the soul of the images, the carpenters make a cube like cavity in all the four images. In accordance with K.C. Mishra the length and breadth of the cavity is twelve *yavas* each and according to *Skanda Puran* the making or fashioning of the images are strictly prohibited to look at.

### **PRATISTHA**

Parallel to the fashioning of Chaturddha Murti the consecration of images is performed by the Brahmin priests and Rajaguru. According to Tripathy consecration is performed on a piece of wood cut off from any one of the four Darus. From that of Subhadra most probably that is taken. Towards the east of Nirmana Mandap the consecration is performed on an altar known as Pratistha Mandap. The size of the Mandap is 16 x 16 or 12 x 12 *hastas* with a fire altar at the centre. At the centre fire altar is of size 5 *hastas* and 18 *angulas* on each side.

The chief priest of the ceremony is nominated by the Raja of Puri or by his representative. Mostly in this case one of Rajgurus is nominated. On the following stages the ceremony is divided.





- 1) Preliminaries or Preparation.
- 2) Bathing of Nyasadarus or Abhishek.
- 3) Nyasa on Darus
- 4) Fire sacrifice
- 5) Insertion of Brahma Padartha into new images.

To counter their evil effects in the ritual performance the spirits or the Bhutas are to be satisfied daily. All the major activities in the ritual are conducted by Brahmin priests only. Sri Narsingha, Laxmi Narayana and Vasudev with other minor deities are worshipped in pitchers. The Nyasa Darus are brought to Pratistha Mandap on the sixth day.

Along with the fashioning of the new images the consecration of the Daru is over by the fourteenth lunar day as it is said. The Nyasa Daru is taken around the main temple either four or seven times on a cart on the 14th lunar day and then taken into the temple for handing it over to Daitas or carpenters who make four pieces out of it. In a similar manner the new images are taken to the temple maintaining the order Sudarshan, Balabhadra, Subhadra and then Jagannath. For taking out Brahmmapadartha or life substance the coverings are stripped off from the old images by the 14th day.

### **BURIAL GROUND**

The old image is declared dead soon after the Brahmmapadartha is removed from its cavity as it is declared in case of a mortal being. From the western door the dead images are taken to the burial ground known as Kaivalya Baikuntha or Koili Baikuntha on a wooden cart. A red velvet cloth is spread out in a pit of nine *hastas* deep and six *hastas* diameter. In that pit the old images are buried. The images of *apsaras*, horses, *Parswadevatas* which decorate the wooden chariots of the deities every year during the Car

festival also are buried along with old Chaturddha Murttis.

A few more anthropological clues are manifested in this performance. To the study of mortuary rites social anthropologists attach utmost importance. This is the most crucial crisis situation of a person because he has to leave his kith and kin members for ever. Kin members of various degrees as well as the kins from non-kins are clearly distinguished by the mortuary rites. Then the other distant kins, primary kin members take more active participation. Hence one can clearly identify the nearest ones to the dead from the mortuary practices.

From the mortuary practices of Lord Jagannath the same situation is exactly reflected. The mourners are none but the Daitas on this occasion. For the Lords they weep and cry. They consider the Chaturddhamurttis to be their clan members. Daitas remain in ritual impurity for 10 days as the kin members of the Lords. They leave the beard unshaved, hair uncut and maintain diet restrictions as per the social practices and the prescription of Hindu Shastras. They rub oil on their bodies near Mukti Mandap and shave their beard and cut hair, pare the nails. They take a purificatory bath in Markandeya tank. Their houses are white washed as per the usual practice of the mortuary rites. On the 10th day their family members also maintain ritual impurity and have purificatory bath. For the white wash of their houses the temple bears all the expenditures including the food grain and vegetables required for the Daitas on this occasion. Daitas arrange mortuary feast on the 12th day for the temple Sevayats and also for devotees from outside the temple.

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Shree Jagannath is the supreme identity of Odisha and its people. The Jagannath cult is the foundation of Odia culture and tradition. The History of Odisha remains incomplete without Him. The cult of Jagannath is not confined to Odisha only. Its appeal and followership is universal, particularly for the concepts of equality, amity and brotherhood. There is no discrimination of caste, faith, colour, belief or even religion in Jagannath cult. He is the Lord of the Universe.

In an expression of bonding with millions of devotees, Jagannath Mahaprabhu embarks on Nandighosha, His chariot, for the annual Rath Jatra, which is also known as Patitapaban Jatra. His journey is punctuated with breaks to ensure that none is deprived of an opportunity to have HIS holy darshan. The legend of Bhakta Dasia ( where the Lord accepts a coconut from a poor fellow) conveys the message of collectivism for the world. The institution of Jagannath blends and subsumes both the Aryan and Dravidian divide. The non-sectarian faith in Shree Jagannath is characterised by the legend of the living deities. Nabakalebara is an embodiment of change and continuity. The onset of the millennium's first such event provides a unique opportunity for my Government. As with many facets of Jagannath and Puri, the renewal of His body is woven with legends, folktales and traditions. Many of them are of great antiquity and pre-date the Christian era. Honed over centuries, the rich fabric of Odisha's art, culture and crafts can be traced to the temple of Jagannath and its practices.

Set against rigorous ritualistic practices, the observance of Nabakalebara is marked by elements of mysticism and spirituality. Not surprisingly, it draws attention from the entire world as a major periodic event in the Orient. The State is preparing elaborately to receive several million devotees during the ensuing Nabakalebara. An expansive ramp-up of infrastructure and extensive enhancement of services will enable the visitors to enjoy the festival in a great way.

The event is a unique experience for millions of devotees across the globe. Banajaga, the search of sacred trees, marks the beginning of Nabakalebara and ends with the change of Brahman at Shree Mandir. I appreciate the efforts of 'Odisha Review' for bringing out a special volume on Nabakalebara Rath Yatra and hope, it will be successful in spreading the message of Jagannath Cult.

  
Shri Naveen Patnaik  
Hon'ble Chief Minister

## GOOD GOVERNANCE





## Odisha at the Pinnacle of Success

- 1 For excellence in production of food-grains, the State bagged “Krishi Karman” award for the third time at the National level.
- 1 Through participatory irrigation management system, 22,444 Pani Panchayats involved for managing irrigation in 15.28 lakh hectares of irrigated area in the state.
- 1 State Govt. is all set to convert all the Kucha houses in the rural areas into Pucca houses.
- 1 To ensure safe drinking water to the rural people, the State Govt. has installed 3,95,920 spot water sources and 9618 piped water supply projects across the state.
- 1 To facilitate qualitative English medium education to rural students in each block headquarters, the State Govt. accords priority in establishing model public schools well equipped with ICT infrastructure, internet connectivity and a full time computer teacher.
- 1 ‘Biju Gaon Gadi Yojana’ launched in the schedule and backward regions for better transport facility.
- 1 1,15,827 homesteadless families and 35,780 landless families in the rural areas provided with homestead land and cultivable waste land respectively.
- 1 State Government is implementing Odisha Disaster Recovery Project wherein 15,016 families have been relocated out of the affected 17,248 families at 112 locations.





- 1 Covering 17,798 individual's belonging to the most primitive and vulnerable tribal groups, land rights accorded to 5,39,532 acres of forest land under Forest Rights Act.
- 1 5,287 nos. of Residential Hostels for ST students with all educational support to about 4,14,053 ST students.
- 1 Odisha State Treatment Fund made operational to provide medical assistance upto Rs.3 lakh for treatment of patients suffering from critical ailments.
- 1 'Biju Krushak Kalyana Yojana' includes 55 lakh farmers and their families with provision of free health insurance coverage.
- 1 'Odisha State Policy for Girls and Women' launched enabling provisions of inheritance, equal land lights, free homestead land of 4 decimals to homesteadless women of lower income group and special package for differently-abled women.
- 1 Road network in western and K.B.K. Districts strengthened with the launching of 656 km. 4 laned 'Biju Express Way' at a cost of Rs.3200 crore as a life line road network for socio-economic progress in these regions.
- 1 State Highways Development Programme implemented for all-round development of the State Highway network of Odisha.
- 1 'Mukhyamantri Sadak Yojana', another connectivity programme of the State Government, provides all weather connectivity to small habitations with population upto 100 not covered by any other connectivity programme.
- 1 Provision of cooked meal under "AAHAAR" Scheme @ Rs.5/- per meal for the urban poor in 5 towns of Odisha introduced.
- 1 "Niramay" Scheme implemented for free distribution of medicines under Odisha State Medical Services Corporation to the patients undergoing treatment in all Government Hospitals.





**N**avakalevara or the new embodiment of the wooden images of Sudarsan, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Jagannath is celebrated in the year in which two Ashadhas fall. This is known as Adhimasa, Malamasa, Purusottamamasa or intercalary month that occurs once after an interval of 19 years, some times even after 12 years. It is the unique ceremony in the Jagannath Temple which involves total replacement of the worshippable images through the new ones.

As regards the construction of the Temple of the Lord Jagannath at Puri and installation of the deities therein, a good number of mythological stories and legends are associated. Madalapanji, the Temple Chronicle mentions that when Yajati

Keshari, a Saivite by faith, occupied the throne of Odisha, he retrieved the idol of Jagannath from under the earth and installed Him in a newly constructed temple in the 9th century A.D. Chodaganga Deva, the founder of the Ganga dynasty reconstructed the existing temple in about 1135 A.D but the work was completed by Anangabhima Deva towards the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.

The date and period of the origin of Navakalevara has not yet been ascertained by the scholars and researchers. The Madalapanji however reports that Yajati Keshari rebuilt the image of Sri Jagannath after rebuilding the temple. That is why he is regarded as the Second Indradyumna in the annals of history. There is a

## Retrospective Highlights of Navakalevara

*Balabhadra Ghadai*



popular belief that the credit of the first erection of Jagannath temple at Puri goes to Indradyumna, the mythological king because in between Indradyumna and Yajati name of any other king is not chronicled. History bears the testimony that the temple of Lord Jagannath had been attacked and plundered for several times by the non-Hindu invaders. These external invasions have brought out irreparable loss to the holy Shrine, the more valuable treasure house of Odisha. Due to these unfortunate incidents the images of the deities have been shifted and brought back for security and sanctity on several occasions. All these changes might have been associated with Navakalevar.



According to the first historical evidence, an attack on the temple of Lord Jagannath took place in the year 1509 A.D. by Ismail Gaji who was the commander of Allauddin Hussain Shah, the ruler of Bengal. This resulted in shifting the Triad to the Chadheiguha hill inside Chilika lake and brought back to the Ratnasinghasana of the temple later on. "The most unfortunate incident occurred when the bigoted Afgan general Kalapahad who had earned great notoriety in popular tradition as a cruel iconoclast desecrated and plundered the temple of Jagannath in 1568 A.D. According to Madalapanji, Jagannath had been removed from the temple and hidden, but Kalapahad found out the deity and taking it with him consigned it to flames on the bank of the Ganga. A devotee who had followed the God in disguise somehow succeeded in recovering the Brahma from the charred image and kept it in the custody of the Khandayat of Kujang. King Ramachandra Deva of the Bhoi dynasty had carved out a small Hindu kingdom on the ruins of the vast Gajapati empire with its capital at Khurda. After strengthening his power and position in the new kingdom he lost no time in bringing the Brahma from Kujang and performed the Navakalevara Ceremony of Jagannath. The deities were installed in the great temple at Puri in 1575 A.D. For reviving the worship of Jagannath at Puri after the temple was desecrated by Kalapahad, Raja Ramachandra Deva of Khurda was popularly called Abhinava Indradyumna or Incarnation of Indradyumna.

After the death of the great Mughal emperor Akbar, his successors were not benign to Hinduism and they connived at the Muslim Subedars to discourage Hinduism and denigrate its deities and temples. In the year 1609 A.D. the Subedar of Cuttack Makaram Khan attacked Puri and to save the image of Jagannath from the

savage hands of the enemies, it was kept hidden in Kapileswarpur, 12 kms. from Puri. In 1610 A.D. a Hindu Rajput Jagirdar of Cuttack named Kesodas Maru in the disguise of a pilgrim, came to Puri while the Car Festival was going on and occupied the temple. He burnt the three chariots. Kesodas fought with the Raja Purusottama Dev and killed many. At the 14<sup>th</sup> Anka (1610 A.D.) of Purusottam, Hasim (Khan) came to Puri. Therefore, the image of Jagannath was taken away to Khurda and was kept in Gopal temple. In the 15<sup>th</sup> Anka (1611 A.D.), Purusottam Dev brought it to the temple of Puri. Again in 1615 Kalyan Malla, the son of Raja Todarmalla, the Revenue Minister of Akbar who became the Subedar of Odisha in 1611 A.D, attacked Khurda. Before his attack on Puri, the deities had already been transferred to Mahisanasi hill on the coast of Chilika. It was in the year 1622 that during the reign of Narasingha Dev, Subedar Mirza Ahmed, the nephew of Mughal Empress Nurjahan assailed Puri. The king's family along with the image of Lord Jagannath took shelter in the Manitri Fort of Ranpur. In 1625 Jagannath's image was reinstalled in the Puri temple and Navakalevara festival was celebrated as usual. It was during the reign of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb that Hinduism faced serious setback. In 1692 A.D he issued an order to destroy the temple of Lord Jagannath but the order was not actually carried out but the temple was kept closed till the death of Aurangzeb.

When Dibyasingha Dev was the king of Khurda, Nawab Ekram Khan attacked Jagannath temple in 1698 A.D with the help of his brother Mastram Khan. Darubrahma of Lord Jagannath was kept hidden at the back of the Bimala temple and the king Dibyasingha Dev kept himself concealed. Ekram Khan looted the temple's treasure and destroyed the deities. After his departure from Odisha, Navakalevara of



Jagannath was held. In 1732 Muhammad Taqi Khan, the Deputy Subedar of Odisha invaded the temple of Jagannath being attracted by its wealth. The worshippers of Jagannath apprehending the motive of Taqi Khan had taken away the idols of Jagannath which they concealed in an island in the Chilika lake. Rama Chandra Deva II brought back the image of Lord Jagannath in 1733. That year also there were two Ashadhas and Navakalevara function was held according to the old tradition.

During the Maratha Period, the Temple of Lord Jagannath was brought under the direct management of the Government with special attention paid for the important rituals and festivals. The Maratha regime in spite of other drawbacks, distinguished itself for patronising religion and religious institutions and making Odisha a centre of attraction for numerous people of India. After the Maratha rule, the British administrators also did not venture to interfere in the normal celebration of Lord Jagannath including Car Festivals and Navakalebaras. During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries Navakalevara has taken place in the year 1863, 1893, 1912, 1931, 1950, 1969, 1977 and 1996. In the present century Navakalebara is going to be celebrated in 2015 expecting congregation of fifty lakhs of devotees from inside and outside India. Thus it is evident that this ceremony falls after a gap of 7, 12 or 19 years depending upon occurrence of second Ashadha month. Various complicated and elaborate rituals are performed from the beginning of the Navakalevara ceremony till new images are made ready for the Car festival. The first phase of it being the Vanajago Yatra or searching of sacred Daru (Margosa Wood) for the deities from the day of Chaitra Sukla Dasami (March-April) of the year. 28 Daitas are chosen for the task to fetch the Daru, including 7 who serve as

reserves. Four garlands are removed from the Daitas after the mid-day worship by Pati Mahapatra, the group leader. He takes out three Ajnamala and distributes it to the Daitas and retains the Ajnamala of Sudarsan with himself. The Daitas and others are offered silken Saree in the temple by the Bhitarchha Mahapatra, which symbolises administrative authorisation on the persons for carrying out assigned job. Another temple servant called Mekapa then applies sandal paste and red powder etc. on the forehead of all the Daitas to make the auspicious beginning of the Yatra in search of the Daru. The whole party including the four carpenters, three Karanas, twenty one Daitas, the Pati Mahapatra, The Lenka, the Brahmins and administrative authorities proceed to the palace of the Raja of Puri. The party moves with the accompaniment of the music of conches, trumpets, drums and gongs etc. The King greets the party with the help of Rajaguru. The Raja of Puri offers two plates containing articles like coconut, arecanut, gold, rice, coloured thread to his Rajaguru who keeps one for himself and his fellow Brahmin priests and offers one plate to the leader of the Party of the Daitas. The royal gesture signifies a wish to ward off evils and a request to succeed in fetching the divine logs. The party then retires to the Jagannath Ballav Matha and stays there for one and a half day. After that they set out on foot for Kakatapur's Mangala temple, a place about 50 kms. from Puri. After reaching there, Goddess Mangala's blessings in the endeavour are sought by offering *puja* and *prasad* of Lord Jagannath which the head of the party has brought with him.

The worship of Goddess Mangala is performed extensively in which Acharya, the Brahmins and Pati Mahapatra take active part and stay inside the temple till they receive instruction from the Goddess. They mutter *mantras* and await the instruction in a dream. If



no instruction is received for a period of three days, another extensive worship of Goddess is performed in which the statue is completely bedecked with flowers. The first fall of flower from the body of the Goddess gives the clue as regards the direction, the Darus are to be searched. Thereafter the members of the party move out in that direction to search out the Darus. There are certain prescribed signs and environment for selecting the Darus which must be adhered to. After the trees are located with the required conditions, a Homa is performed in front of the trees. After the prescribed rituals, the entire tree with the branches are brought in a newly constructed wooden cart by the team member by walk on the road to the Jagannath temple through north gate and kept at a place known as Koili Vaikuntha, the funeral ground of Lord where old deities are buried.

On the full moon day of Jyestha i.e on the day of Deba Snana Purnima after receiving ritual bath, the logs are carried from Koili Vaikuntha to the Nirmana Mandapa, where the deities are carved by Vishwakarma (Carpenters). The carving of the images continues to complete in 21 days. When the new deities are made, they are brought only by the Daitapatis and Pati Mahapatra inside the temple to a place adjacent to inner sanctum known as Anasar Pindi. On Amavasya, Ghata Paribartana (Brahma is removed from old bodies to the new bodies) programme is performed by four seniormost aged Daitas. They confidentially remove Brahma from old deities to the new deities carefully with covered eyes in the mid night of Amavasya. Their eyes are blind-folded and hands are wrapped up with clothes so that they can neither see nor feel the mysterious life substance. It is worth mentioning that this Daru or the wooden image containing this Brahma is called Daru Brahma. There are so

many theories about this mysterious object. Some are of opinion that it is the tooth of Lord Buddha. Others say that it is the image of Lord Vishnu made of some precious stone. Some others hold the view that it is a very rare variety of Salagrama. The popular belief is that the said esoteric object called Brahma is in the naval portion of the imperishable body of Lord Srikrishna which continues to be transformed from the original statue of Sri Jagannath to subsequent ones at the time of each Navakalevar up till now. During the mid night, the old deities are carried out on the shoulders of the Daitapatis and buried in the Koili (Kaibalya) Vaikuntha before the dawn. Daitas and their family members who consider themselves to be the descendants of Lord Jagannath mourn the loss and observe purificatory ceremony for a period of ten days. The new images are purified by Rig Vedic hymns and make their first appearance on the new moon day of Asadha, two days before Their maiden Car Festival.

From the foregoing analysis of the Navakalevara of the deities, it would be apparent that it is the Unique ceremony of Lord Jagannath in which the immortal Lord plays the mortal game propounding the eternal truth of birth and death of all living beings and also the immortality of soul as narrated in the Srimad Bhagavata Gita (2/22):

*“Vaasaamsi Jirnaani Yathaa Vihaaya  
Navaani Grihnaati Naroparaani  
Tathaa Sariraani Vihaaya Jirnaa  
Nyanaani Samyaati Navaani dehi”*

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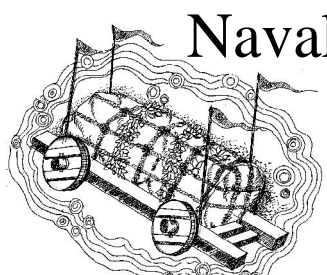




**B**ody decays. Soul lives on. As the soul is eternal it needs new body at times. On the basis of this concept renewal of the wooden *Chaturddhamurati* (the four deities on *Ratnasinghasan* of *Srimandira* at Puri is required. *Navakalebar* is in fact the combination of two words namely *nava* and *kalebar* which mean 'new body' respectively. So the assumption of new body (shape) may be called *Navakalebar*. In Jagannath cult it is a periodical renewal of the wooden images of Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshan. *Navakalebar* ritual is not a yearly feature in the Jagannath *dham*. Generally it occurs on 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> year of the previous *Navakalebar*.

'*Purushottamamasa*'. The four deities of Ratnasinghasan undergo the process of *Navakalebar* in the year in which falls this *Adhimasa*.

Periodical renewal of the bodies of the deities is required because the images are carved out of wood and not from durable materials like stone and jewels. The images are actually made out of *Nimba* wood. Wooden images are not generally used for the worship in the other shrines. But in the case of *Srikshetra* the images are wooden ones. *Nimba* wood is considered to be one of the best and most auspicious materials for making the images of *Vinshnu*.<sup>1</sup> Regarding the carving of images from wood *Bhavishya Puran*



## Navakalebar : Ritual and History

*Dr. Hemanta Mohapatra*

The principle adopted to fix the year of *Navakalebar* is to find a year in which there are two *Aasadhas* (*Doaasadhas*), or the month of *Aasadha* in which there are two fullmoons. In the Lunar Hindu calendar in every three years a lunar month is excluded from calculation to strike a balance between the lunar and solar years. This period is called "*Adhimasa*". It is also known as a 'Malamasa'. No auspicious rites are conducted in this month by common human beings. But for the spiritual purpose this month is very much auspicious. Hindu religious scriptures depict this *Adhimasa* as highly auspicious and suitable for all types of spiritual attainments. As a '*Doaasadha*' is considered very much connected with the cult of Sri Jagannath it is also called a

has given an exhaustive guidance when it states that wood of different trees will be used in making of images by different castes.<sup>2</sup>

- |                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Auspicious for Brahmins    | - <i>Suradaru, Sami, Madhuka, Chandana</i> |
| Auspicious for Kshatriyas  | - <i>Arista Khadira, Tinduka, Asvastha</i> |
| Auspicious for Vaishyas    | - <i>Khadira, Chandan</i>                  |
| Auspicious for Sudras      | - <i>Kesara, Amra, Sala, Sarjaka.</i>      |
| Auspicious for all castes. | - <i>Nimba, Sriparma, Panasa, Arjuna</i>   |

So the images of Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshan are being carved out of *Nimba* wood as Lord Jagannath is worshipped by all castes and the other deities are his



associates. Such a view is confirmed by the *Bhavishya Purana* in its chapter 131 and sloka. Further the *Vaikhanasagama* says that woods are of three genders; male, female, neuter. *Nimba* belongs to the male category. *Nimba* is also considered as the strongest and the best wood material for the carving out of *Vishnu* images. *Nimba* is also not damaged by pests and insects.

By worshipping the wooden *Vigrahas* the worshippers get the four vital ingredients of life like *Ayu* (longevity), *Sri* (Wealth and Beauty), *Vala* (strength) and *Jaya* (victory). Whereas by worshipping images made of stone or jewels or other *dhatu*s (metals) one can get only one or two of the aforesaid ingredients of life. Texts like *Kasyapasilpa* and *Vishnu Samhita* also recommend for the carving of images from wood. The *sabaras* (a tribal community) of Odisha are also in the habit of worshipping wooden images. As *Jagannath* is most probably a tribal God his image is carved out of *Daru* (wood).

This *Navakalebara* rituals is also called *Jirna Bera Parityaga*, literally means leaving the old deity and consecration of new one. Twenty second verse of the second chapter of *Srimat Bhagavat Gita* mentions

“*Vasansi jirmani yatha Vihaya  
Navani grhnati naroparani  
Tatha sarirani vihaya jirna-  
nyanyani sanyati navani dehi*”<sup>3</sup>

As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, the soul similarly accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless one. This philosophical view stands as the background of the tradition of *Navakalebara* of Sri *Jagannath*.

### **The rituals associated with the tradition of Navakalebar**

The ritual of *Navakalebar* formally starts on the tenth *Tithi* of the fullmoon day of the month of *Chaitra* (*chaitra sukla Dashami*). Commanded by the *Gajapati Maharaja*,

*Vidyapati*, *Daitas* and the Brahmins well versed with the *Vedas* make preparation to go in search of the *Daru* or tree. The details of the party goes to fetch the *Daru* is as follows. The number given below is minimum. More members can join the party.

- 1) *Patimahapatra* - 01
- 2) *Daitapaties* - 20-30 members
- 3) *Sui Daitapati* - 03
- 4) *Lenka* (who holds the *Sudarshan Chakra*) - 01
- 5) *Deula Karan* - 01-03

This party is also accompanied by a police party of sufficient numbers to ensure the smooth travel of *Daru* to *Srimandir*. The police has to manage the crowd and see that no harm is done to the *Darus* at the time of transportation.

In *Srimandir*, the functions start after the mid-day ‘*Dhupa*’ of the deities on *Sukla Dashami of Chaitra*. The blessings of the Lord is sought. A garland of twelve feet made specially for the day is offered to the Lord and his siblings. After worshipping the Lord the garland which is now named “*Ajnyamala*” or the garland as a token of Lord’s permission, is given to *Patimahapatra*, who is there to lead the procession to fetch the ‘*Daru*’. He would from then on carry the huge garland until the sacred tree is located.

After getting the *ajnyamala* the *Patimahapatra* and four *Daitapatis* carry it to the “*Anasarapindi*”, where all of them put on new clothes provided for the occasion. Both garland and the clothes are significant in the sense that it is indicative of the Lord himself travelling with them. *Patta* clothes used by the Lord are also given to the *Lenka* family representatives and the nine *Maharanas* who accompany the group. Once the *Mekap* family members touch the forehead of each members of the procession with the Lord’s sandal, the procession officially takes



off. They also go to Jagannath Ballav *math*. The Gajapati Maharaja of Puri after offering auspicious articles such as unboiled rice, cocoanut and pieces of cloth to *Daitapaties*, make formal request to start for the forest in search of *Daru*.

From the palace of the Gajapati Maharaja the party proceeds to Jagannath Ballav Matha and from there they go to the famous temple of Mangala at Kakatpur, a village around 60 Km from Puri. There the party stays at *Deulimath* for several days and the oldest Daitapati sleeps inside the temple. He must have a dream during this stay in which the goddess Mangala tells them the exact location of the '*Darus*'. The tree for each of the four deities is found in different places. The stay of the party at Kakatpur varies from 15 to 30 days. During this time they live on the *Prasad* of Maa Mangala. Sometimes *Mahaprasad* from Srimandir is also supplied to them. After the dream in which Maa Mangala reveals the location of the *Darus*, the party goes on its mission to find out them.

### Identification of the Darus

For the identification of the Darus the following conditions and signs are taken into consideration. The *Daru of Sudarshan* should have three branches. The skin (bark) of the *nimba* tree should be reddish. The tree should have a sign of *chakra* with a small of depression in the middle.

The *Daru of Balabhadra* should have seven branches. The skin of the tree should be of light brown or white colour. It should have a sign of plough and pestle etc. Nearby the tree there should be a heritage and also a graveyard etc.

The *Daru of Subhadra* should have five branches. The bark of the tree should be yellowish. There should be the sign of lotus flower on the tree.

The *Daru of Sri Jagannath* should have four main branches. The bark of the tree should be dark in colour. The tree should have the sign of *Sankha* and *chakra* on it. There should be a cremation ground near the tree. There should be an anthill near the tree and a snake hole at the roots of the tree. The tree should be near a river or pond or a crossing of the three ways or else to be surrounded by three mountains. There should not be nests of birds on the tree and no bird have ever perched over the tree. The tree should be surrounded by other trees preferably *Varuna*, *Sahada*, *Belva*. There should be a temple dedicated to Lord Shiva in the neighbourhood. There should be some heritage nearby and the tree should be free from *Nirmulilata* (Parasite plants) and creepers.

For the information of the readers the following table is inserted to show the places from where the *Darus* of different deities were located in the *Navakalebaras* of 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Year	Daru of Jagannath	Balabhadra	Subhadra	Sudarshan
16 <sup>th</sup> July, 1912	Prataprudrapur	Niali	Polar Mahal	Fetehgarha
17 <sup>th</sup> July, 1931	Gabapada	Satwikpur	Niali	Kakatpur
16 <sup>th</sup> July, 1950	Khadihara	Nuapatna	Durgeswar	Jalarpur
16 <sup>th</sup> July, 1969	Champajhar	Bhakar Street	Kanhupur	Balara
18 <sup>th</sup> July, 1977	Rayachakradharpur	Bhogeswar	Baraboi	Niali
17 <sup>th</sup> July, 1996	Dadhimachhagadia	Ramakrushnapur	Malada	Bisoidiha



On discovering the tree the Daitapati places the garland (*Ajnamala*) on the tree. They clean the place around the tree and sprinkle perfumed water on the place. Then they erect a platform and an altar for the performance of Vana-Jaga ceremony on the foot of the tree. The party also erect huts in a nearby place and establish a temporary *Sabar palli* there. The search party stays in this 'Sabar palli'.

All the four *Acharyas* namely *Brahma*, *Adhwarju*, *Hota* and *Udgata* conduct the *Yajna*. Daitapati, *Vidyapati* (*Patimahapatra*) and carpenters participate in this holy fire. The Daitas and other attendants sit in meditation for three days. At the end of the *Vanayaga* the *Vidyapati* touches the tree with a golden axe. The *Daitapati* touches the tree with a silver axe. Lastly the head wood carver of the *Maharana* family would touch it with iron axe. During the cutting of the tree, the 108 names of the God are chanted incessantly. Once the tree is felled the entire trunk along with the branches are placed in a wooden cart (*sagadi*) and dragged by the Daitapatis and others in the group to the temple of Sri Jagannath at Puri. The *Sagadi* has four wheels and should be newly built.

Thus the trees for making of the four images are located from different places (as shown in the previous table). All the sacred logs are covered by new silken clothes and drawn by the *sevakas* are brought to the temple compound through northern gate and kept at *Koili Baikuntha*. 'Koili' means a living being. *Koili Baikuntha* is a place where *jiva* mingles with the ultimate soul (*paramatma*). That means here in *Koili Baikuntha*, living being gets his salvation. 'Koili Baikuntha' is the most primitive place and Sri Jagannath has emerged from this place. During the *Navakalebara* this *Koili Baikuntha* assumed the status of utmost importance.

### Carving of images from the Daru

On the Snana Purnima day, the sacred logs are bathed simultaneously with the old deities.

Then they are taken to their sheds named *Daru Ghara* (stacks for the sacred logs). One hundred and eight Brahmins perform prescribed rituals and the construction works of the images begin. The carving of the images begin with three oldest wood carvers taking the charge of carving the images of Sri Jagannath. The images of the Lord Balabhadra and Subhadra are simultaneously carved by two other teams consisting of three carvers each. More than fifty carpenters work as assistants to the main carvers.

The work is done with utmost confidentiality and not even the head priest of the temple is allowed to visit the place of the work. There is a special enclosure inside the temple premises where the carving of the Lord is done. The enclosure is open at the top but is attached with very strong doors. The wood carvers are not supposed to consume any thing (eat, drink or smoke) once inside the enclosure. The carvings are completed in 21 days and during these 21 days the carvers are not supposed to leave the temple premises. They would sleep in the temple courtyard and have their dinner in the form of Mahaprasad. Devotional songs are sung outside the *Koili Baikuntha* day and night throughout during this period of 21 days. This chanting of devotional songs is called 'Akhandha Bhajan'. It is sung by the Devadasis and temple musicians. The Brahmin priests chant *Vedas* continuously.

According to *Niladri Mahodaya* the image of Sri Jagannath is based on *Cakrayantra*. The significance of presenting the *Cakrayantra* for Jagannath is evident from the colour of Chakra as well as that of the deity and the name *Cakradhari* given to Jagannath. At the time of carving of the image it is seen that the height of the image of Sri Jagannath is 5'7". The image of Balabhadra is 5'5" high and is based on *Sankhayantra*. This is prescribed for Balabhadra as the colour of the *Sankha* (conch) is white. The image of Subhadra is based on *Padmayantra*.



This is appropriate because the colour of Subhadra is the same that of *Padma* (Lotus). The image of Subhadra is less than 5'. Sudarshan image is erected in the form of long log. The image of Sudarshan is based on the *Gadayantra*. Its height is 5' 10".

### Ghata Paribartana

After completion the images are brought to the 'Anasarapindi' inside the main temple after circumambulation for three times. The new images are carried inside the inner sanctum of the temple and placed in front of the old deities facing them. This is again an act that is done with utmost confidentiality as nobody is allowed inside for a *Darshan* of the Lord, not even the temple priests. The three new deities are carried inside only by descendants of the *Daitapati* family.

The '*Ghata Paribartan*' or transfer of *Brahma* from the old to new deities is performed by *Pati Mahapatras* in the dead of the night of the *Krishna Chaturdashi of Asadha*.<sup>4</sup> Generally the three oldest men among the *Pati Mahapatras* perform this secret ritual of transferring the *mysterious Brahma*. The right of this great transformation are accorded only to the *Daitapaties* as they are considered to be the descendants of the Daitapati who was the first worshipper of Lord Jagannath. This ceremony takes place three days before the Chariot festival. The *ghata parivartan* is complete once the 'Brahma' or *pinda* is transferred from the old deities to the new ones.

During this act of *ghata parivartan* the *Daitapaties* must adhere to certain rules and regulations. They are as follows:

- The three Daitapaties, one each for Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra must be blindfolded.
- They must bind a piece of Lord Jagannath's cloth around their hands during the entire process of *ghata parivartan*.

- This rite is considered to be the most auspicious ritual of all in the temple of Sri Jagannath. This *ghata parivartan* or the transferring the *pinda* from the old to new deities is the real *navakalevara* ceremony. The three *Daitapaties* fast and meditate the whole day inside the temple. Only after the midnight does the transfer of the *Brahma Padartha* occur and that to in total silence.
- The members of all Daitapati families wear new clothes on this day of transfer of 'Brahma'. The secret ritual (*ghata parivartan*) is performed on *Amavasya* (dark moon day) in the total darkness of mid night. A special *bhoga* is offered to the old deities before transfer of the Brahma. This Bhoga is known as the *Sarbanga Pankti Bhoga*. This is the last *bhoga* of the old deities. Only after that the Brahma is transferred from the old to the new deities. As soon as the *Brahma Padartha* is taken out of deity, the corresponding deity is considered dead. The dead deity is then loaded on the cart on which the corresponding new deity was brought and carried to the *Koili Baikuntha*. The deities are buried in the same grave where the previous deities were buried. But interestingly remaining of previous burial was never found in the grave. During this time not only the old deities are buried but also all the subsidiary deities (*Parswa devatas*) of the three chariots are also buried here and new subsidiary deities are made for next car festival.<sup>5</sup>
- The old images along with their beds, pillows are buried in the wells of *Koili Baikuntha* and the *Daitas* observe mourning till the tenth day and on the eleventh day, they perform *Suddhikriya* as it is done after the death of the member of a family. The Daitas consider Lord Jagannath as the head of their family.



- During the midnight, when the old deities are buried in the *Koili Baikuntha* there is darkness not only in the Srimandir, but also in the entire Puri town. It is said that if anybody from outside happen to see this secret rite, be it from a roof top or otherwise, he is sure to die. The Government of Odisha therefore orders a full blackout of light on this night in the whole town of Puri.

There is a general curiosity among all to know what this *Brahma Padartha* or *Pinda*. What is it ? Different religious sects have different assumption on it. But nothing is confirmed and beyond doubt. The Buddhists see the *Brahma Padartha* (the soul matter) mysteriously hidden inside the body of Lord Jagannath is a tooth of Gautam Buddha. The *Vaishnavas* say that it is to be a live '*Shalagrama*' (a pebble with natural symbols) which fell from heaven into the Gomati river of Nepal. The tribals think that this *Brahma Padartha* is nothing but the unburnt navel portion of Srikrushna.

Noone has seen the *Brahma Padartha* till now, the mystery relating to this topic is still unrevealed. When asked of their experience at the time of *ghata parivartan*, the *Daitapaties* say, it is very difficult rather impossible to express the feeling of the *Brahma or Pinda*. But a powerful feeling is very much present, like a rabbit jumping in our hands. This is our experience. Beyond this exactly what this *Brahma* is that is so powerfully felt, nobody is able to say.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Tribal (Savara) tradition during Navakalevara**

The impact of the Sabaras on the Jagannath cult is well known. In the temple tradition they are known as *Daitapaties*. Their service to the main deities became multiplied in the process of *Navakalebar*. As they are the family members of the Lord Jagannath they perform all the secret works of *Navakalebar*

including the transferring of the '*Brahma*'. After the burial of the old images they observe funeral rites for 10 days and undergo *suddhi* on the eleventh day.

One Jara Savara had killed Sri Krishna in a place (*Sialilata Kunja*) which is identified with the present *Koili Baikuntha* or *Kaivalya Baikuntha*. The *Sabaras* too had found the '*Indranilamani*' from this place. Biswabasu was the son of Jara Sabar. He was worshipping the *Nilamadhav* in the Blue mountain.

Jara Sabara aimed his arrow at the lively lotus feet of Sri Krishna on the *Krishna Chaturdashi tithi of Asadha*. The memory of the myth even today leads to the celebration of *Navakalebara* on the fourteenth day of dark fortnight of *Asadha*. During the 'anasara' all the 'sevas' connected to the Deities are performed by the *Daitas* which means the most beloved ones.

### **Navakelebar in history**

From the outset it must be made clear that there is no pure historical evidence about the primitiveness of this *navakalebar* ritual. However efforts are made to construct a continuous story of the *navakalebar* festival from semi historical sources. Sometimes myths and hearsays are also analysed along with the Jagannath temple chronicle '*Madalapanji*' to construct a trustworthy history of *Srimandir*.

From the description of *Madalapanji* the first *Navakalebara* is assumed to have taken place during the reign of the Somavamshi ruler Jajati. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> anka of *Sovandev* one foreigner *Raktabahu* had invaded Puri. *Raktabahu* has been identified differently by different historians. Dr. *Krushnachandra Panigrahi* identified *Raktabahu* as the *Rastrakuta* ruler *Govinda III*. He is of the view that *Sovandev* of *Madalapanji* is none other than the *Bhaumakara* king *Subhakardev I*. *R.D.Banerjee* identified this



Raktabahu with a Kushan commander-in-chief. Some other historians are of view that Raktabahu was a Srilankan invader, who came to Puri by sea-route and created havoc in Srikshetra. So the very name 'Raktabahu' is a fictitious character but the event associated with this name was a fact. Out of fear of such an invasion the priests of Puri had shifted the deities to Sonepur (Suvarnapur) where the deities were kept under earth near a banyan tree in the village Gopalgaon. In this 'Patali' condition the deities were kept for one hundred and forty four years. The deities were rescued in dilapidated condition by king Yajati of Somavamshi dynasty. This king built a temple for the deities, organized the ritual of *Navakalebara* and the deities of Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshan were installed on *Ratna Singhasan*. There is no evidence to prove that any other Somavamshi ruler had organized *Nabakalebar* of the deities.

Historically the next *Navakalebara* took place at the time of the Ganga king Ananta Varman Chodagangadev. He built the temple of Sri Jagannath and installed new deities on the *Ratna Singhasan*. This is substantiated from an epigraph of Nrusingha temple where the words "*Naba Vighraha Pratisthapan*" are mentioned. But the rules and regulations of such *Navakalebar* is depicted nowhere. But after Chodagangadev, there is no evidence to prove that other Ganga kings organized such a festival.

During the rule of Gajapati kings Vaishnavism became a powerful religious force in odisha and Puri became the epicenter of *Vaishnavite* philosophy and literature. But nowhere the historians could find the mention of a ritual like *Navakalebar*. Hindu rule in Odisha came to an end with the death of Mukundadev at Gohiritikira. Kalapahad the army general of Suleman Karani, the Afghan ruler of Bengal, was a known iconoclast who destroyed many images of Odisha. Kalapahad's expedition to the Puri

district of Odisha was a mere raid. Soon after he turned his back, Ramachandra Dev carved out a kingdom in Southern Odisha with Khurda as its capital.<sup>7</sup>

However apprehending the vandalism of Kalapahad the *sevakas* of Srimandir shifted the four deities to Parikudgarh inside the Chilika lagoon. But Kalapahad brought the images from Parikud, took them to Bengal and burnt them on the bank of river Ganges. One *Vaishnav* devotee named Bishar Mohanty brought the 'Brahma' of the deity to Kujanga. Gajapati Ramachandradev collected the *Brahma* from the Raja of Kujang and organized the *Navakalebar* festival and installed the new deities on Ratnasinhasana. As he had reinstalled the deities he is termed as the *Dwitiya Indradyumna* or the second Indradyumna. It is assumed that he organized the *Navakalebara* festival twice, once at Khurda in 1574 AD and for the second time in 1593 AD at Puri.<sup>8</sup>

The son of Ramachandra Dev, Gajapati Purushottama Dev ruled from 1600 to 1621 AD. During his time a Rajput Jagirdar named Kesodasmaru plundered the temple of Sri Jagannath, burnt the chariots of Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra. He also compelled Purushottam Dev to sign a very humiliating treaty. The Subedar of Orissa Kalyanmalla also invaded Khurda during the time of Sri Purushottamdev. Two other Subadar Makaram Khan and Ahmad Beg also invaded Khurda during the time of this Gajapati king. During this period *Nabakalevara* ritual was organized in Puri in a very modest manner due to the nuisance of Keshudas Maru in 1608 AD.

The invasion of Kalyanmalla in 1615 AD compelled the king to shift the deities to Banapur. But during his life time he could not bring back the deities and died with utmost dissatisfaction. Six years after his death the *Navakalebara* could be organized only in 1627 AD. In this



*Nabakalebar* the Muslim Subedar of Odisha Ahmad Beg contributed 100 *madhas* of gold for *Navakalebara and Rathayatra*. By the time Ahmad Beg was very much influenced by the Vaishnava saint of Odisha Rashikanandadeva Goswami.<sup>9</sup>

The next *Navakalebar* was held in a very difficult situation in 1646 AD. At that time the king of Khurda was Gajapati Narasinghadev. A part of his reigning period was peaceful.<sup>10</sup> But in 1647 AD he was killed by the Subedar of Odisha Mutaquad Khan and his nephew Gangadhar was made the king of Khurda.<sup>11</sup> The next *Navakalebara* was organized in 1665 AD during the reign of Mukundadev, the king of Khurda. That year *Daru* was collected from Khallikote area. The same king Mukundadev was ruling over Khurda when *Navakalebar* ritual was observed in 1684 AD. During the reign of Badsaha Aurangazeb, the deities of Srimandir were not safe. The deities were shifted to Banapur again. However in 1696 AD, Gajapati Dibyasingha Dev brought the deities to Puri and conducted '*Sriangaphita*' which was not a complete *navakalebar*. In this tradition '*Brahma*' is not shifted. However complete *Navakalevara* was observed in 1711 AD. Some historians are of view that this *Navakalebar* took place in 1714 AD. *Daru* was collected from Madhupur and Raja Divyasingha Dev organized this ceremony at Puri.

The next *Nabakalevara* was also conducted in a very difficult situation. Due to the fear of attack of Taki Khan, the *Sevakas* of *Srimandir* like Narayan Mohapatra and Dama Mohapatra shifted the deities to Hantuhada of Banapur. However the *Navakalevara* was celebrated in a traditional way after the collection of *Daru* from Nimabania by the *Daitapaties* in 1730 AD.

It is also said that the deities then were shifted to Athagarh, where they stayed for two

years. In 1735 the deities were brought back from Athagarh and installed on the Ratnasimhasan. From this time onwards till today the deities are never shifted due to the fear from the renegade or iconoclasts.

During Raja Birakeshari Dev's reign there were *Navakalebaras* in 1749, 1768 and 1790 AD. For the *Navakalebara* of 1749 '*Darus*' were collected from Garudia Panchana, Sujanpur and Nuapada. This festival was celebrated under the direction of the Marathas, as they were in charge of the administration of Odisha. Gajapati Birakeshari Dev was a minor and that is why Ujjaldev was in charge of the entire ritual. For their commendable works Damodar Bhatta Mishra and the Daitapati were rewarded by the Maratha Administration of Cuttack. They were given land as *Jagir* for their commendable work.

The next *Navakalebar* was held in 1768 AD. With the active co-operation of the Maratha Subedar of Cuttack, Raja Birakeshari Dev of Khurda organized the ritual. In 1768 AD *Daru* were collected from the bank of the river Devi and Dhenkanal. The king of Dhenkanal offered 100 *Madhas* gold for the expenditure of *Navakalebara*. Next *Navakalebara* of the deities was due in 1780 AD as there was *Do-Aasadhas* in that year. But the time was not opportune. The Raja of Khurda Birakeshari Deva murdered his sons and were in the custody of the Marathas at Cuttack. As the time was very much disturbing for the royal family of Khurda, *Navakalebara* ceremony was avoided.

But *Navakalebar* was held in 1790 AD with much pomp and grandeur. This year on the invitation of Jayee Rajaguru Chimabai, the mother of Raghujee Bhonsle came from Nagapur to Puri. With the combined effort of the Subedar of Cuttack and Raja Divyasingha Dev of Khurda the *Nabakalebar* was conducted in Puri.

The next *Navakalebar* was held in 1809 AD under the supervision of the Britishers. The





Land Settlement Commissioner of the Revenue Division, Charles Bullar granted Rs.5,500/- for the expenditure of this *Navakalebar*. *Daru* was collected from Khandapada. The Rajas of Khandapada, Ranapur and Athamalik also helped the organizers financially for this *Navakalebar*. The claim of Madalapanji that the Navakalebar was held in 1817 is not trustworthy. During this Navakalebar ceremony the British sepoy were deployed on the grand road at the time of *Rathayatra*.

With the grant of Rs.5500/- by the Commissioner Pakenham the next *Navakalebar* was organized in 1828. At that time the Gajapati Raja was Ramachandra Dev. This year *Daru* was collected from Bhusandpur. The next *Navakalebara* was due in 1853, but actually it was organized in 1855 AD. It was said that due to this untimely *Navakalebar* a number of natural calamities occurred. Due to incessant rain '*Darughar*' was broken. Stone fell from the temple due to lightning. In this festival two lakhs devotees gathered but due to lack of effective crowd management seven people were killed in the stampede near the lion's gate. This was reported by magistrate Andrews of Puri.

In 1874 A.D. the *Navakalebar* was celebrated on the supervision of a committee appointed by the magistrate of Puri, Armstrong. During this ceremony the Gajapati of Puri, Divyasingha Dev was a minor and his guardian was Suryamani Patamahadei. The next *Navakalebar* was observed in 1893. This year *Daru* was collected from *Chudanga tota*.

In the twentieth century *Navakalebaras* were held in the years of 1912, 1931, 1950, 1969, 1977 and 1996 AD. During such *Navakalebaras* and *Ratha Yatra* ceremony each time around a million people gathered on the grand road and Puri town became immensely active. The first *Navakalebara* of 21<sup>st</sup> century is due in

the year of 2015 AD. This year it is expected that more than thirty lakhs devotees will gather in Srikshetra to take part in this twin festival of *Navakalebara* and *Rathayatra*. This year the devotees can see the new deities and they can also see the new images of Jagannatha, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshan on the chariots. Positively this will be a new and once-in-a life experience for the devotees. The government is gearing up to provide all the civic facilities and convenience to the *yatries* who shall throng into Puri during this grand festival '*Navakalebar*' and *Ghoshayatra* of the four deities of Srikshetra.

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The rituals of Lord Jagannath are related to our ways of life. The Lord is adored as the divine head of every Hindu family. For this reason, unless we first invite Him, we do not perform our social functions. Likewise, when we set out on any journey, we remember Him first and then we move out in our mission. Similarly many don't start their day, unless they pray to Lord Jagannath first and surrender themselves at His lotus feet. This is how we obey and respect the Lord in our day-to-day life. Lord Jagannath is the end-all and be-all of our life. He is the presiding deity of every Hindu House in Utkal Pradesh.

Sri Jagannath is the Lord of the universe. His 'Dham' i.e. Puri is one of the pilgrim centres

recognition of Mahaprasad and this way, the Mahaprasad of the Lord is most unique in the spiritual order. There is a belief among the Hindus that if 'Nirmalya' is given to a person on his death-bed, he is sure to have a place for himself in the heaven after his death following atonement of all his sins. In that way, Mahaprasad and Nirmalya are very auspicious. This is the illustriousness of the Jagannath cult and Jagannath Temple at Puri.

Cooked Mahaprasad in all its best conditions can at best be preserved for one day. It loses its taste when it becomes stale. So Mahaprasad of cooked rice and other dishes prepared in the Grand Temple are taken to other places only when it is hot and fresh. This is mostly done on festive occasions. But Nirmalya which

## Mahaprasad

*Durga Madhab Dash*



of the world. He is seated on the Ratnavedi of the Grand Temple. The 'Prasad' offered to Him and later to Maa Bimala in the Grand Temple is known as 'Mahaprasad'. No Prasad offered in any other temple in India has the spiritual

is akin to Mahaprasad can be used at any time save certain items like the garlands of the Lord etc. which are not long-lasting like certain items of Mahaprasad.

Mahaprasad is of two types. One is 'Sankudi' Mahaprasad and the other is 'Sukhila' Mahaprasad. Both the types are available for sale in Ananda Bazaar of the Grand Temple.

'Sankudi' Mahaprasad includes items like rice, ghee rice, sweet rice, mixed rice, cumin seed and asaphoetida-ginger rice mixed with salt, and the dishes like sweet *dal*, plain *dal* mixed with vegetables, mixed curries of different types, 'Saag', 'Khata', porridge and so on. All these



are offered to the Lord in ritualistic ways. It is said that every day, 56 types of Prasad are offered to the Lord during the time of worship and all these are prepared in the kitchens of the Temple and made available to the devotees in Ananda Bazaar sold by the Suaras who are the makers of the Prasad. Aside from these 'Prasads', a type of dry sweetmeats is also prepared by the Suaras and made available to the devotees in the same way as the 'Sankudi Mahaprasad' is sold. This is known as 'Sukhila Mahaprasad'.

Besides 'Sankudi' and 'Sukhila Mahaprasad', another type of dry Mahaprasad is made available to the devotees in Ananda Bazaar of the Temple. This is known as 'Nirmalya'. This is also known as 'Kaibalya'. In spiritual recognition, Nirmalya is equally important as Mahaprasad. Nirmalya can be preserved for a good number of days. In places far-flung from Puri, if Sankudi Mahaprasad is not readily available in good condition, Nirmalya is taken by the devotees. Nirmalya is holy and sacred like any type of Mahaprasad prepared in the Temple. Nirmalya is commonly understood as dry-rice which is rice dried up in the hot sun in Kaibalya Baikuntha.

When the rice-stock remains unutilized, the said stock is taken to a place called Nirmalya Khala in Koili Baikuntha in the temple-garden and dried there in the hot sun. When the said rice is completely dried up, the dried form of rice becomes Nirmalya and it is made available to the devotees in red-cloth pockets.

As laid down in the Skanda Puran, things like flower, Sandal-paste, garlands etc. which are treated with reverence on the Lord including the other divine deities seated on Ratnasimhasan in the Temple are also known as Nirmalya after they are taken out from the deities.

It is thus clear to mention here that any of the divine accompaniments or components that is taken out from the Lord and his divine associates is known as Nirmalya. This fact is also mentioned in *Bruhat Tantrasar Yoginitantra*. It is mentioned in this Tantra Shastra that ornaments made of gold along with jewels like corals etc, copper pots, silk sarees etc used for the Lord and His divine associates and subsequently permanently taken out also become Nirmalya generally after six months of the use.

It may be stated in this connection that Mahaprasad or Nirmalya as the case may be, comes under the category of divine orts in reference to the deities of the Temple. But they are free from the stigma of offal. They do not become worthless on this ground for further use on any auspicious occasion. This is the illustriousness of the use of Nirmalya and Mahaprasad in our day-to-day life.

Widely used, the term Kaibalya also means different types of spiritual activities like Nama Kaibalya, Sannidhya Kaibalya, Lila Kaibalya, Mukti Kaibalya and Kaibalya Baikuntha.

**Nama Kaibalya:-** 'Nama' means the name of the Lord that a devotee repeats while worshipping his Lord. He may be Sri Jagannath; He may be Lord Hari or Narayan and so on. In this sense, the name of the worshipped is identified with the term, 'Kaibalya'. If a devotee repeats the name of his Lord regularly, he is said to be enjoying Nama Kaibalya.

**Lila Kaibalya:-** Lila means cosmic game. It means and refers to the various religious functions that are held at a religious place attracting devotees to the proximity of God. Devotees enjoying Lila Kaibalya participate in various



functions of the Lord and enjoy boundless divine ecstasy.

**Sannidhya Kaibalya:-** S a n n i d h y a means close proximity to the Lord. One can have close proximity to the Lord, if one stays at the place of the Lord. By this, one can take part in all the religious functions and festivals of the Lord and be closer to Him.

**Mukti Kaibalya:-** Mukti is emancipation. Devotees seeking emancipation in life get involved in spiritual activities surrendering themselves at the lotus feet of the lord. This is Mukti Kaibalya. In this, the devotees resort to the path of devotion.

**Kaibalya Baikuntha:-** One can attain Baikuntha in life if one is prompted to lead the type of life as laid down in the *Bhagavat*. A proper ambience is necessary for the purpose. This, one can have in life, if one settles down in a place like Srikshestra. Here, one can not only lead a sacred life but also get the benefit of enjoying Mahaprasad every day. This is obviously a rare opportunity in life.

In the opinion of Pandit Krupasindhu Mishra, the system of Mahaprasad was first introduced in the Grand Temple by King Jajati Keshari during his rule in the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. For this reason, Raja Jajati is known as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indradyumna in the cult of Lord Jagannath.

In the opinion of Aniruddha Das, it was Raja Jajati Keshari who had not only launched Mahaprasad but also brought about the system of offering Bhog to other gods and goddesses in the Grand Temple.

In the scripture known as '*Jagannath Kaijiyat*', there is an exposition about introduction of Mahaprasad and Nirmalya in Srimandir under



a disciplined system with the royal support of Raja Jajati Keshari. A legend has been in vogue to say that after introduction of Mahaprasad in Srimandir, a dumb person, sitting by the side of the earthenwares containing Mahaprasad etc consumed a handful of Mahaprasad to his utmost satisfaction and lo ! and behold ! after sometime, he got back his voice and immediately afterwards, he sang the glories of Lord Jagannath and His Mahaprasad, revealing thereby a great miracle of the Lord.

It is mentioned in Madala Panji that Gajapati Narasingha Dev (1621AD to 1647) had brought the divine images from Manitiry and offered 'Sankudi Bhog' to the divine deities in the Grand Temple. It is further said here that prior to the above period, during the time of Raja Ramachandra Dev, the system of 'Sankudi Bhog' had been discontinued in the Grand Temple on account of the invasion of Kalapahad and only Nisankudi Bhog was oblated to the deities at that time. Not only this, Nisanka Bhanu Dev during the period from 1337 AD to 1361 AD had included "flowers" of the divine images in the category of Mahaprasad. According to Krupasindhu Mishra, Ananga Bhima Dev (1189 to 1123 AD) had increased the quantity of Bhog which King Jajati had introduced in the Temple in the name of Mahaprasad.

According to Dr. Satyanarayan Rajaguru Mahapatra as written by him in his book "Sri Purusottam and Sri Mandir", Ananga Bhima Dev had displayed his utmost respect to the Lord by surrendering all his royal rights at the lotus feet of the Lord and brought about many good changes in the customs and rituals of the Lord particularly in the system of oblation. It was he who had introduced the system of making Mahaprasad available to the devotees on sale in the premises of the Grand Temple. He had also brought in to



use many other 'Nities' in this regard. He had got constructed a Bhog Mandap in the Temple. It is believed in this connection that Ananga Bhima Dev, had increased the Bhog-quantity and introduced a good number of new dishes numbering 56 items.

In crude local language, Mahaprasad is known as 'Maharda.' Some also call it 'Khatani'. In the temple language, "Khatani" means discharging one's duty. This actually entails a long-way process. For example, for preparation of "Mahaprasad," some people are engaged in the cooking of the dishes. Some are engaged to supply the requisite materials for cooking the Prasad. Both categories of servitors have one objective i.e. offering of Mahaprasad to the Lord. For this purpose, the servitors have their respective duties and corresponding shares in Mahaprasad whatever their names and titles may be. There is a Khatoni Nijyog to streamline this work. In crude-expression, Mahaprasad is known as 'Abadha'. As per the practice being followed in the Temple, Mahaprasad is partaken by the devotees from the very pots in which the dishes are prepared.

This system of consumption of Mahaprasad has been in vogue for the last hundreds of years. As per a holy belief, Mahaprasad is not to be served in platters to the devotees. The devotees are to take the same from one place irrespective of caste, creed and religion. This is known as the popular system of receiving Mahaprasad at the place of consumption. This binds the consumers with the fellow feeling of universal brotherhood. It may be stated here that this system is very much akin to the principle of eating as it prevails among the Sabaras who belong to aboriginal tribes. When the Sabaras sit down to take their food, they take the same from one pot. This system appears to have crept into the cult of the Lord as Sri

Jagannath is basically known as the God of the aboriginal tribes.

As per the system now being commonly followed, although 'Abadha' is served in leaf-plates, the term 'Abadha' has not lost its implication and significance. It still retains the sanctitude of commonly taking from one place with a fellow feeling of universal brotherhood. It may be a platter in the form of a banana leaf or a big sal-leaf plate for that purpose. The whole idea is that the consumers of 'Mahaprasad' while taking it need to have a fellow-feeling of oneness shorn of any individual distinction. This feeling of universal brotherhood is not in vogue in any other religion.

There is a beautiful story in the Utkal Khanda of Skanda Purana in this regard, which says that Mahaprasad is always sacred. It is always sacrosanct under all conditions and circumstances. It is imbued with divine attributes exhibiting many a miracle in our day-to-day life. One such attribute is evident from the following story as depicted in this scripture.

Long ago there was a Brahmin living in the central province of India. He was well versed in all scriptures. He led a sort of impeccable life. His wife was a pious woman. She had also very good knowledge of Purans and Shastras like her husband. Both of them led a peaceful life. Both of them were the devout devotees of Lord Narayana. Once the Brahmin told his wife, 'Priye, I have come to know from scriptures that Lord Jagannath is 'Brahma' in all respects. I want to join a group of my friends who are proceeding to Puri to have the 'darshan' of Lord Jagannath. I need your permission'.

The wife of the Brahmin was very happy knowing the details of her husband's journey to



Puri. And finally she permitted him to join the group of his friends.

The Brahmin was very happy. He and his friends proceeded to Puri. When they reached the holy place, they were astonished to see the Grand Temple about which they had heard many good things from others in their area. The Pandit and his friends had had the 'darshan' of the divine deities seated on the Ratna- Simhasan of the Temple. The Brahmin and his friends performed a Yajna near the Temple in propitiation of Lord Narayan Who was none other than Lord Jagannath at Puri. They had observed all the rigors of the celebration. They had conducted the Yajna in the Vedic order for full three days. At the end of the celebration every day, they used to take food cooked separately for the purpose. They did not prefer to take the Mahaprasad of the Lord. The Brahmin had a feeling that consuming Mahaprasad would be tantamount to violation of their ritualistic observance. Mahaprasad did not have the required sacredness for their purpose as it was touched by people irrespective of caste, creed and religion. This was an absurd feeling on the part of the Brahmin who was the leader of the team. In the ultimate result, all of them, after the celebration was completed, were succumbed to serious illness. Some lost their voice. Some were afflicted with severe skin diseases and so on.

The Brahmin was greatly surprised. He prayed to the Lord for His blessings. He prayed for their early recovery from the shocking illness. At last, the Brahmin heard a divine voice speaking out to him that he and his friends should take Mahaprasad for recovery from their illness. The Brahmin and his friends partook Mahaprasad as per the instructions of the divine voice and they had speedy recovery from their respective illness.

In this sense, one should have the belief that Mahaprasad is always sacred. It has divine



power. It is free from all blemishes. Under no circumstance, can it have any sort of disgrace or negative imputation. The Grand Temple for this reason is an illustrious shrine. The spiritual belief on this score is that Maa Mahalaxmi actually cooks the Prasad incognito. The cooks are mere scapegoats. She feeds Mahaprasad to the Lord. Shastras say that if a sinner hears the glory of Mahaprasad, he is expiated of all his sins. The Brahmari Lord gets delighted, if a devotee rubs Mahaprasad on his physical self and sings His name in ecstasy. This is the greatness of Mahaprasad as has been described in Skanda Puran (Utkal Khanda).

There is another story which needs mention in this regard. A legend has it to say that once Sri Narad Maharshi reached Brajapur when Lord Krishna was immersed in His cosmic Lila with Radha and other Gopis. Radha was feeding Her own hand-cooked food to Krishna. The Lord was enjoying the food unmindful of the surrounding where the Lila was going on. Sri Narad consumed some morsels that had fallen from the mouth of Srikrishna. After that, he went to Kailash in the Himalayas. Lord Siva saw bits of morsels on Narada's mouth. He could know from the morsels that those were the offals of Lord Krishna. He was very much delighted. He had the morsels with utmost satisfaction. At that time, Maa Parvati was present in Kailash. She witnessed the Lila of Her consort and wanted a morsel from Narad's mouth. However She could not get anything and so She was deeply distressed. In deep sorrow, Parvati prayed to Lord Krishna who came to know all the details of the spiritual happening that had taken place in Kailash. At last, to satisfy Parvati, He gave Her a boon saying that in Kaliyuga, He would appear at Puri in Utkal Pradesh, as Lord Jagannath and Mata Parvati would appear there as Bimala and everyday, She would have the Prasad of the Lord after which



His Prasad would come to be known as Mahaprasad.

In *Chaitanya Charitamrita*, Sri Chaitanya while, narrating the glory of Mahaprasad, has said, “Prabhu, having taken Mahaprasad, my divine yearning has been fulfilled and I feel that You have given me shelter at Your lotus feet. This is all due to Your unfathomable compassion and profound generosity. I now feel that I am released of the material bondage and achieved Your blessings in my life.”

In *Mahanirbana Tantra*, it is said that so far as Mahaprasad is concerned, all can take it from one plate irrespective caste and religion. All are equal before Mahaprasad for that purpose. Mahaprasad is the leftover food-stuff of the Lord. In quality, it has no grade or class. Mahaprasad is always Mahaprasad. Denial of Mahaprasad is a type of sin that can't be atoned.

In *Skanda Purana*, it is said that, with Mahaprasad, one can overcome Maya and attain 'Moksha' in life.

In '*Padmapurana*,' it is mentioned that if one has no satisfaction after partaking Mahaprasad, one shall be deemed spiritually treacherous and sinful of Lord Vishnu.

Rishi Marichi has said that his ancestors felt satisfied after partaking Mahaprasad on Sraddha rituals. So those who offer Mahaprasad to the ancestors on the Sraddha ceremony are virtuous persons and they achieve immense 'Punya' in life. And they also get the blessings from their ancestors. Not only this, Lord Biswanath is greatly satisfied with the offering of Mahaprasad. It can be taken as 'Prasad' of the Lord Vishnu on Ekadasi days as mentioned in '*Gouri Tantra*'.

It is mentioned in '*Brahma Puran*', that those who take holy bath in the sea at Puri and then offer 'Pinda' with Mahaprasad to their deceased parents, they are said to be worthy successors and they acquire 'virtues of Dasaswa-Medha Yajna in life. So it is advisable to offer 'Pinda' with Mahaprasad to the deceased ancestors in the area covering the 22 steps of the Grand Temple. *Purusottam Puran* and *Kurma Puran* also corroborate this view. As stated in these scriptures, offering of 'Pinda' in the Grand Temple is considered the best spiritual action whereby the ancestors get 'Moksha' from the cycle of birth and re-birth. Thus Mahaprasad is the symbol of utmost divine love, delightful adoration, exquisite rapture, graceful impeccability and the highest devotion to the departed parents awaiting Sraddha at an interval of one year as per the customs prevalent in our sphere of living. Nobody should drop a morsel of Mahaprasad on the ground. It is believed as per the Hindu scriptures that even the gods in the cosmic sphere have a fretful wait for morsels of Mahaprasad.

One has to follow certain rules while partaking Mahaprasad. One should not sit on any *asana* while partaking Mahaprasad. One should not also take any other cooked food of any private house along with it. After taking Mahaprasad, one should wash one's hands and mouth at a place that is clean and not sullied with any other leftover food or dirty filth. Nobody should walk over Mahaprasad at any place. While taking Mahaprasad, one should touch at first a little of it on one's head. This is very important. This action is a mark of reverence to the Lord and His Mahaprasad.

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*Apānipādo Javano grahītā  
Paśyatyacaksuhsaśrnotyakarṇaḥ  
Sa Vetti Vedyam na ca tasyāsti vetta  
Tamāhuragryam Purusham Mahāntam<sup>1</sup>*

(*Swetaswetara Upanishad*)

“Without hands the Supreme Brahma receives; He walks fast without foot; He faces no difficulties to see without eyes; He hears everything without ears; He knows all Vedas; But how many of us know Him? His mystery is not known to others. He is the soul and life breath of Odia people. Lord Jagannath who is carved in wooden iconic form as ‘apānipādo’. He is *Dāru Brahma* for lay people and ‘*Śunya Nirguṇa* (a great void without attributes)’ for intellectual

devouts. The abstruse philosophy ingrained in the Jagannath Cult explains about oneness of the Trinity, i.e Krishna, Balaram and sister Subhadra. Ādikabi Sāralā Dasa’s Odia Mahabharat elaborately explains this theory in the following words:

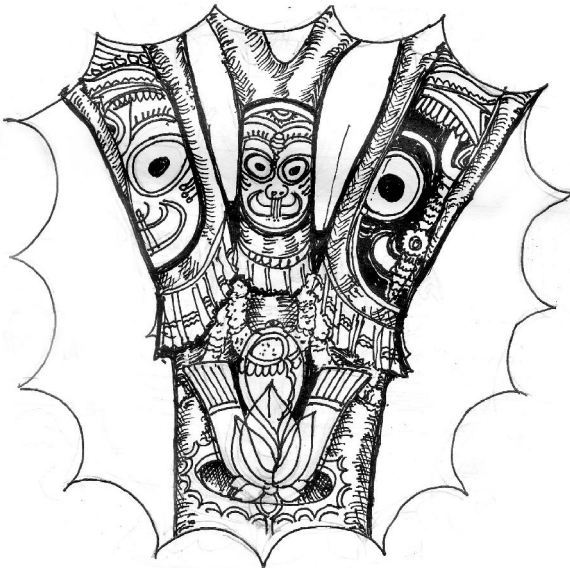
*“Rāmkrushna Subhadrā je, E tini Pratimā  
Śrī Purushottame vije, Hali Hara Brahmā”*

(*Mushali Parva, Mahābhārat*)

In an answer to curiosity and interest of the innumerable people arises over “why Lord Jagannath is worshipped in a wooden and incompleated form?,” it must be explained critically with clarifying note about the origin and growth

## Evolution and Growth of Nabakalebara : A Historical Analysis

*Dr. Binodini Das*



of the Jagannath Cult. The present Odisha develops on the assimilation of different territorial units whose existence and extension varied from time to time from ancient times till the formation of a separate province of Odisha in modern times. Once upon a time Odisha was called “*Sabarasthāna*” because of its predominant inhabiting tribes called Śabar, Munda, Kandha and Ganda etc. These Tribes spoke a common language called Muṇḍāri which is believed to be the principal root of Odiā and Purva Māgadhi.<sup>2</sup> A common cultural trait especially in matters of societal behavior and religious belief was noticed among the Muṇḍāri speaking people in spite of their divisions into different tribes.<sup>3</sup> They were





found to follow a common technique while constructing their prime deities. It is well known that the tribes of Odisha, even in the present day are the tree worshippers which prevail from time immemorial. These tribes in ancient times led a life of hunting and gathering, wandering from place to place in search of their food and shelter.

The selection of a place for settlement was done through the recommendation of their respective priest who also identified the trees to be worshipped. There is a deep resemblance in the selection process of the *dāru* (timber-wood) from *Neem* trees during Nabakalebara of Lord Jagannath with that of the selection of the tribes for their worship. Further it is elaborated that those tribes selected a tree with specific signs for which they sought the blessings of their God and priest.<sup>4</sup>

Regarding the tribal origin of Lord Jagannath, a legendary account is also derived by Pundit Sadashiv Rathasharma who took an interview with a Sabara Aduni Jāni, a priest of Birijai temple of Niladriprasad of Banpur PS in the district of Puri who showed him a treatise of five leaves written in the *Darpani* script and said that “When the whole world was submerged under water during the great deluge, only Mahāprabhu and Birijāi Thākuraṇī were spared. Goddess Birijāi gave birth to five sons being satisfied with the worship of Jāni (the priest of the śabar tribe). These five sons called Śabara, Ghaurā, Santāl, Kirāto and Jāni sat in meditation for twelve years sitting inside water, rain and fire to appease Mahāprabhu. Satisfied with their prayers, Mahāprabhu appeared in one of the tree of Nimba forest. Jāni started to worship them. Mahāprabhu also left his body during the death of Jāni. He further reappeared in the Nimba tree when clothes and sacrifices were offered to Him. This became possible due to the kindness of Birijāi. Both the Mahāprabhu and Jānis gave birth to each other. Gradually Jānis did the functions of

the Brahmins.<sup>5</sup> H. Kanungo opines that it might be a myth of the then time, but in true sense, it is the background for the origin of Lord Jagannath.<sup>6</sup>

In course of time, the tree worship was replaced with wood-log(*dāru*) worship as the tribes very often changed their settlement in search of food. They started to cut down the trees following the same principles and rituals while selecting the trees for worship. They started to worship the wooden pillars placing it inside or outside of their houses. As these wooden pillars were destroyed after some period, they replaced it with new ones following certain specific rituals and principles which appear to be almost identical with that of the process of selecting the timber-wood till the making of the idols of Lord Jagannath during Nabakalebara. So it is to be admitted that the Nabakalebara rituals of Lord Jagannath have developed upon the tribal rituals of replacing the wooden pillars. Further it is argued that the principles and rituals which are followed to place the Brahma secretly inside the new idols of Śrī Jagannath Trinity is also derived from the tribal background. To enliven the wooden pillar with life, the tribes secretly placed five metals (gold, silver, iron, copper and zinc) underneath the wooden pillar before installation uttering the esoteric hymns. Besides, the tribes inserted a gold pin in the middle of the wooden pillar as a symbol of heart. This timber-wood (*dāru*) worship which prevails among the Mundāri speaking tribes, gradually became the prime cult of Odia speaking people representing both the tribes and the non tribes into a socio-political coherent bond. In the process of Aryanisation the tribes left their hunting-gathering economy and settled down in villages adopting agrarian economy as their principal source of income but practicing timber-wood worship as their cultural faith. During the rule of different dynasties from 4<sup>th</sup> century onwards in Odisha, gradually a practice developed upon



assimilating and incorporating tribal cultural faith into the mainstream of national-cult with some additions and deletions. So, the tribes extended their cordial support to the rule of different dynasties.

An analysis of the treatise on idol making (*Mūrti Śāstra*) reflects that the longevity of the idols made from different materials is also different. The longevity of the idols made from gems, metals, wood, portraits and clay is ten thousand years, one thousand years, twelve years, one year and one month respectively. Accordingly the longevity of Śrī Jagannath's idol is twelve years as it is made from the timber-wood (*dāru*) and this change of iconic form is called as Nabakalebara.<sup>7</sup>

A question may arise that why did Mahārāja Indradyumna who constructed such a gigantic temple for Śrī Jagannath opt for wood-timber for making Idols ? In an answer to this question, P.Mishra asserts that though the worship of timber-wood (*dāru*) idol is influenced by Śābarī (tribal) culture, but its worship is more fruitful than the worship of other metals.<sup>8</sup> It is reflected in Varaha Mihira's *Vrihat Samhitā* that the worship of timber-wood and clay idols blesses the devotees with long life, wealth, strength and victory whereas gems idol is beneficial to mankind; the gold image brings prosperity; fame is achieved through worshipping silver idols. The worship of bronze images increases the number of children; one gains land by worshipping the stone or *Shiv linga*.<sup>9</sup> The importance of timber-wood image worship is also highlighted in both '*Kāśyapa Śilpa*' and '*Āgama Grantha*'.

A legendary account prevailed in Odisha that Mahārāja Indradyumna was instructed by Śrī Jagannath to fetch the floating wood logs from the Banki estuary of the Bay of Bengal. Indradyumna constructed three idols from these wood-logs and worshipped them. Another

scientific justification is given in the treatise '*Pratimā Lakṣhaṇa Saudhāgama*' that the images could be carved out from the trees like *Asvatha*, *Śāl*, *Piāsāl*, *Muṇḍimuṇḍi*, *Simsapā*, *Kendu*, *Khaira*, *Devadāru*, *Gambhāri*, *Neema* etc. But the *Neem* is the best among others (*Nimba Pradhānameteshām pratimā vinirmitau*). The old *neem* tree possesses a quality of a Sandal wood. Usually, this type of *neem* tree is not worm-stricken due to its bitterness. It is also used as a medicinal tree. In *Āgama Śāstra*, it is stated that the neem tree is of three types according to their characters, i.e., male, female and other. The tree which possesses a strong potential male character is fit for Vishnu idol. '*Vāmadeva Samhitā*' mentions that *Neem* tree is the best for carving of the idols. *Bhabhisya Purana* mentions that:

*'Nimbādyāh Sarva Varnaṇām  
Vrikshāh sādharmaṇa Smrtah'*

"The *Neem* tree is worshipped by all *Varṇas*." As Sri Jagannath is the Lord of whole Universe, destroyer of all sins and worshipped by all, irrespective of caste, creed and religion, so His idols should be made from the timber-wood of *Neem* tree. So it is essential to change the icons of Sri Jagannath at certain intervals which is popularly called as Nabakalebara<sup>10</sup>.

One could realize a great truth, i.e., embodied in the life and death concept which is explained by Śrī Krishna to Arjuna in the Śrīmad Bhagavat Gītā :

*'Vāsāmsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya  
Navāni grhṇāti naroparāṇi  
Tathā Śarīrāṇi vihāya Jirnanyāni  
Samyāti Navāni Dehī'*<sup>11</sup>

"As the man discarded the old clothes for new one, similarly *jīvātmā* (the soul) leaves the old one to enter into a new corporeal being".



This message of the *Srimad Bhagvat Gītā* is applicable to mankind as well as to Śrī Jagannath Who is believed to be the head of the family of all animate and non-animate being. Usually, this Nabakalebara is observed within 8, or 11, or 12, or 19 years intervals in which year month of *Āshadhā* (June-July) twice occurs. Nabakalebara is of two types : one is the carving of new idols and alteration of the Brahma; and the other one is *Śrīāṅga* Phita. The timber-wood of the *Neem* tree is searched in the year when it is considered that the carving of the idols and transfer of the Brahma must happen. All these activities are not done in the year when it is decided that the *Śrīāṅga* should be opened. The original wood carvings and *Brahma* is not at all touched.

The first Nabakalebara is held around the early decades of 10<sup>th</sup> century AD. *Mādalā Pāñji* (the temple cronicle) states that an external invasion was carried out by Rakta Bāhu on Śrī Purusottam Kshetra (Puri) during the second regnal year of king Sovan Deva. K.C. Panigrahi opines that this Sovan Deva was the Bhaumakar King Subhakara Dev-I who ruled around 8<sup>th</sup> century AD. He further states that Rakta Bāhu was the Rastrakuta king Govinda III. R.D. Banerjee believes that the attackers were the Kushanas whereas Nabin Sahu holds the foreign invaders as Murundas. In spite of these differences, it is ascertained that both Śrī Jagannath and Puri were the victims of foreign invaders. It is to be mentioned that Śrī Jagannath temple became the victim of foreign invasion for eighteen times.<sup>12</sup> According to Madala Panji's account the first invader Rakta Bāhu came from Delhi to Calcutta and from there, he proceeded towards Puri through sea-route. Observing the aggressive and ferocious attacks of Rakta Bāhu, the Daitās and the Sevakas being ordered by the king Sovan Deva shifted Śrī Jagannath to Dobandha ferry place of the Bhargavi river through which they

reached Sonapur crossing through Bhargavi, Kuakhai and Mahanadi river.<sup>13</sup> Lord Jagannath was installed on a pavilion called Sudhālipa in the village Baghapani of Gopāli for 45 years. As the danger was lurking behind and there was no chance of getting rid of it, the deities were shifted to a cave nearby Chaliā mountain where the devotees put them underground.

A banyan tree was planted over the spot which called 'Dianbara' and the deities remained for 99 years till it was excavated and rescued by king Jajati Keshari-I of Somavamsi dynasty around early decades of 10<sup>th</sup> century AD.

After much effort to save the country from Rakta Bāhu's hold who destroyed the city of Puri, King Sovana Deva utterly failed and left the country for Jharakhand renouncing the throne. On the other hand the Daitās and other servitors who put the deities of Lord Jagannath underground, fled away to Biribandha and Ratnapura of Madhya Pradesh where they settled down.

A statement of the Prameya (Odia Daily Newspaper)<sup>14</sup> highlights a fact relying on the evidence of Surendra Nath Mishra, one of the experts of Jagannath Cult, that King Jajati Keshari (925-955) along with Ādi Śankarāchārya of Kerala came to Puri to take a holy-dip on the auspicious day of *Govinda Dwādasi* in Chakratirtha of the Bay of Bengal, where it is believed the wood-log of the three deities were found in a floating state. A belief is there that the man who takes a holy-dip in this sacred place would acquire merit. This occasion occurs at the intervals of at least 50, 60 and 80 years.<sup>15</sup> To the utter surprise of King Jajati Keshari and Ādi Śankarāchārya the deities were not found inside the temple. On their query, they came to know from some of the old priests of the temple that around 144/146 years back the servitors put the



deities underground at Gopali of Sunupur (Sonepur).<sup>16</sup> Both King Jajati Keshari-I and Ādi Śankarāchārya went to Sonepur in search of the deities but could not trace out the exact spot. Seeing an old lady watering the Banyan tree, Śankarāchārya asked her about the importance of the tree. The old lady replied that she learnt from her forefathers that this tree was Dianbara. So Śankarāchārya sat on meditation and came to know about the underground of the four deities (i.e. Śrī Balabhadra, Mā Subhadra, Śrī Jagannath and Śrī Sudarśan) in that place. The place was dug and the idols of four deities were discovered in almost damaged condition, but the 'Brahma' was in a safe position. Then Jajati Keshari-I searched for Daitāpatis and other *sevakas*. They were invited and with their help the first Nabakalebara was held. A controversy arose over the exact place where the performance of the first Nabakalebara was held. Some scholar opines that it was held at Jajpur<sup>17</sup> and others believed that it was performed either at Binka in Sonepur<sup>18</sup> or in Puri<sup>19</sup>. Whatever it may be, *Mādalā Pāñji* states that King Jajati Keshari with the help of Daitās and the *sevakas* collected the timber-wood of Neem tree following all rites and rituals and carved out beautiful images of the four deities and constructed a temple (Patola) at *Samkha Nāvi Maṅḍala* (most probably Puri). After the consecration of the temple the deities were installed.<sup>20</sup>

H.Kanungo highlights that as Jajati Keshari was not claimed by the Mādalā Panji as Indradyumna II whereas the later ruler Ramachandra I of Bhoi dynasty was called "Abhinava Indradyumna" or 'diti Indradyumna', in true sense, this Jajati was the real Indradyumna who constructed the temple and started the worship of Śrī Jagannath.<sup>21</sup> The temple was not attacked by external forces till the rule of Mukunda Deva. After the fall of Mukunda Deva

in 1568AD, Kalapahad, the general of Nawab Sulaiman Karani invaded Puri with a mission to demolish all the Hindu temples. The temple priests also took a safe measure by secretly transferring the deities from the temple to Parikud of Chilika region. Kalapahada traced it and took away the deities and threw away the half burnt deities into the river Ganges from where the Brahmas were rescued by Bisara Mohanty who followed him as beater of musical instruments. Putting the Brahma inside the *Mridanga*, he came to Kujanga. The King of Kujanga performed Nabakalebara and consecrated the deities.<sup>22</sup>

Ramai Routray, who established the Bhoi dynasty and was later known as Gajapati Raja Ramachandra Deva-I established political stability in Odisha. He was instructed in dream by Śrī Jagannath to fetch the deities from Kujanga and to perform Nabakalebara reinstalling Them in the temple. Accordingly, the King brought the deities from Kujanga during his 9<sup>th</sup> regnal year. In the 11<sup>th</sup> regnal year of his reign, after carving three beautiful deities following all rites and rituals of Nabakalebara, the King installed Them on the Ratnasimhāsana (golden altar) on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of bright fortnight of the month of Srāvaṇa, the 8<sup>th</sup> day of capricorn. Then the King appointed Bisara Mohanty who brought the Brahma as Pora Nāyak. Being pleased with his activities all the *Brahmacharis* (one who followed celibacy), ascetics and Brahmans entitled King Ramachandra-I as '*duti Indradyumna* (Second Indradyumna) or *Abhinava Indradyumna*.<sup>23</sup> Once again the car festival (*Rathayātra*) was celebrated after the lapse of eight years.

The Mughal emperor Akbar died in the 5<sup>th</sup> regnal year of King Purushottam Deva, the son of deceased King Ramachandra Deva-I. The liberal policy of Akbar was reversed by his successors as a result of which Sri Jagannath



temple faced the wrath of Mughal *Subedars* from time to time; on the other hand, the people and the King tried their best to save Śrī Jagannath sacrificing their prestige and wealth. The Mughal *Subedar* Makaram Khan's attack to Puri in the year 1609 during the reign of Purushottam Deva compelled both King and the Subject people to transfer Śrī Jagannath to Kapileswar eight miles away from Puri. Then again in 1610 another Mughal *Subedar* known as Kesudas had burnt down the three chariots of the deities in Puri for which the deities were brought with swing-palanquins. Out of fear, the temple servants shifted the deities to Mahisānāsī near lake Chilika in 1615 when Kalyana Mall, the son of Mughal *Subedar* Raja Todar Mall, invaded Khurda. For the second time Makaram Khan invaded Puri in the year 1617 for which Jagannath was secretly taken to Gajapadā of Banapur where the deities were kept inside a pleasure-boat for two years till the return of Makaram Khan.

The King Narasimha Deva of Bhoi Dynasty sent his family and Śrī Jagannath to the Māñitri fort of Ranpur in the year 1622 when Mughal *Subedar* Ahmed Beg attacked Khurda and the images were immediately brought back in the night with the help of Bhima Singh, the Hindu general of revolted prince Khuram and the deities were offered the cooked rice.<sup>24</sup> Once again, King Narasimha Deva took the idols and concealed those inside the Sakhigopal temple due to return of prince Khuram in the year 1623. The King performed Nabakalebara in which the *Brahma* was transferred into the new idols and reintroduced *anna Mahāprasād* following all rites and rituals when the idols were returned to Puri in 1625. During the reign of Divyasingha Deva in 1698 the *Paṇḍās* (priests) of the Jagannath Temple took out the *Brahma* from the idols and put it secretly on the back side of the goddess Bimalā temple due to the invasion of Ekaram

Khan. Nabakalebara was also observed when the deities returned to the temple.

During the Khurda invasion of Mughal *Subedar* Taki Khan in 1731, King Ramachandra Deva II sent the images of Lord Jagannath from the temple to Harisvara *maṇḍapa* (altar) of Banpur and from there the Idols were shifted to Tikāli of Khallikote during the second attack of Taki Khan. In the same year Ramachandra Deva-II brought back the images from Tikāli and performed Nabakalebara.<sup>25</sup> Being enraged by the re-consecration of Lord Jagannath, the Mughal *Subedar* Dasarath Khan of Cuttack invaded Khurda as a result of which the King shifted the three Images to Mereda village of Athagarh where the masons toiling hard for two months constructed a temple for Śrī Jagannath.<sup>26</sup>

After the death of Ramachandra Deva II, his grandson Sri Birakishore Deva became the ruler of Khurda. During this period, Odisha came under the Maratha rule. As Birakishore Deva cultivated good relationship with the Marathas, no invasion had been made on the temple and peace prevailed. Odisha was in peace from 1725-1803 during the Maratha rule. Nabakalebara was also celebrated at regular intervals according to the tradition. After the British occupation of Odisha in 1803, Nabakalebara and Rathayātrā were celebrated in a traditional way.

The first Nabakalebara during British administration, according to the British records, was held in 1809.<sup>27</sup> *Mādalāpāñji* also states that the first Nabakalebara was celebrated in the year 1817 during the British rule. Charles Bhuller, the then Commissioner of the Land Settlement, of the Revenue Department, granted Rs.5,500 for Nabakalebara as he was requested by the *paricchās* (temple servants) of the temple.<sup>28</sup> Besides the rulers of Khaṇḍapadā, Ranpur and Athagarh donated some amount for



Nabakalebara. The timber-wood (dāru) for Lord Jagannath was collected from Khaṇḍapadā. In the same year, the Chherāpahanrā (to sweep the cars with gold broomstick) was conducted by *Mudiratha* (the chief priest of the temple) in the absence of Gajapati Maharaja.<sup>29</sup> Further, the Nabakalebars were held in the years 1828, 1836, 1855, 1863, 1874, 1893, 1912 and 1931 during colonial rule.<sup>30</sup>

The first Nabakalebara of independent India was celebrated in the year 1950 in 29<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Gajapati Ramachandra Deva-IV.<sup>31</sup> The next Nabakalebara was held in 1969 in the 15<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Gajapati Bira Kishore Deva. Just after 8 years, i.e. 1977, the Nabakalebara was performed with much controversy. The last Nabakalebara of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was celebrated in the year 1996 in which the present Gajapati Divyasingha Deva-IV took active part. The first Nabakalebara of 21<sup>st</sup> century has been celebrated recently in this year (2015).

There are literary references describing the procedures and certain steps to be followed while making the idols. A detailed description is obtained from the *Skanda Purana* (14<sup>th</sup> century) describing what precautions should be adopted during the carving of images. *Mushali Parva* of Sarala Das's *Mahabharat*, a 15<sup>th</sup> century work, narrates how the half burnt body of Srikrishna was converted into wood-logs while floated in the sea. He, further, elaborates the technique of making the idols. 'Nityāchāra Paddhati' of Vidyadhar Vajapeyee, a scion of Sambhukara dynasty, states about the rites and rituals to be followed in Banajāga. Similarly, Gopal Bhatta's 'Haribhakti Vilāsa' (1540) and 'Pratisthā Pradipa' (1568) of Narasimha Vajapeyee focus light on the principles of Nabakalebara.

Usually, the Nabakalebara is celebrated in the year when the month of *Āshādhā* (June-



July) occurred twice. The Nabakalebara is always followed by *Rathayātrā*. The functional inauguration for Nabakalebara begins on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the bright fortnight of the month of *Chaitra* (March- April) after a special mid-day worship to Śrī Jagannath trinity. Some special flower garlands are offered to the four deities-Śrī Jagannath, Mā Subhadra, Śrī Balabhadra and Śrī Sudarsan-which are brought by Pati Mahāpātra. He gives it to *Daitāpatis* retaining the garland of Śrī Sudarshan for himself. These flower garlands are called '*ājñāmāla*' signifying the permission of Śrī Jagannath to go ahead of searching the 'timber-wood'. These four, i.e., Pati Mahapatra and three *Daitās* with the '*ājñāmāla*' proceed towards '*aṇasara pindi*' (the altar where the three deities reside after taking their bath and suffering from fever) amidst the blowing of trumpet and playing of other musical instruments. When these four reached in the *aṇasara piṇḍi*, the Bhitarcchu Mahāpātra put the sarees in turban form on their heads which is called 'saree-tie' ritual. Just in this moment, the Brahmanas lay the foundation of sacrificial altar (*yajña kuṇḍa*) and construction pavilion (*nirmāṇa kuṇḍa*) and *dāru griha* (timber- wood houses).

After the "saree-tie" ritual these four wearing red silk clothes of Śrī Jagannath proceed towards the King's palace through *siṃhadwāra* (lion gate) with '*chhatri*' (umbrella) and playing of other musical instruments. When they reached in the palace, the Gajapati offers the betelnut to the *Rājguru* (the royal priest) who later on gives it to Viswāvasu (the chief of the Daitas) and *āchārya* (Pati Mahāpātra) and request them to make Banajāga for searching the timber-wood after performing all the rites and rituals. Then all of them go to Jagannath Ballav monastery where they stay for one and a half day and started for Banajāga journey towards Kakatpur walking in bare foot in the mid-night with Pati Mahāpātra,



Daitāpatīs, Lenkā, Brahman, Deula Karana and the temple police.

On the way to Kakatpur, the Banajāga team take rest in between Ramachandi and Konark *Nātamaṇḍapa* (dance pavilion). The Brahman usually take rest either in the school or in the monasteries whereas the Daitās take rest under the tree where they cook their food observing *habishya* (to take only boiled food for one time which is prepared without spice, oil, turmeric etc.). They observe *habishya* from the day of journey till the day they bring timber-wood safely and keep them inside the Koili Baikunṭha of the Grand Temple in Puri.

In an answer to a query, “what is the necessity of securing order and blessings from Goddess Mangalā of Kakatpur in the presence of Mā Bimalā, the principal deity of Srikshetra ? “it is believed that for the protection of Śrī Kshetra there are eight powerful goddesses. They are Mangalā, Bhagabati, Churchikā, Sāralā, Harachaṇḍī, Ramachaṇḍī, Alāmaṇḍī and Tāriṇī. Mangalā is the best among others. As the goddess Mangalā is believed to be exterminator of all evil forces both from internal and external front and wielder of untold power and strength and as the timber-wood collection is to be done outside Puri, the inaugural function starts from Kakatpur Mangalā.

The Banajāga team stays at Deuli Matha after reaching at Kakatpur. The principal object to stay here is that, in the past Kakatpur Mangalā was also worshipped here. In course of time, She is worshipped in the temple which is two miles away from this place. The Daitāpatīs send a letter to the temple authority. Next day, after their holy bath in the river Prāchi, they are welcomed by the temple administrator and servants who proceed to the Deuli Matha with umbrella and beating of musical instruments. After reaching

inside the temple, the Banajāga team perform *mājaṇā* (to bathe) by applying chuā, sandal paste, naphthalene, aguru on the body of goddess and pouring 108 tumblers of water with the utterance of Veda, Śloka, Bhajanas (Prayers), Gāyatri Mantra. Then Pāta saree, ornaments and flower garlands are adorned on the body of Mā Mangalā and She is offered with *Mahāprasād* which the Banajāga team have brought from the temple.

After *mājaṇā*, the Brahman chant the Chaṇḍī *mantra* (hymns) which is called Chaṇḍī *pāṭha* and the Daitās lay themselves prostrate with sincere devotion seeking refuge near Mā Mangalā and in the night recite *Svapnābati mantra* (hymns of goddess of dream). Being satisfied with the recitation of this hymn, Goddess Mangalā appears in dream instructing the sites where the timber-wood Neem tree would be found. The Banajāga team divide themselves into four groups each placed under a chief Daitāpati called Bādagrāhī who are solely responsible to fetch the timber-wood to the temple of Puri.

The Neem tree which is to be selected for timber-wood of Śrī Jagannath trinity must bear certain auspicious signs which are: The tree must be an old one; There must be 3 to 7 branches; The tree must be straight from the root with 10/12 feet in height; There must be a temple, or monasteries, or river, or tank, or graveyard, or ant-hill, Bel tree, Sāhārā tree, Varuṇa tree, Tulasi tree, and a hole nearby the Neem tree; cobra must reside either in the ant-hill or in the hole as a security guard; no branches are cut; The birds would never make their nest on the tree; The circumference of the tree should be within 2/3 meters; the tree must have auspicious signs like, conch, disc, mace and lotus; No part of the tree would be damaged by thunder or worm-stricken.

There is reference to principal characteristics of the timber-wood (*dāru*) in ‘*Sūta*



*Samhitā*’ It states that the colour of the timber-wood of Sri Jagannath, Sri Balabhadra, Mother Subhadra and Śrī Śudarshan should be *Krishna* (Black), *Sweta* (White), *Pita* (Yellow) and red<sup>32</sup>. Similarly ‘*Indra Nilamani Purana*’ mentions about the principle to be followed during the timber-wood collection and carving of the idols which part is always kept secret<sup>33</sup>. At the top of the Neem tree which one is to be selected for Sri Balabhadra one of the branches should remain swinging like *Tāhiā* (an head ornament) and the seven branches must symbolize seven hoods and in the trunk of the tree, there must be sign of plough or plough-share<sup>34</sup>.

After the selection of the four trees, first the timber-wood for Śrī Sudarśan is to be cut followed by Śrī Balabhadra, Mā Subhadra and finally Śrī Jagannath with due rites and rituals. The land nearby the trees are purified and *yajña maṇḍapa* (sacrificial altar), *yajña kuṇḍa* (sacrificial tub from where the fire is ignited), germination house, śabara palli (the resting shades for the Daitāpatis) are erected where Banajāga *homa* is to be performed. Symbolising the tribal culture, the houses of śabara palli are thatched with branches and leaves of the tree nearby the selected Neem tree. On the other hand, the Brahmans take shelter either in a nearby temple, monasteries or schools. The oblation and worship performed in the Banajāga *Homa* is done through *pātāli Nrisimha Mantra*. The tree is first cut from its root with gold-axe by Vidyāpati followed by Viśwāvasu’s silver axe and finally by iron axe by Viswakarmā. The Brahmans and the Daitās observe fasting till the tree completely falls down on the earth. They break their fasting when *chudāghasā* (a prasād prepared with the mixing of pressed rice/puffed rice, coconut scraps, molasses, ghee, cinnamon and cardamom) and *paṇā* (a liquid drink made from the bel, banana, camphor, sugar, etc) are offered to the felling tree.

The tree is cut according to the size which is called ‘*Chaupata*’ and the leftover part of the tree is buried in a big whole which is dug earlier nearby the tree. After bathing the timber-wood, new white cloths and Khaṇḍuā Pāta (the silk cloth prepared from the cocoons of silk-worm) scribed with the verses of Gīta Gobinda are wrapped on it. Then the timber-wood tied with silk rope are placed on a cart which is previously sanctified and is made from the wood of banyan, tamarind and *kendu* trees and is brought to Puri by pulling it with the ropes made from cane and coconut. The timber-wood is worshipped and welcomed by thousands and thousands people on its way to Puri. The timber-wood cart is taken to *Uttaradvāra* (north gate) of the temple in Puri through which it enters the Koili Vaikuṇṭha. The timber-wood are placed in the temporary shade houses which are made before.

Everyday the *dārus* (timber-wood) are offered in the afternoon with milk, *khuā*, and *pāpuḍi* after their arrival. The *dārus* are also given bath in their shade houses on the day of *Snāna Purnimā*, i.e. the full moon day of the month of Jyestha (May-June) after the bath of Śrī Jagannath, Śrī Balabhadra, Mā Subhadra, Śrī Sudarśan and Śrī Madan Mohan. After *hātiveśa* (dressed like elephant) the four deities are taken to *aṇasara* house whose door is closed with sticks or leaves being tied with the paintings of Daśavatāra. From the next day the carving of the images are started by the daitāpatis and Viswakarmā in the day time and in the night the daitās serve to the ailing deities. Usually the deities appear before the devotee with “*Navayauvana Veśa*” (with youth look) on the day of *śukla pratipada* (the first day of new moon night) just after 15 days of *Snāna Purnimā*. But as it would be difficult to complete the carving process of the idols and to insert the *Brahma* in the idols within a short span of 15 days, so three fortnights of intercalary *Āshādhā* month are





essentially required for Nabakalebara, because one and half month would give sufficient time to complete the process. So *aṅasara* during Nabakalebara is called *Mahā aṅasara*.

On the fourteenth day of dark fortnight, the *Brahma* is secretly transferred from the old images to the new ones in the deep midnight by the Pati Mahapatra. The four doors of the temple are closed vacating all others except the Pati Mahāpātra and Deula Karaṇa. The Deula Karaṇa watches the temple holding the *Pāta Khaṇḍā* (a large sword) of Lord Jagannath. New images are brought from construction altar to *aṅasara* house. Then the old images are brought to Koili Vaikuṅṭha where they are buried in a hole dug by Kothasuānsias under the *Śiālī* creeper. With the old images are buried *sārathī* of the chariot, horses, subsidiary deities, parrot, *dwārapāla*, *dhvaja daṇḍa*, cot and bedsteads.

Some scholars opine that the *Brahma* is Lord Buddha's teeth, or a *yantra* made of eight metal consecrated with *mantra*, the naval of Sri Krishna, or a sleeping gold image, or a small box full of mercury, or some portion of the images carved out by Indradyumna, or a precious and attractive gem, or lively *śālagrāma*. This *Brahma* is truth, the wisdom and the symbol of eternity. He is Supreme Who is the blissful nectar of happiness. He is peace, pure, unique, sacred and devoid of sins.

After burying the old images the Daitās observe mourning and follow all the rites of *śuddhi*. They take food for only one time called *Belikiā* with a curry bitter in taste, non-fried *mung dal* boiled with banana and *sāru*. On the 10<sup>th</sup> day, i.e. on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of full moon night, the Daitās massage til oil on their body sitting near *Mukti Maṇḍapa* and then go to Mārkaṇḍa tank through *Simhadwāra* where they get shaved and take bath. After taking bath, they come back to the

temple where they cleanse their feet with turmeric water on *Bāisi Pāhācha* (twenty two steps) and take *śānti udaka* (The water for purification) and in the night eat *Mahāprasād*. New garments are also given to the King and Queen. On 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> day the *Mahāprasād* is offered to the Brahmans and in the 13<sup>th</sup> day the Daitās host *Mahāprasād* feast for common people. From the fourteenth day of dark fortnight in the month of Āshādha till the 9<sup>th</sup> day of full moon night, a paste called "*śveta aṅgarāga*" is applied in the body of new idols which is called *khadilāgi*. The last 15 days of the month of second *Āshādha* or *Malamāsa* is observed as *aṅabasara*. On the day of new moon the idols appear before the devotees from *aṅabasara* altar which is called as *Netrotsava* or "*Navayauvana darśan*". This practice is in a state of continuity and continuum.

*Jay Jagannath.*

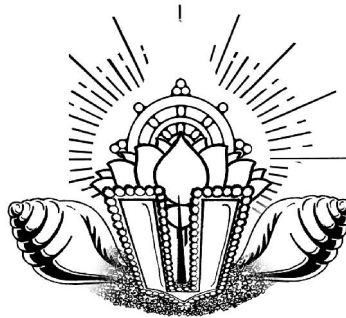
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Countless pilgrims and visitors throng the shrine of Purushottama- Jagannatha to see the famous Ratha Yatra (Chariot Journey Festival) of Jagannatha and his associates in the month of Ashadha (June-July) every year. The festival is associated with *Snana Yatra* (Bathing ceremony) and Navakalevara (the Ceremony of the periodical renewal of the wooden images in the Jagannatha Temple). Navakalevara involves a total replacement of the worshippable images through the new ones after an interval of 19 years, sometimes even after 12 years.<sup>1</sup> The reason why the ceremony takes place either in the 12th or 19th year is that it is only performed in the year having two Ashadhas. The first half of the Ashadha, starting from the day following the great

bathing festival on the full moon day (Purnima) of the month Jyestha is used every year for the repainting of the coloured images and for making the necessary annual repairs on them. During this phase popularly known as *Anavasara* the sanctum is closed and the people may not have the Darshan of the deities. In the year with an extra Ashadha, the new Ashadha is intercalated after the first fortnight of the regular Ashadha. The phase of Anavasara thus extends itself to three fortnights and this gives sufficient time to construct new wooden images and to consecrate them before the temple is reopened on the first day of the bright half of the regular Ashadha to make preparations for the chariot festival which starts from the next day. There is also a sort of small

## Navakalevara and Ratha Yatra in the Purushottama Kshetra

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Navakalevara known as *Sriangaphita*. When the intercalary Ashadha occurs after just eight years only the various coverings of the icons are renovated and not necessarily the wooden structure. All these occasions, being a very significant part of the cult of Jagannatha, need to be reinterpreted after a thorough reexamination of the available literary and epigraphic sources. This focus is designed for a reinterpretation of the available literary and epigraphic records for a comprehensive study on Navakalevara and Ratha Yatra in the Jagannatha Kshetra.



## II

The images now worshipped in the temple of Jagannath are wooden in nature. So the very nature of the material used for the images implies their occasional renewal or replacement which is popularly called Navakalevara. First of all it is necessary to know when exactly this ceremony of the renewal of the bodies of the deities (Jagannatha and His Associates) was observed in the sacred city of Puri. The very term Navakalevara as a significant part of Ratha Yatra of Puri is not used in the old texts like Purushottama Kshetra Mahatmya of *Skanda Purana* which presents the details of the festivals connected with the Jagannatha temple and this text belonged pre-Suryavamshi phase.<sup>1a</sup> *Niladri Mahodaya*, another comprehensive text on Jagannatha and His temple, is silent on this specific occasion”.<sup>2</sup> The Odia Mahabharata of Sarala Das(15th century A.D) is also silent on this specific occasion in the Purushottama Kshetra.”<sup>3</sup> This indicates that although the rituals connected with Navakalevara were more or less observed in the Puri temple in the Ganga-Gajapati phase because the wooden deity was well known during this phase, the term then was overshadowed in the Snana-Gundicha Yatra. Two important texts referring to the performance of this ceremony are *Vanayagavidhi* and *Chalashri- Murti-Pratishtha Viddhi* are works of the post-Suryavamshi Gajapati period”.<sup>4</sup> In the traditional chronicles like Rajabhoga Itihasa, Deshkhajja and Gopala Tirtha Matha Madalapanji there is a description of this ceremony, but these texts are compiled in the 17th-18th century A.D.<sup>5</sup> On the basis of these traditional accounts G.C.Tripathy, an important authority on Navakalevara ceremony, stated that the tradition of the ritual of Navakalevara is older than the time of the two texts stated above.<sup>6</sup> He has found a reference to this ceremony in the Oeshkhajja which was also

copied in some details in the Gopala Tirtha Matha Madalapanji.<sup>7</sup> These texts followed from the Vanayaga, the method of Vidyakara Vajapeyi of the family of Sambhukara.<sup>8</sup> The *Nityacharapaddhati* of Sambhukara Vajapeyi and Vidyadhara Vajapeyi was compiled in the 13th or 14th century A.D.<sup>9</sup> Rajabhoga Itihasa of Prachi Samity as well as Deshkhajja refer to the renewal of the wooden deities, but not after an interval of 19th or 12th year; on two occasions only during the period of Yayati (Keshari line) and Anagabhima III (Ganga line) the wooden images were stated to be renewed.<sup>10</sup> These texts thus are silent on the time of Navakalevara (as there is no mention of 19th or 12<sup>th</sup> year as interval period) and also they are silent on this specific term Navakalevara.<sup>11</sup> From the wooden nature of the deities which were worshipped in that form in the Purushottama Kshetra from the period of Anangabhima III (in the second and third decade of the 13th century A.D.) it is very clear that the rituals connected with Navakalevara were observed in some form in the Ganga period; but it was overshadowed in the so-called Ratha-Gundicha Yatra.<sup>12</sup> There is an indirect reference in the Odia Mahabharata of Sarala Das on a particular ritual connected with Navakalevara.<sup>13</sup> It refers to the fact that Brahmin Vasu was blindfolded by Savara Jara to see the secret seat of Nilamadhava which reminds us of a ritual of the removal of the sacred substance from the old body to the new one in the Puri temple by the Daita (priest of Jagannatha) who is blindfolded in the Navakalevara occasion.<sup>14</sup> This indicates the fact that the rituals connected with Navakalevara were well known in the Puri temple in the Suryavamshi phase as Sarala Das presented it in this concealed manner. But so far our knowledge goes there is no text of the pre-Suryavamshi phase to point out the time of this festival of the extra Ashadha.



The festival which was observed in the Purushottama Kshetra and which had great appreciation in the Indian cultural life in the 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. was the famous festival of the month of Jyestha.<sup>15</sup> This occasion has been stated in the texts like *Kalaviveka* of Jimutavahana, *Naisadhiya Charita* of Sri Harshadeva.<sup>16</sup> We do not find any reference to Ratha Yatra of the month of Ashadha during this phase. The yatra stated in the drama *Anargha Raghava* of Murari Mishra can only refer to this yatra of the month of Jyestha.<sup>17</sup> The famous Ratha Yatra was not known in the Purushottama Kshetra till the end of 12<sup>th</sup> century A. D. and this has been justified by a text of the 11th century A.D. It was *Rajamartanda*. It was a very important text on *tithis*, *vratas* and *utsavas* for India and it was composed by Bhoja, the Paramara king in the first half of the 11th century A. D.<sup>18</sup> This text refers to the famous sacred places of India which were the centres of religious activities for different months. According to that text -

*Gangadvare cha Vaisakhi Jyesthi to Purushottamam  
Asadhi Kanakhalechaiva Kedare Sravani tatha  
Mahabhadri vadayam tu Kubjayam cha Mahasvini  
Puskare Kartiki Kanyakubje margi sada smruta  
Ayodhyayam Mahapausi etah syuh sumahaphalam  
Mahamaghi Prayaga tu Naimise Phalguni tatha  
Salagrama Mahachaitri etah Punyatamah smrutah.*

According to this version the month of Jyestha was famous for Purushottama Kshetra during that time and the area of Kanakhala was famous for the auspicious occasion in the month of Ashadha. This clearly indicates that the famous Ratha Yatra was not observed in the Purushottama Kshetra in the 11th century A.D. Had it been known in the Purushottama Kshetra as a distinct festival during this phase *Rajamartanda* would not have used Kanakhala area for the month of Ashadha. Ratha Yatra was a very important festival of the Purushottama Kshetra and was well

known in India in the 13<sup>th</sup> - 14th century A.D. and so it would have been definitely stated in the *Rajamartanda*. It was unknown as a distinct festival in the Purushottama Kshetra in the 11th century A.D. It can thus now be contended on the basis of this reference of the text of *Rajamartanda* that the festival was unknown in the Purushottama Kshetra till the end of the 12th century A.D.

The text *Rajamartanda* not only refers to the month of Jyestha for Purushottama but also states about the *Mahajyesthi* occasion of the place. According to the text -

*Jyesthe samvatsare chaiva Jyesthamasasya Purnima  
Jyesthabhena yada yukta Mahajyesthi prakirtita  
Aindresasi Gurushaiva Prajapatye Ravistatha  
Purnima Jyesthamasasya Mahajyesthi bhavettadal*

This *Mahajyesthi* yoga of the Purushottama Kshetra has also been stated in the *Purushottama Kshetra Mahatmya* of the Skanda Purana in the context of Snana yatra.<sup>19</sup> On the basis of these references we can state that Purushottama Kshetra was famous in India in the 11th and 12th century A.D. for Jyestha Snana and Mahajyestha Yoga. Ratha Yatra as a festival was unknown during that time. A careful study of the epigraphic records of pre-Ganga and those of the phase of Chodaganga also indicate the worship of a stone image called Sri Purushottama in that Kshetra and the Vishnuite character of Sri Purushottama was then well known. The evidence of the worship of wooden images in the Purushottama Kshetra in the pre-Ganga phase which has been so strongly presented in Rajabhoga Itihasa and Deshkhancha of Madalapanji was only a construction of the chroniclers of Puri in the 17th century A.D. after the destruction of the images by Kalapahad in A.D. 1568 to articulate the history of a continuous phase of worship of the wooden deity in Puri.<sup>20</sup> This indicates that the so-called Navakalevara



occasion was possible in the Purushottama Kshetra in the post-Chodaganga phase when the stone image was transformed into the wooden images-Chaturddha Murtis having syncretistic character.<sup>21</sup> Even in Rajabhoga Itihasa and Deshkhansa of Madalapanji the term Navakalevara as an occasion in Puri temple has been absent and there is description of the renewal of the images of Puri temple on two occasions- the period of Yayati after the so-called invasion of Raktavahu and the period of Anangabhima III for the images being old and needing renewal.<sup>22</sup> Thus the chronicles of Jagannatha Puri now available to us do not present any such ceremony in the temple of Jagannatha in the Ganga-Gajapati phase before the invasion of Kalapahad, except the renewal on the images during the period of Yayati and Anangabhima. This also gives an indication that the renewal of the wooden images in the Puri temple from the period of the Ganga king Anangabhima III was not undertaken after an interval of 19 or 12 years in a regular fashion. There was then no doubt Ratha Yatra every year but the wooden structure of the deities was probably very strong for which renewal was not needed after an interval of 19 or 12 years.

The term Navakalevara became popular after the destruction of the wooden images by Kalapahad, the Afghan general in 1568 A.D. and their remaking during the period of Ramachandra I, the founder of the Bhoi family in Khurda. It is very probable that it got a distinct status in the ritual life of Purushottama Kshetra only during that period. In fact the available contemporary evidence of the time of Kalapahad suggests that the images were burnt and thrown into the sea.<sup>23</sup> But during the period of Ramachandra I, it was given out that one Bisara Mahanty collected the remains of the burnt images and kept them secretly in a Mrudanga (drum) from the Ganges and that he kept the burnt part of the images in

Kujanga from where they were again collected during the time of Ramachandra I and used in the renewal of the deities.<sup>24</sup> This construction of Bisara Mahanty tradition in the Puri chronicles was intended to establish the continuity of the cult of wooden gods in Puri despite several waves of invasion starting from Raktavahu to Kalapahad and with the title of Duti Indradyumna for Ramachandra I for this remarkable deed the renewal of the wooden gods might have become a significant part of the Ratha Yatra ceremony for the coming centuries.<sup>25</sup> No doubt the images were renewed in some intervals during the Ganga-Gajapati period, but this name Navakalevara for this occasion began to be used from the Bhoi phase. In fact no Puranic text of the period of the Ganga-Gajapati phase or any Sanskrit text of this phase refers to this particular name. The absence of this name Navakalevara in the literary texts of this period clearly indicates that the festival was observed in the Purushottama Kshetra during the Snana and Ratha occasions and had no independent ritual status.

### III

A study of the rituals of Ratha Yatra and the association of the kingship with the cult help us to conclude that Ratha Yatra was introduced as a new and separate festival in the Purushottama Kshetra only in the Ganga period, i.e., after 12th century A.D. An important ritual can be studied for this context. It is described in *Chaitanya Charitamruta* (a text of 16th -17<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) and in *Niladri Mahodaya* (a text composed after 16th century A.D.) On the fifth day of the departure of Jagannatha, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshana to Gundicha Mandapa, the Hera Panchami is observed.<sup>26</sup> On that day Lakshmi who was like a disillusioned wife after the departure of Jagannatha makes her journey to Gundicha by a palanquin. As soon as She approaches the



chariot of Jagannatha, a temple servant receives her. After the *Madhyanhadhupa* (Mid-day offering) of the Lords is over in Gundicha Mandapa he takes the garland from Jagannatha and delivers it to Lakshmi. With the garland Lakshmi comes to the chariot of Lord Jagannatha. Then her servants break some part of the chariot of Jagannatha and return to the temple. We have no information about the exact period when the *Hera Panchami* was first observed in the Purushottama Kshetra, but from the fact that Jagannatha does not accompany his wife Lakshmi to the Gundicha Mandapa, it is clear that Ratha Yatra was observed in the Purushottama Kshetra only when the four wooden images (where Lakshmi in wooden form is absent) were worshipped there.

On the basis of the inside story of Lakshmi's agony in the *Hera Panchami* we may state that this festival was unknown in the pre-Ganga period when Sri Purushottama was worshipped.<sup>27</sup> Lakshmi was in agony because the festival was introduced in the period when Jagannatha was worshipped in the temple with his brother and sister and she was neglected by her husband. We can also argue that Balabhadra is the elder brother of Jagannatha. So Lakshmi, the wife of Jagannath should not see the elder Balabhadra and for this traditional taboo (as known in Odia society) Jagannath does not like to take his wife to Gundicha. But this taboo is not a cogent argument to connect Ratha Yatra with the Purushottama Kshetra in the pre-Ganga period. The priests of the Purushottama temple would not like to change the tradition of the visit of Lakshmi and Purushottama to Gundicha Mandapa during the Ratha Yatra phase. In a family in Odia social life an elder brother should not see the wife of the younger brother; but it does not mean that in any ceremony the wife of the younger brother will be totally neglected for the presence of the elder

brother there. On the other hand, we may state that probably the Ratha Yatra was not known in the Purushottama Kshetra in the pre-Ganga period when Sri Purushottama was the chief deity. The introduction of the worship of Balabhadra, Jagannatha, Subhadra and Sudarshana in wooden form indicates the phase of Krishnaization of the deities in the Purushottama Kshetra. The identification of Purushottama-Jagannatha with Krishna who could sit on his popular chariot Nandighosh suggests that Ratha Yatra was introduced as a separate festival in the Purushottama Kshetra in the Ganga period.

We can only speculate that the place now called Gundichanagara was a tribal centre of worship before it was included in the Kshetra of Purushottama. Near it a temple for Sri Purushottama was built somewhere on the sea-shore zone before 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Although Sri Purushottama Kshetra was well known in the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. there was conflict between the tribal groups and the Sakta-Tantric groups on the ownership of the Kshetra. Consequently Sri Purushottama was neglected in that zone. The Jyesthi festival was popular in the small corner of Sri Purushottama on the sea-shore of Puri in the Somavamshi phase. The Somavamshi kings were mainly the patrons of Siva-Lingaraja and Saivism was the main religious force during that time. This situation underwent significant change during the period of the Ganga king Chodaganga who subverted Somavamshi rule in Odisha and despite his ancestral regard for Saivism he wanted to patronize Sri Purushottama for the development of Vaishnavism which was actually a political decision for the legitimation of his power in Utkala kingdom.<sup>28</sup> His inscriptions in the Narasimha shrine in the inner compound of the present Jagannatha temple indicate that there was elaborate provision for the worship of Sri Purushottama from the period of Chodaganga.<sup>29</sup>



In all probability he first either repaired the old temple of Purushottama or even shifted it to an ideal location in the Kshetra before planning the construction of a suitable temple for the deity in the place where it now stands.<sup>30</sup> Besides granting elaborate endowments for the worship of the deity Sri Purushottama Chodaganga made a provision for the *Anga-bhoga* of the deity Sri Purushottama during the period of the construction of a gigantic temple in the Kshetra.<sup>31</sup> This is found to be stated in the Markandesvara temple inscription.<sup>32</sup> According to this inscription during the reign of the illustrious Ganga king Chodaganga a provision was made for the *angabhoga* of Sri Purushottama and for the maintenance of a perpetual lamp with image to be burnt before the god Markandesvara which was entrusted to one Sadhu Bhimadeva of the village Niralo, along with Hari and Rudra.<sup>33</sup> Thereafter (idanim or now- the time is not specified in the inscription) Bhimadeva's son Nana is stated to have freed himself from the earlier responsibility possibly after the death of his father.<sup>34</sup> Then the inscription states that one Jivantasresthin accepted the gold after the termination of the previous endowment. This second arrangement as stated in the inscription is silent on the *angabhoga* of Purushottama which suggests that the second arrangement was only for the perpetual lamp of Markandeswar. D.C. Sircar and following him Snigdha Tripathy suggest that Niralo grama where Sadhu Bhimadeva resided was an *angabhoga* grama; but in the inscription the expression is very clear-Sadhu Bhimadeva of Niralograma, along with Rudra and Hari accepted an endowment for both purposes like burning of a perpetual lamp for Markandesvara and for the *angabhoga* of Purushottama. Here we cannot accept *angabhoga* as an epithet for the Niralograma. Also if one accepts the location of Niralograma in Aska on the bank of the river Badanadi in the Ganjam

district as suggested by S. Tripathy recently, this provision was not possible on the part of the Somavamshi kings in their declining phase before Chodaganga.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, if one reads *angabhoga* for Sri Purushottama as a separate provision during the period of Chodaganga in this inscription the meaning would be very clear. In fact there is no evidence on the provision of *angabhoga* for Purushottama during the Somavamshi phase in the remote Aska zone where the later Eastern Gangas had considerable power and influence. This suggests that the arrangement for the *angabhoga* of Purushottama was not needed after the death of Sadhu Bhimadeva of Niralo grama and his son became free from this arrangement when possibly Purushottama was needed to be replaced by the fourfold wooden images-Jagannatha and his associates. We cannot arrive at the conclusion that the wooden images called Jagannatha, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshana were all on a sudden installed in the temple during the reign of Anangabhima-III. There must have been a movement in the Kshetra to change the iconography of the deity in the newly built temple of Chodaganga before Anangabhima-III (in the first decade of 13th century A.D.). As a radical iconographic change was in the process in the post-Chodaganga period this provision of *angabhoga* for the old deity Sri Purushottama was not necessary. Thus in the second arrangement as stated in the Markandesvara temple inscription the provision for the *angabhoga* of Sri Purushottama was deleted and only the provision for the perpetual lamp for Markandesvara was granted.<sup>36</sup> This *angabhoga* has been interpreted as a provision for the body decoration and illumination; but this decoration of the body does not give any direct indication that the deity was wooden in shape, because there is inscriptional evidence on the provision of *angabhoga* (sometimes





anga-rangabhoga) for Varahalakshmi Narasimha and Bithala Deva.<sup>37</sup> These deities are not wooden in shape. However from the inscription it is clear that the arrangement for the wooden image worship was in progress in the post-Chodaganga phase and possibly in the period of Anangabhima-III (in the first two decades of the 13th century A.D) the worship of fourfold wooden images became successful in the Purushottama Kshetra.

#### IV

Ratha Yatra as a distinct festival was introduced in the Purushottama Kshetra only when the fourfold wooden images were worshipped in the new temple during the period of Anangabhima-III. Anangabhima III for the first time after his successful military career declared himself the Rauta (deputy) of Lord Purushottama-Jagannatha in his 8th regnal year.<sup>38</sup> Such a declaration by the Ganga king highlighted Purushottama- Jagannatha cult in the religious space in medieval Odisha. Later on he declared himself the deputy of Lord Jagannath under whose command he was ruling over the extensive kingdom.<sup>39</sup> In all probability during the period of Anangabhima III the chariot festival was introduced in the Purushottama Kshetra.<sup>40</sup> The Jyesthi occasion was expanded into Gundicha Yatra and became known as Ratha Yatra. Gundicha Kshetra was possibly the centre of the first formation of the Hinduized wooden deities. So probably the images in wooden form every year after Snana occasion left to Gundicha Kshetra, their original seat, in their chariots.<sup>41</sup> The Ratha Yatra justified the kingly nature of the deity Jagannatha in whose kingdom the Ganga kings were mere Rautas. By the subordination of kingship with Ratha Yatra in the month of Ashadha the cult served a very useful political purpose. It was able to unify all local forces in Hinduism and by the public view of Lord Jagannatha in his

chariot during the month of Asadha a social cohesion was also achieved. In 1321 A.D. an European Friar Odoric presented an interesting evidence on the Ratha Yatra in Puri.<sup>42</sup> According to this report- “Annually on the recurrence of the day when the idol was made, the folk of the country come and take it down, and put it on a fine chariot; and then the king and queen, and the whole body of the people, join together and draw it forth from the church with loud singing of songs and all kinds of music”. This indicates that Ratha Yatra was the most significant ceremony in the kingdom of Jagannatha in Odisha from the later Ganga phase.

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5. For an elaborate study on these texts see G.N.Dash and R.R. Das, ed., *Jagannatha and the Gajapati Kings of Orissa, A Compendium of late Medieval Texts (Rajabhoga, Sevakarmani, Deshakhanya and Other Minor Texts)*, 2010, Manohar, Delhi. In the Gopala Tirtha Math Madalapanji, there is an elaborate section on this aspect entitled “Sri Jagannatha Devankara Chaturddhamurti Gathana” which is more or less similar with that of Deshkhanya. This Gopalatirtha Matha Madalapanji otherwise called *Sri Purushottama Kshetra Sri Jagannathankara Darubrahma Murati Abatara* has not been edited. I am grateful to Professor Gaganendranath Dash for giving an opportunity of reading this manuscript. It is



- included in Orissa Research Project, Manuscript No.20.
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  7. Tripathy, 2014, 302-306. G.N.Dash, 2010, XXVIII.
  8. *Ibid*.
  9. Tripathy, 2014, 304.
  10. In Rajabhoga Itihasa compiled by A.B.Mohanty, in Deshakhjanja compiled by G.N.Dash and R.R. Das the renewal of the images have been presented in two important dates; in the period of Yayati Keshari, and that of Anangabhima. See *Madalapanji (Rajabhoga Itihasa)*, ed. A.B.Mohanty, 1969, Bhubaneswar, p.5, p.28. For Deshakhjanja see G.N.Dash, 2010, p.10, p.17. The term used in Deshakhjanja texts is *Talapa* which may mean decoration (Lepa) or remaking. In Gopalatirtha Panji the term is *Talaba*. In Madalapanji of Mohanty the term is Tarapha. In another section as known to Mohanty it is *Lepa*. In the case of Yayati the renewal of the images is clear. But in the case of Anangabhima the term may also mean cleaning or decoration of the old body.
  11. In all these texts starting from Rajabhoga Itihasa, Deshakhjanja, and Gopalatirtha Matha Madalapanji and even in Sarala Mahabharata the term Navakalevara is not mentioned.
  12. From a study on the introduction of Chaturddhamurti in place of Sri Purushottama during the period of Anangabhima III (in the first two decades of 13th century A.D.) it becomes very clear that the wooden image worship was not known in the Purushottama Kshetra in the pre-Ganga period. Except the traditional texts starting from Rajabhoga Itihasa, Deshakhjanja and other manuscript of this nature which contain the worship of wooden gods in Puri during the period of Yayati Keshari (in the pre-Ganga phase) there is no evidence of this worship in the Kshetra in the pre-Ganga phase. In the *Anargha Raghava Nataka* of Murari the deity is expressed Nilendramani (indicate of its stone nature). The large number of votive inscriptions of the period of Chodaganga in the Narasimha shrine do not definitely indicate the wooden nature of the deity Sri Purushottama. In the famous Indradyumna tradition (in Purushottama Mahatmya and in Sarala Mahabharata) if properly analysed the image worshipped as Nilamadhava before Indradyumna saw the Kshetra is presented as made of stone. According to Indradyumna tradition the old image of Nilamadhava (stone image) was replaced by the *Chaturddhamurti* (four fold daru images) only in the period of Indradyumna. See for the stone image worship in the Kshetra of Purushottama in the pre-Ganga phase *Vana Parva* of Sarala Mahabharata, Department of Cultural Affairs, Bhubaneswar, 1970, p.185. For the stone image worship in the Kshetra of Purushottama in the pre-Ganga phase see H.V. Stietencron, "Early Temples of Jagannatha in Orissa", *CJRTO*, 2014, p.132. For an interesting study of Indradyumna legend see R.Geib, "The Temple Legend and the King Indradyumna", *CJRTO*, 2014, p.23-43.
  13. *Vana Parva* of Sarala Mahabharata, Part-2, Department of Cultural Affairs, Bhubaneswar, 1970, p.184-185.
  14. *Ibid; Biprara mukhe vandhila Andha ye Patalal / Dekhaila Pasana pheina andha ye patala / p.185*. For the interesting details on this provision in Navakalevara see the report of Charles Groeme of 1805. According to the report-when Assar happens to be an intercalary month it is necessary to take off the idols' clothes and have the body completely experienced, when if any part of them is gone to decay. A new case or body must be made to contain the sacred deposit and the Dytahs and Puttees who remove the sacred substance from the old case to the new one are blindfolded. See for this context *Charles Groeme's Report on the Temple of Jagannatha*, 10th June, 1805, ed. K.S.Behera and others, Orissa State Archives, Bhubaneswar, 2002, p.18-19.
  15. Kailash Chandra Dash, "A Study of the Origin of Ratha Yatra in the Purushottama Kshetra", *East and West*, Rome, Vol.46, No.1 and 2, 1996, p.117-125.
  16. Dash, 1996, p.117-125.
  17. Dash, 1996, p.117-125.
  18. Dash, 1996, p.117-125; P.V.Kane, "Passages from the Rajamartanda", *Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Institute*, Pune, Vol. 36, p.306-339.
  19. *Purushottama Kshetra Mahatmya* (Skanda Purana), Venkateswar Press, Mumbai.
  20. A recent study of Rajabhoga Itihasa of Madalapanji as well as the versions of Deshkhjanja indicate that the phase of Yayati and the wooden image worship in that phase before Chodaganga was a construction of the chroniclers of Puri after the destruction of the wooden images by Kalapahad, the Afghan general in 1568 A.D. It was intended to present a continuity of the worship of



- the wooden images in Puri for several centuries before and after the Ganga phase. For the absence of wooden image worship in pre-Ganga phase in Puri see No.12 of our references. The so-called Raktavahu tradition of the period of Yayatikesari of the Puri chronicles merely served a prototype for Kalapahad and the reinstallation of the wooden images after 1568 A. D. in the period of Ramachandra Deva-I. See for similar argument Hermann Kulke, "Looking for Yayati Kesari: Reflections on Puri's Temple Chronicles", Souvenir of 74th Indian History Congress, Cuttack, 2013, p.55-71.
21. In the post-Chodaganga phase and possibly during the reign of Anangabhima-III in the first two decades of 13th century A.D. the wooden gods in forfold form were worshipped in the giant temple in Puri. For this aspect see *CJRTO*. Chapter-11, 2014, p.235-267.
  22. See No.10.
  23. Abul Fazl wrote: Kalapahad, the general of Sulaiman on his conquest of the country flung the image of Jagannatha into fire and burnt it, and afterwards cast it into the sea. On the basis of the statement of Abul Fazl P.Mukherji commented; it appears that the images were taken to the sea shore near Kujang and burnt. Such an assumption accounts for Besar Mohanty's presence at Kujung. P.Mukherji, *The History of the Gajapati Kings of Orissa and Their Successors*, Calcutta, 1953, p.118.
  24. H.Kulke, "The Sturggle between the Rajas of Khurda and the Muslim Subahdars", *CJRTO*, 2014, p.415-416.
  25. Kulke, 2014, p.415-417.
  26. Dash, 1996, p.119.
  27. Dash, 1996, 119-120.
  28. Kulke, 2014, p.207-214; Kailash Chandra Dash, "Chodaganga and Vaishnavism", *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, Bangalore, Vol. LXXXIV, No.IV, 1993, p.174-188.
  29. Kailash Chandra Dash, "New Light on the Date of the Construction of the Temple of Purushottama-Jagannatha of Puri", *Odisha Review*, June, 2014, Vol. LXX, No.II, p.63-69. See for Narasimha temple inscriptions in Puri, Snigdha Tripathy, *Descriptive Topographical Catalogue of Orissan Inscriptions*, Manohar, Delhi, 2010, p.399-412.
  30. According to Deshkhancha it was at Malaya Mandapa where the deities were worshipped when the giant temple was under construction. See Dash, G.N., 2010, p.20. Dash, 2014, p.63-69.
  31. See Kailash Chandra Dash, *Anchalika Janasruti O Itihasa*, Bhubaneswar, 2000, p.54-63.
  32. *Ibid*.
  33. The village Niralo has recently been identified with the same name in the Aska police station under Ghumusar sub-division, on the bank of the river Badanadi in the Ganjam district. See Tripathy, 2010, p.411.
  34. Dash, 2000, p.55-58. The content of the Markandesvara temple inscription suggests that it was engraved in the post-Chodaganga period and that the provision of angabhoga by Chodaganga in it was originally a verbal order.
  35. For the views of D.C. Sircar see "Puri Inscriptions of Chodaganga", *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXXIII, pp.181 ft.
  36. Dash, 2000, p.56-58.
  37. For angabhoga see Dash, 2000, p.59; K.Sundaram, *The Simhachalam Temple*, Waltair, 1969, p.84; Sobhana Gokhale, "Anga Bhoga Ranga Bhoga of Sri Vitthala of Pandharapur", *Orissa Historical Research Journal*, Vol. XXXII, No.1 and 2, p.173-179. This angabhoga may only represent the elaborate mode of worship popularly called *Sodasopachara Viddhi*.
  38. Dash, 1996, p.122-124.
  39. *Ibid*.
  40. *Ibid*. Madalapanji also refers to the introduction of Ratha Yatra during the period of Anangabhima III. See Kailash Chandra Dash, "Anangabhima III", *Orissa Historical Research Journal*, Vol. XXXV, No.1 and II, p.19-20.
  41. In the Purushottama Mahatmya, Gundicha Kshetra has been described as the fatherland of the wooden deities which indicates that this site was the centre of worship of the predecessor of the wooden deities in the Puri temple. See Kailash Chandra Dash, "Ratha Yatra", Srimandira, Puri, Vol. XXIII, 1994, p.12-13. Dash, 1996, p.123.
  42. H.Kulke, "Rathas and Rajas: The Car Festival at Puri", *The Cult and Culture of Lord Jagannatha*, ed. D.Pand and S.C. Panigrahi, Cuttack, p.187.
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**S**ri Purushottam Chandrika (The narrative of Sri Kshetra Dham) by Bhavani Charan Bandopadhyaya was published on 1844 A.D. (1251 *sal* or 1766 *Saka* era) at *Samachar Chandrika Yantralay* (Printing Press). It is purported to be the first full-fledged book on Lord Jagannath and His Domain of course with special reference to history of Odisha written by an Indian author in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is written in Bengali with poetic style.

Invention comes from the word 'invent' (to be the first to think of, make or use something). Invention in this case is the act of creating something new while reinvent is to invent something again or bring something back into existence, use or popularity after a period of

neglect or obscurity. The second invented edition of the book in 2011 A. D. has made a new addition to the historiography of Jagannath literature and of Odishan History.

The article aims at bringing to focus the first indigenous writing on Odisha more luminous on the abode of the Lord, Puri with its theological and blessed manifestation. The Christian missionaries of the period have bitterly criticized *Juggernaut* (the handless and legless Deity) whose decline was only a question of time that would ultimately pave the way for the collapse of Hindu religion. But contrary to missionary expectation and zeal, the Indian minds have exhibited strong inclination and deep-seated penchant towards the cult of Jagannath that got

## Jagannath in Literature : Sri Purushottam Chandrika Revisited

*Dr. Somarani Chand*



itself expressed through literary manifestation. In this backdrop, the pioneering attempt has been made by Bhavani Charan in the 4<sup>th</sup> decade of 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The name Bhavani Charan Bandopadhyay (1784-1848) may not be familiar to the majority of Jagannath readers today. In fact, he belongs to the first category of Indian writers, whose writings on Odisha cover a spacious range of geography, religion, Jagannath culture, mythological significance of the soil with sporadic reference to British occupation of Odisha. Above all, *Sri Kshetra*, Puri forms the nucleus of Bhavani Charan's literary pursuit.



The repercussion of 16<sup>th</sup> century enlightenment coupled with fertilizing effect of European Romanticism invested the non-Europeans like Indians with an aura of inquisitiveness, interrogation and exploration. The tendency was to probe not only in the direction of historical happenings of hoary past, but in the direction of society, culture, tradition, heritage, customs, religion, rites, rituals and the like. Growing interest in Indological studies received an advantageous foothold with the establishment of Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784. Thus wrote Rabindra Nath Tagore in the Preface of *The Bengali Book of English Verse* (Ed. T.O.D. Dan) in 1918, I think she (Bengal) is the only region in the Orient which has shown any distinct indication of being thrilled by the voice of Europe as it came to her through literature. While other eastern countries captivated by the sight of the immense power and prosperity which Europeans presented to us, Bengal has been stirred by the forces of new ideas breaking upon her from the western horizon. This shock, which roused Bengal, mainly came through literature and a great part of her energy followed the same channel of literature for its expression ..... Bengal's response through literature to the call of the west is something unique in the history of modern east.

*Sri Purushottam Chandrika* can be well cited as a glaring example of Bengal's response to literature in its initial phase of awakening. It is characterised by Bengal's enthusiastic proclivity for Jagannath (Whom they usually refer as *Jagannathdev*, *Nilachal Bihari*, *Niladri Nath*) and intense estimation for His surroundings. Again it can be well quoted as a sweet symbol of neighbourly fraternity and goodwill.

As a matter of fact, a glance towards the history of religion in Odisha, identifies itself with the history of the Lord to a great extent. In the words of William Wilson Hunter in Odisha :

There, then is a great phenomenon in the inner history of a nation, over which those who would study the workings of the religious instinct in man's heart will do well to pause. In order to understand what Jagannath is now to the Hindus, it is necessary to learn what He has for Ages been.

Again Hunter has asserted that this cult of Jagannath has congregated all the principal sects of Hinduism, assimilated the tenets of other religions, that in due course has become the national religion of the soil. He further adds of this religious syncreticism, Jagannath forms the ultimate result. He has assimilated to Himself a wider range of attributes, than any of the Gods of Rome or Greece. This national reverence for holy places has been for ages concentrated on the city of Puri. On these inhospitable sands, Hindu religion and Hindu superstition have stood at the bay for 18 centuries against the world. Here is the National Temple whither the people flock to worship from every province of India.

Author Bhavani Charan born on 1784 A.D. at 24 Pargana of Bengal was a Brahmin by birth. Following two consequential battles; that is Battle of Plassey (1757) and Battle of Buxar (1764), the political revolution in Bengal led to a series of socio-economic and cultural changes. Calcutta (Kolkata) had overtaken the older commercial centres of Dacca or Murshidabad. More *Brahmins* and *Kayasthas* of rural Bengal settled in and around Calcutta, that in the long run ushered in a free environment in ideas, thoughts, apperception and appreciation. It created a new class of native elites, with deep insight to the past, interpretation of the present with vision for future.

*Bhavani Charan Bandopadhyay* very well belongs to this category who had with him intellectual awareness and cognizance. He had thoroughly mastered Sanskrit and English along



with his mother tongue Bengali. Starting his career at the tender age of 16 in a commercially concern, J. Docket Company, he had a long tenure of 11 years service experience. Then he was secretary to Bishod Middleton at Calcutta and thereafter served as main assistant to Collector of Hoogly. His intellect proximity with administration, commercial knowledge have made him a gifted personality. He was no less aware of the labours of British Orientalists like Sir William Jones (1746 – 94), Charles Wilkins (1749 – 1836), H. T. Colebrooke (1765 – 1837), H. H. Wilson (1786 – 1860), James Prinsep (1799 – 1840), who made serious attempts to gain greater knowledge of the legal, cultural and religious literature of the Hindus.

Alongside the Hindu history and culture there was a discernible growth in the demand for English education. ‘They (the Hindus) have shown the greatest desire in Calcutta to learn the English language’ as one contemporary official was to note ‘and have gone to considerable expense for that purpose.’ The best known instance of such private initiative in education was Hindu college, set up in 1817 (later renamed as Presidency College in 1855). Thus, Bengal witnessed a meaningful transformation, better to be called as ‘Bengal Renaissance’ where Raja Rammohan Roy was like a father-figure. As a junior contemporary Bhavani Charan had joined Rammohan in editing *Sambad Kaumudi* in 1821. Soon difference of opinion made them poles apart and in 1830, Bhavani set up *Dharma Sabha* himself being the President and Radhakanta Dev as Secretary. His Bengali Daily *Samachar Chandrika* (1823) became his mouthpiece. A creative genius of high order, the other literary outputs of Bhavani Charan include *Babu Upakhyan* (1821), *Kolikata Kamalalay* (1823), *Duti Bilas* (1825), *Hitopadesh* (1823), *Nabababu Bilas* (1825), *Naba Bibir Bilas*

(1831), the translation of *Bhagavat*, *Manu Samhita* and *Gita*.

Travelling constituted another striking feature of Bhavani Charan’s personality. He had visited many places throughout India. Naturally, Odisha was one of his cherished spots for religious, cultural and artistic heritage. The observation of missionary Amos Sutton seems befitting to the context.

Pilgrimage to reputed holy places have been so popular in India. But no pilgrimage was ever so extensively practised and so generally famed as that of pilgrimage to *Juggeranath*. But what fortuitous circumstances that idol became so celebrated, it is difficult to imagine.

Bhavani Charan has made extensive tour of Bhubaneswar, Jajpur, Konark though Puri is the most favoured and revered one. The inquisitive mind has goaded him to look into history, tradition and heritage of the places he has come across. The temple chronicle *Madalapanji* has hastened his spirit of creativity. Just four years before his death at a matured age of 60, he has written *Sri Purushottam Chandrika* and has published it in his own publication unit of *Samachar Chandrika Yantralay*. The book has become not only a guide book for the Bengali pilgrims, but also it represents a brilliant combination of history and spiritualism.

### **Jagannath in Tradition and Literature**

The holy temple town of Puri is situated on the eastern sea coast of India and lies within 19°47’55" North latitude and 85°49’5" East longitude. It is famous for the acclaimed temple of Lord Jagannath and the blue sea which provides a picturesque appearance to the place. The great temple being at the centre, the whole its surroundings constitute the *kshetra* extending about five *kosas* or around 16 kms as referred in ancient scriptures. It resembles a right oriented



conch-shell or *Dakshinavarta Sankha* for which the *kshetra* is also called *Sankha Kshetra*.

Thus, antiquity of Lord Jagannath is of remote origin. No fixed date or year can be assigned in this regard. Nevertheless, the prevailing tradition, myth or legend help us to form a reasonable hypothesis on the matter. In ancient Indian literature of *Rigveda* and *Atharvaveda* there is reference to *Daru* who is regarded as the symbol of *Brahman*. The Upanishadic literature however makes mention of *Purusha* as the Creator of the Universe. It is therefore presumed that with the passage of time the *Daru Upasana* concept of Vedic Age was moulded to *Purusha Upasana* in Upanishadic era. The *Svetasvetara Upanisad* (III, 19), *Kaivalya Upanisad* (mantra 21) depict *Purusha* as one Who possesses neither hands nor legs, Who has no eyes, but sees everything, no ears but hears all and who through unknowable knows everything.

*ApânipadoYavanograhitâ  
Pasyatyacaksuhsasrnotyakarnah  
Savettivedyamnacatasyastivetta  
TamâhurârâdhyamPurushammahântam.*

*Apânipado ham  
acintyâsaktihpasyamyacaksuhsrnomyakarna  
Ahamvijânamiiviktarupo n castivettâ mama  
citsadaham.*

It can be well deduced that this very depiction of *Purusha* in both the *Upanisadas* provides basis of peculiar form of *Purushottam* and His Associates.

In *Uttarakanda* and *Kiskindakanda* of *Ramayana* and in *Santi Parva* of *Mahabharat*, reference to Lord Jagannath are not unfamiliar which indicates the remote ancientness of the cult.

The *Puranas* (mythologies) are however vociferous on their accounts regarding *Purushottam Kshetra* and *Kshetranath* (Master of the *Kshetra* (place), Jagannath).

*Bhavisya Purana, Brahma Purana, Brihat Vishnu Purana, Garuda Purana, Padma Purana, Skanda Purana, Vayu Purana, Vishnu Purana* and *Narasimha Purana* are worth-quoting in this context. *Brahma Yamala, Vishnu Yamala, Rudra Yamala, Kapila Samhita, Kshetra Mahatmya* are the others in the line.

Besides these mythological texts, several medieval Sanskrit works throw light on Jagannathism or Jagannath religion or its various aspects or in entirety. The followings are the list of few texts.

- *Abhinav Gitagovinda, Mukti Chintamani, Gopalarcana Vidhi* by Gajapati Purushottamdev.
- *Bhakti Bhaibhava Natakam* by Jivadevacharya
- *Chandrakala Natika* by Viswanath Kaviraj
- *Gangavamsanucharita Champu* by Vasudeva Rath
- *Jagannath Ballav Natakam* by Rai Ramananda
- *Gundicha Vijay Champu* by Kaviraj Bhagavan Brahma
- *Mukunda Vilasa* by Raghuttama Tirtha
- *Niladrinath Satakam* by Nityananda
- *Purushottam Satakam* by Purushottam Mishra
- *Purushottam Tattva* by Raghunandan
- *Srikrishnalila Tarangini* by Narayana Tirtha
- *Saubhagya Manjusa* by Krushnananda Brahmachari
- *Siddhanta Darpana* by Samanta Chandrasekhar



The theological concept centering round the deities Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarsana evolved through ages. It further developed and got reoriented by various groups of worshippers under different ruling dynasties of the state like Matharas, Early Gangas, Sailodbhavas, Bhaumakaras, Somavamsis, Gangas and Suryavamsis. Leading philosophers like Shankaracharya, Ramanuja, Narahari Tirtha and others have their laudable contributions towards the growth of the cult and conviction. Several existing sects and religions have also exercised considerable influences in making the cult an amalgam.

This gradual absorption of heterogeneous attributes by Jagannath have made it the melting pot of many faiths and beliefs. Irrespective of individual conviction, the Lord has His universal appeal because of the spirit of harmony and co-existence. He epitomizes *vasudhaiva kutumbakam* (the world as one family), a global vision of unified concept, the Indians have unfailingly cherished since time immemorial, a philosophy that goes beyond the realm of realism.

Since the time of Ganga rule especially with Chodaganga, Jagannath religion better to be called as Jagannathism became more vibrant and reflective. In addition to His epigraphic appearances, he made His presence felt in Odia literature. The followings are the glaring examples.

- Mahabharat by Sarala Das.
- *Amarkosa Gita, Bata Abakash, Deulatola, Gupta Gita, Gurubhakti Gita, Virata Gita, Jagamohana Ramayana, Vedantasara Guptagita* by Balaram Das.
- *Darubhakti Gita* by Jagannath Das.
- *Namaratna Gita, Rasakallola, Jagamohan Chhanda* by Dinakrushna Das.
- *Premabhakti Gita* by Jasobanta Das.

- *SunyaSamhita, Chayal is Patala* by Achyutananda Das.
- *Usha Vilas, Deulatola* by Sisusankar Das.
- *Anakara Samhita* by Nanda Das.
- *Chaturdha Vamana Murati* by Krupasindhu Das.
- *Dadhyata Bhakti* by Ram Das.
- *Kalpalata and Ramvivaha* by Arjun Das.
- *Jagannathastakam* by Gajendra Das.
- *Kotibrahmandasundari, Niladri Chautisa, Kshetra Mahatmya, Rasika Harabali* by Upendra Bhanja.
- *Jagannath Chautisa* by Ratnakar Sharma.
- *Nilagiri Vighraha* by Gopinath Singh.
- *Niladri Mahotsav* by Loknath Vidyadhar.

The collective efforts of these writers have made the cult of the Lord a glittering one that has its reflection in every aspect of human life be it religion, architecture, social custom or cultural heritage. It assimilates within itself the views of teachers, preachers, philosophers by re-establishing the ultimate truth that God is one, beyond all man-made trivial narrowness and thus belongs to all.

With British occupation of Odisha in 1803, remarkable changes were felt in socio-intellectual and religio-economic sphere. The English people were well aware of the importance of Jagannath and His all-pervading influence on Hindu life. To quote Major Thorn in his *Memoir of War in India* (1818) :

A considerable degree of importance has been attached to the possession of Cuttack from the connection which it has with the religion of the *Hindoos* whose reverence for Temple of *Juggernath* infinitely surpasses all that has ever





been known in the history of ancient or modern superstition of the extravagance of local sanctity.

The celebrated structure may be said to constitute the centre of *Brahmanical* devotion absorbing all the proud and invidious distinction of that extraordinary system.

Naturally, a wave of writings in English appeared that fabricated the literary appearance of Jagannath more impressive. Some of the earlier publications as follows :

- *An Account of Orissa Proper or Cuttack* by Andrew Stirling.
- *Ancient Geography of India* by Sir Alexander Cunningham.
- *A Brief History of the Rise and Progress of the General Baptist Mission in Orissa* by James Peggs.
- *Orissa, the Garden of Superstition and Idolatry: Including an Account of British Connection with Jagannath Temple* by W.F.B. Lauree.
- *The Government Grant to Juggernath's Temple* by James Peggs.
- *History of Puri* by B. K. Ghosh.
- *Orissa and Its Evangelization* by Amos Sutton.
- *Antiquities of Orissa* by R. L. Mitra.

Pilgrimage to holy centres constitutes a vital part of Hindu religion. But among various places, Puri is the most preferred one. In the words of Amos Sutton,

Orissa is to India what Jerusalem was to the land of Israel. It is the holy land of the Hindus. As the Israelists went up to worship at Mount Zion, so do the inhabitants of the various provinces of India go on pilgrimage to the great temple of Juggernath.

Realising this tradition bound sentiment, the construction of new Jagannath Road from Jaleswar to Puri began in 1812 and was completed in 1825. The construction of a well at *Atharanullah* for the convenience of the pilgrims in 1827, erection of *saraies* (pilgrim shelters) at Balasore, Akhuapada, Basta, Bhadrak and Rajghat near Jaleswar in 1827, plantation of shady trees on roadside further encouraged the pilgrims to visit Puri. As a result, Jagannath began to get place in indigenous Hindi, Tamil, Telugu and Bengali literature. Some earlier publications can be cited in this regard.

#### Hindi

- *Jagannath Mahatmyabhasa* by Viswanath Tripathy.
- *Tirthadarpan* by Shivakrishna Binani.
- *Jagannath Mahatmya* by Shiv Narayan Sharma.
- *Narapati Nala* by Bisaldev Raso.
- *Chitravali* by Usman.

#### Telugu

- *Utkal Sri Jagannatham* by Narasimhamurti Bhallamudi.
- *Nilachal Mahatyam* by Tennets Seethumuti.
- *Mukti Chintamani* by Venkatadiya.

#### Tamil

- *Sri Jagannath Kshetra Kilakkam* by K. S. Venkataraman.

In Bengali, however more number of publications are available. In fact, the Bengalis are the forerunners among other Indians who were either government servant or ardent Jagannath devotee or sincere Odisha lover. They were somewhat justified in taking such a stand, frantically trying to present different aspects of Odishan



history, cultural heritage, religious sanctity. Some of them are more descriptive about Puri and Jagannath. In spite of various limitations of their works, they are the harbingers of indigenous historical as well as religious writings on Odisha. Few among them are-

- *Sri Purushottam Chandrika* by Bhavani Charan Bandopadhyay.
- *Niladri Madhuri* by Jadabendra Adhya.
- *Utkal Tirtha* by Sadananda Saraswati.
- *Sri Kshetra* by Sundarananda Vidyavinod.
- *Sri Jagannath Mandir* by M. M. Sadasiv Mishra.
- *Mandirer Katha* by Gurudas Sarkar.
- *Jagannath Mangal* by Viswambar Das.
- *Nilachal* by Chuinal Basu.
- *Utkal Parva* by Ramyani Viksha.
- *Mahaprabhur Nilachal Lila* by Haridas Goswami.
- *Govinda Deser Katha* by Govinda Das ed. Jaygopal Goswami.
- *Amader Des Orissa* by Subodh Kumar Chakravarty.
- *Kanchi Kaveri* by Rangalal Bandopadhyay.

Even in the Bengali autobiographies of 19<sup>th</sup> century like *Amar Jivan* by Nabin Chandra Sen, *Amar Jivan Katha* by Nagendra Nath Basu and *Keshab Janahir Atmakatha* by Sharada Sudari Devi, description on Puri and Lord Jagannath occupy a dominant position.

### **Sri Purushottam Chandrika : An Evaluation**

The first category of Bengali writing on Lord Jagannath is *Sri Purushottam Chandrika* written by Bhavani Charan Bandopadhyay. Published in 1844, it is in poetic form in Bengali.

The caption of the book denotes its exclusiveness for Puri and Jagannath. At the same time, the proximity of religion with contemporary politics and administration, religious interference vis a vis power has been well portrayed by the author.

The book consists of three parts. The first part includes the colourful description of *Sri Kshetra* (Puri) to *Chatish Niyog* (36 types of servitors) of Jagannath temple with sub chapters like *Panchatirtha Vidhan*, *Chakratirtha*, Prayer (in Quartains), *Pratimurti* (Representation of Image) of the Lord, the boon to Indradyumna, Twelve Festivals (*Dwadasa Yatra*), the offerings as designed by Indradyumna, reference to *Snanayatra*, *Nava Yauvan Darshan*, Car festival and list of 36 servitors. The second part of the book reflects the story of the monarchs from *Kali Yug* to 4945 years of rule from Yudhisthir till Mukundadev. The last part of the book centers round the three other religious centres of importance- *Chakra Kshetra*, *Gada Kshetra* and *Padma Kshetra*.

For the portrayal of *Srikshetra* and other main places of ecclesiastical weightiness, the author has used *Utkal Khanda* (section) of *Skanda Purana*, *Madala Panji*, (Temple Chronicle), *Kapila Samhita*, *Vayu Purana* and *Garuda Purana* as source books. In fact, the first and third portion of the book is the Bengali form of original Sanskrit version. The second part of the book centers round the political history of the state with mention of the long list of rulers and short reference to the notable activities of some rulers for which *Madala Panji* has served the base.

The initial depiction of the first part starts with deep reverence and prayer to Lord Jagannath. Bhavani Charan's precise study of the physical features of *Sri Kshetra* with the details of other deities of Puri like *Loknath*, *Asta*



*Mahadev, Astachandi* etc. with their mythological and religious significance, a rich description of Jagannath temple from *Meghnad* Boundary wall, *Simhadwar* (entrance gate), the kitchen, the *bhogamandap*, the *Jagamohan* and the *Viman* is indeed a comprehensive one. The sub-chapter *Panchatirtha Vidhan* refers to take bath first at lake *Markandeya*, *darshan* (view) of Jagannath Trio, bath at sea and *Indradyumna* tank. The importance of *Chakratirtha* refers to representative images (*pratimurti*) of Jagannath like *Madan Mohan*, *Ramakrishna*, *Nrusimha*, *Dolagovinda*, blessings of Almighty to king *Indradyumna*, *twelve yatra*s (festivals) in twelve months, five types of *bhoga* (offerings) in a day as fixed by *Indradyumna*, bathing festival (*SnanaYatra*), *Naba Youban Darsan* (view of new youth), Car festival and 36 types of servitors are the respective additions to first chapter.

Bhavani Charan's account of ancient phase of political history is rather a curious one being the admixture of mythology and legend with history. The contour of ancient history, he has tried to reconstruct from *Kali Age* by utilizing references from *Madala Panji*. To maintain the chronology of the kings, mythical, legendry heroes along with epical heroes from *Mahabharat* have been included, total numbering 14 over a period of 3179 years.

The *saka* era in the book starts from 65 A.D. From 65 *saka* era to 1741 *saka* era there is the mention of 96 rulers with references to very few who has some specific achievements to his credit like constructing *Markandeswar* temple, *Jagannath* and *Konark* temple or the digging of *Atharanalla* and the like. In addition, the *Raktabahu* episode of 245 *saka* era during the reign of *Sovandev*, related with some miraculous incomprehensible happenings place the historical description to a hodgepodge of legend with history. Also it indicates the inadequacy of

differentiating between myth and reality and paucity of data.

The concluding portion contains the narration of *Chakra Kshetra* (*Bhubaneswar*), *Gada Kshetra* (*Jajpur*) and *Padma Kshetra* (*Konark*). It elucidates the history of *Chakra Kshetra* with reference from *Vayu Purana*. The emphatic mention of *Brahmesvar* temple, *Bhaskaresvar* temple, *Ramesvara* temple, *Gokarnesvar* temple, *Muktesvar* temple etc. along with *Ananta Vasudev* temple, the scenic beauty of the place with devotional touch makes it an interesting study. For *Gada Kshetra*, *Bhavani Charan* has relied upon the contents of *Garuda Purana*. The presentation is lively and catchy. Within a well marked boundary line, the author has attributed divine importance to the place by mentioning numerous deities besides the Presiding one, *Goddess Viraja*. The spiritual gravity of the place is very strong and distinct in this presentation while for *Padma Kshetra*, he has devoted only a single paragraph in a prosaic manner. This again points to the dearth of sources for *Konark* temple and its surroundings.

### Concluding Analysis

*Raja Rammohan Roy* on one occasion said;

A day will come when my humble endeavours will be viewed with greater justice, perhaps acknowledged with gratitude.

The remark of *Rammohan* can be well applicable in case of his junior contemporary *Bhavani Charan*. His humble and maiden attempt of writing a book on *Jagannath* at the fag end part of life (in the forth decade of 19<sup>th</sup> century) is definitely acknowledged with gratitude by the posterity. As mentioned earlier the medium of expression is *Bengali* because it is exclusively for the people of *Bengal* to have an idea about their immediate neighbour with effulgent portrayal of *Srikshetra* and its Overlord. An inimitable



combination of spiritualism with history has made the book quite a fascinating one.

As mentioned earlier, the historical accounts are far from authenticity for insufficient source materials. But the author's narration of *Srikshetra* with other three *Kshetras* will definitely impress any ordinary reader for lucidity and simplicity. The stanzas are in couplet, triplet or quatrains form. Its poetic appeal is equally amazing. History, Philosophy, Theology, legend and travelling experiences amalgamated altogether has been presented in a hearty manner that forms further major attraction for the book. It is a brilliant example of emerging prose and poetry style in Bengali literature of formative years. For the ardent devotees of far of Bengal, the very name and contents of the book breathe an aura of sacredness and purity.

The book is 170 years old. It may not be of any use to present generation of Bengali readers as a lot of publications along with availability of net facilities on the subject has quenched their inquisitiveness. But for Odisha, it carries greater weightage. For a proper and justified assessment of *Madala Panji*, the book is of meaningful significance. Last but not the least, in the evolution of regional writings on Jagannath, the book has its own essentials. It has opened the gate for others to contribute more and more on the subject to touch the grassroots level and to open new vistas for the study Jagannath Cult.

In 1891, the Collector of Puri, N. K. Bose wrote in *Calcutta Review*.

The worship of Jagannath is for the highest minds among the Hindus, a pure system of theism. To the polytheistic multitude, it refers the infinite phases of divinity as objects of worship and provide for their declaration, an infinite number of rituals and ceremonials. In a word, it supplies the spiritual requirements of different classes of Hindus in different stages of their intellectual



developments. Under its broad and receptive roof, doctrines, the most divergent, find a resting place.

Jagannath is an unsectarian name. All Hindu sects worship at its shrine. The followers of Sankaracharya, Ramananda, Kabir, Chaitanya and Nanak are to be seen paying homage to the great God. Even the Jains of the *Digambar* sects flock to the Temple at a certain season of the year. The common link of all these sects is their belief in the supremacy of Jagannath.

This cosmopolitanism of the Lord is indeed a matter of wonder. For, when in the second decade of 21<sup>st</sup> century, we find the votaries of religion have turned the world into a theatre of senseless violence, meaningless terror in the name of God, the Abode of Trinity has remained a trans-continental confluence of people of all faiths with the message.

All are equal before Almighty.

This message had definitely prompted Bhavani Charan for writing on Jagannath to be the forerunner in recent times.

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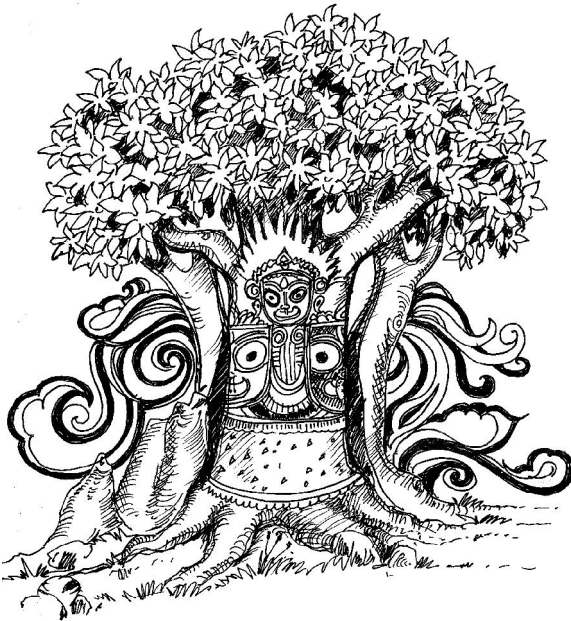
The celebrated temple of Sri Jagannath at Puri occupies a pivotal position in the religious history of Odisha. The word Jagannath literally means the Lord of the Universe. He is Purusottama – The Supreme Purusa. The daily and periodical rituals performed in His service and worship with dignity and grandeur is just like to serve a human being. Human body is subject to decay but not the Atma (soul). In the analogy of this spiritual truth, the Purusottam Jagannath relinquishes his old body and assumes a new body. But his Brahmapadartha (the inner divine substance) is not perishable. It is transferred to the new divine body. The performance of this

spiritual practice is known as Nabakalebar. It is a ritual pertaining to the new embodiment of Sri Sudarsan, Sri Balabhadra, Debi Subhadra and Sri Jagannath in the great temple at Puri of Odisha.

Nabakalebar is celebrated normally in a year having double – Ashadha or two – Ashadhas in the Hindu almanac. Generally such accessions arise at long intervals varying from 8 to 19 years. Generally from the first day of Odia month (Sankranti) to 1<sup>st</sup> day of next month (Sankranti) the duration is 29 days to 32 days (average 30 days 10 hour 30 m. 16.4 sec.) in a solar month and from the full-moon-day to the next full-moon day is 29 days 12 h. 44m. 2.9 secs. in average in

## Sri Jagannath and Nabakalebar

*Er. Nirakar Mahalik*



a lunar month i.e. a difference of 21h. 46 m. 13.5 sec. As a result of which in every (32.5) thirty two and a half of solar months one lunar month is found extra. To bridge the gap of one extra lunar month in the solar and lunar conversion is called Malamasa (extra month) having no Sankranti day. It is also called Domasee (two joint month), the first month is called Malamasa. When this Malamasa or joint month falls in Ashadha the Nabakalebar rituals of Sri Jagannath starts during this four fortnights of Ashadha including the first three fortnight (45 days) from Snana Purnami is called Mahaanasara. Because first two fortnights are required for construction of the new deities and Patalikaran of old deities and one more fortnight (3<sup>rd</sup> fortnight) as usual remains for



Anasara days of Sri Jews. Secret rituals are done from 1<sup>st</sup> day of Ashadha new moon day (1<sup>st</sup> Amabasya of Ashadha).

For example take the case of Nabakalebar of 2015. In Odisha lunar month is started from the next day of fullmoon day upto end of next fullmoon day where in other parts of our country, month starts from next day of Amabasya (Black-Moon day) upto end of next Amabasya, Devasnana Purnima (Full moon day) falls on Brusha (Jyestha) 19th day (Solar month) June-2nd day (English). From the next-day first fortnight of Mahaanasar of Sri Jews at Puri (Odisha) starts and ends after Raja Sankranti on Amabasya (Black moon day) on 16th June. During this period New Vigrahas of Sri Jews with Ghata (Brahma Padartha) transferred from old deities to new are completed. Though it is called Malamasha in Odisha, the sacred works are completed due to existence of Sankranti day and Amabasya. After Amabasya 2nd fortnight of Mahaanasar starts with Patalikaran of old deities and Daitas observe the funeral rights during this period upto Mala Purnima (Full-moon) day on 2nd July. From next day 3rd fortnight of Mahaanasar upto Amabasya day usual Anasar rituals are completed. Next day the Sankranti day on 17th July Nabajouban rituals are completed and next day unwords car-festival as usual are performed. Actually after next day of Ashadha Amabasya on 17th June upto next Amabasya day on 16th July, this extra lunar period without Sankranti day are omitted to keep the Solar-Lunar relationship as usual.

**Preparations :** – In the year when Nabakalebar is performed due to double – Ashadha, the Shree Mandir administration convenes a meeting of all Panjikars and their councils or societies of the state organizations, other specialists and renowned persons for this purpose. They have to get the formal approval from the weather



forecast division, the Director General of Meteorology, Lodi Road, New Delhi. Then the Temple administration convenes a meeting in collaboration with the Collector Puri with Daitapatis, Pati-Mahapatra, Deul Karan, Maharana Sevaks, Lenka Sevak, Rajguru, Temple Priests and other servitors for peaceful performance of the Nabakalebar.

Nabakalebar rituals of the great temple is eight fold – (1) Banayaga Yatra (search for Daru) 2. Daru Nirnaya (Selection of wood) 3. Savarpalli Nirman (construction of temporary shed for Sevaks) 4. Daru Chhedan (cutting of suitable tree-for the deities) 5. Maha Daru Yatra (carrying of suitable log for deities) 6. Karusala Paddhatee (Process of Construction of deities) 7. Brahmotshab Lila (Process of storing Brahma Padartha) 8. Golak Lila and Koili Baikuntha. (Secret rituals inside Koili Baikuntha)

Nabakalebar Lila starts from 10<sup>th</sup> day of bright fortnight of Chaitra (Basantika Dussehra day). After the mid-day Dhupa of Sri Jews inside the temple premises are washed and neatly cleaned. Badagrahi servitors of four deities, Patimahapatras, Daita-paties and other Savar Sevaks congregate under the Ratnasinghasan of Sri Jews. Patimahapatra first of all collects the Ajnamala (Garland) from the Balabhadra and gives to the concerned Badagrahi Sevak of the Lord. Likewise he hand over the Ajnamala of Sri Jagannath to His Badagrahi, Devi Subhadra to Her Badagrahi and he keeps the Ajnamala of Sudarsana for himself. Then they are given Mahaprasad, Dhoti, Khanduapata and sarees for turban for their head by the chief priest (Bhitara Parikshak) inside Anasara Pindi. The same processes are observed near Joy-Vijay Gate for Deulakaran, Padia Karan, Lenka Sevak, Behera Sevak, Khuntia Sevak, Viswakarmas (carpenter Sevak) and other Sevaks. All the Banayaga team along with Lenka Sevak with Chakra (silver Chakra) in front of the team go in a procession



with music (sound of ghanta, kahalies) to the Gajapati's (king) residence through the main gate of the Sri Mandir.

When this party reaches the main gate of Gajapati, the Rajguru of the king greets the party in a ritualistic manner. He then offers areca nuts and coconuts touched by Srihasta of the first servitor of Sri Jagannath, the Gajapati Maharaja to chief Viswabasu, the leader of Daitas and Acharya, the leader of Brahmins of the Banayaga Party. The Raja through this ritual authorizes the party to proceed to procure the sacred Daru.

Then the procession of the party proceeds and halts at Jagannath Ballava Math for a night or two. Next day they proceed to Kakatpur and halt at Deuli Math by the side of river Prachi. Temple of Goddess Maa Mangala is about 50 km. from Puri. Next day this party goes to the temple of Goddess Mangala in the forenoon for a special worship. Nobody is allowed inside the premises during this special Puja. This special worship of Goddess Maa Mangala is an important ceremonial occasion symbolising a link of Sri Jagannath with Goddess Maa Mangala. They return to Deuli Math after the Puja and there they form four groups for four deities. They cook Khechudi Arna and after taking their food and sleep in prostrating position while enchanting Swapnabati Mantra. They get Swapnadesha from Goddess Maa Mangala at about midnight. Next day all the groups proceed in different directions as per the direction given by the Goddess for procurement of Daru.

**2. Daru Anwesana & Chinhat (Location and Selection of Trees)** – The Daitas, the tribal servant of Sri Jagannath take a leading role in the expedition team with one Lenka Sevak in front leading the team with Sudarsan Chakra (Silver Wheel) for the procurement of the sacred Daru of Neem tree.

### **What are the criteria for selection of Daru –**

There are eleven symptoms for selection of Daru – 1. Geographical Position 2. Colour of Daru, 3. Living Parasites in the tree. 4. Branches, 5. Snake Guard, 6. Sign of Ayudha, 7. Ant nest, 8. Barun tree, 9. Sign of worship beforehand, 10. Spiritual Sound (Mangala Dhvani) 11. Anga Sphuran of Daitas. First of all, the tree should be near a river, spring, Nallah or any other natural water source. The tree should have no cut mark on branches. The straight portion of the trunk of the neem tree should not be less than twelve feet in length with required diameter. There should be a temple or a place of worship or any Math or hermitage or cremation ground nearby. No branches of another tree should over hang the Daru tree. The Daru tree should not have any parasites, or any creepers leaning on it. There should not be any burn mark or any of its 'branch submerged in water nor should there be any bird's nest in the Daru tree. Presence of an ant hill and cobra's hole near the tree is considered a sacred symbol for selection of the Daru tree. It is also said that marks of Sankha, Chakra etc. should be seen on Daru. The colour and branches at the Daru trees should be the following :

Sri Balabhadra – White colour with 7 branches

Debi Subhadra – Yellow with 3 branches

Sri Jagannath – Blackish with 4 or 5 branches

Sri Sudarsana – Red with nicely branched

### **Daru Pujan and Chhedan (worship of Daru and Cutting)**

– After identification of all Darus the team first proceed to the tree meant for Sudarsan Daru with Lenka Sevak having Silver Sudarshan Chakra (Disc made of silver) and Badagrahi Sevak with Ajnamala. They keep the Chakra and Ajnamala on the root of the Daru tree and worship starts by the Acharyas after cleaning the site. During this period the team of Banayaga party construct Savarpalli (cottage for



Daitas) on the North-East side of the Daru-tree where they reside upto Daru-yatra day (Lifting of wooden log of Neem). They construct Yajnasala, Yajnakunda, and a Mandap (platform) on the bottom of the Daru tree. They construct a secluded room on northern side of Yajna Mandap (platform) for Ankuraropan. Ankuraropan rituals are completed before Yajna ritual starts. Yajna rituals take three days to complete after Baisnabagni is obtained. Worship of Vishnu starts on the bottom of Daru tree Mandal; Adhibas rituals are completed in Sala Griha (shed). Homa Ahuti are done enchanting Patal Narsingha Mantra inside the Yajnasala. First of all Yajna is performed for Sudarsan Daru then for Balbhadra, Subhadra and Jagannath Daru.

**Daru Chhedan** – Before cutting of Daru tree worship for the saviour of the tree, the cobra is worshipped by offering milk and water in the pots. The trunk of the Daru tree must be bathed by the Daitapatis and covered with white cloth. The Acharya of the Banayaga team worship the golden axe, silver axe and the iron axes and then touches the axes around the tree and then the particular Ajnamala brought from Srimandir is touched on the tree by the Badagrahi Sevak. The golden axe is touched by the Viswabasu and silver axe by Daitapati Sevak curcumscribing the trunk of Daru tree. The Maharana Sevaks actually cut the Daru tree with iron axe. All the servitors take their food after the Daru fallsdown.

**Daru Yatra** – A cart having four wheels made of Bara, Aswasth, Tamarind, Panasa or Kendu wood is worshipped to carry the Sacred Daru (Log of wood). Before carrying of Daru the trunk of Daru tree is cut to size and covered with white cloth. The special cart is also decorated by torana (gate) and flags. The Daru is fastened tightly with the cart and taken to the Koili Baikuntha of Srimandir through Debajana Marga (northern gate) of temple with music and procession from Gundicha temple. Before that the Daru reaches

the Goddess Alamba near Atharnallah as She is the witness to all Darus. Daru passes through northern gate chronologically/ first Sri Sudarsana, then Sri Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Sri Jagannath Daru and are kept inside the temporary Darushala (workshed) inside Koili Baikuntha. Patimahapatra worships the Daru daily. All the rites here are performed as per the tribal practices.

Culturally, the temple tradition is also found to be the result of the integration of tribal and Aryan characteristics.

**Karusala Paddhati Karya** – Nyasashala, Snana Mandap and Yajna Mandap are set up within Karusala inside Koili Baikuntha. Sacred Darus of Sudarsan, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Jagannath are kept inside temporary Darushala upto Snana Purnima. In fullmoon day of Jyestha while the Jews take bath in Snana Mandap the new Darus also are consecrated inside Karusala. New deities are prepared within 15 days of first fort-night of Mala-Ashadha there. The Badagrahi carpenters complete all deities within the time limit according to the scale given by the Badagrahi Daitas inside the closed room without making audible sound. During this period musical instruments are played loudly so that the inner sound should not be heard to others outside. The work is completed so secretly that others do not get any trace except the concerned Daitas.

Statue of Sri Nrusingha is taken to Yajna platform inside Koili Baikuntha where Yajna is performed upto Ashadha Amabasya which is also the Sankrati day of Solar Ashadha month. Yajna is performed during construction of deities enchanting 10,000 Nrusingha Mantras. Gajapati Maharaja attends the Yajna and offers Homa.

**Ghata Parivarttan and Shuddhi Kriya** – After Snana Purnima the old deities are kept inside Anasara Pindi. New deities are brought on 14<sup>th</sup> day of dark fortnight to the same Pindi from Koili Baikuntha and kept in front of old deities. Inside





premises of the Srimandir are cleaned and washed by purifying substances. Nobody except senior, experienced Pati Mahapatra and Daitapatis remain inside Anasara Pindi. They actually change the sacred Ghata (Brahma Padartha) from the old deities to the new deities secretly with covered hands and band paties of cloths over their eyes. Only Dipa lights are used and electric lights are not allowed. K.C. Mahapatra & B. Mishra wrote in their book "Darubrahmanka Nabakalebar" that the sacred Brahma Padartha are removed from the old deities and kept on a stool by the Badagrahi Daitas and Patimahapatra. They bath the sacred things by Panchamruta and offer *bhoga* there. After some secret rituals the Brahma Padartha are kept secretly on the new deities. This secret rituals are not recorded in R.O.R. (Record of Rights) of the temple. Same thing is also written by Pandit Sadasiva Rathsharma and Suryanarayan Rathasharma in their book 'Brahmara Puni Nabakalebara'. After removing the 'Brahma Padartha' the old deities are carried to Koili Baikuntha.

**Golaka Lila** –In Koili Baikuntha a huge pit is dug having a size 12' x 12'. The pit is then covered with Pata Bastra. The four old deities, Dwarapalas, Sarathies and all the old things of the deities are then placed inside the pit and covered by earth. This ritual is performed by the Daitas secretly. After this, the Daitas observe the traditional Hindu funeral rites for twelve days. On the tenth day they go to Markandeswar Tank and perform Dasaha Karma of tonsuring their heads. On the 12th day they give a feast to all Sevayats and others.

**Anavasara Lila** – Anasara rituals are performed inside the *anasara gumuti* from Mala full moon day (extra month) upto new moon day for the 3<sup>rd</sup> fortnight of Maha Anasara. During this period also Daitas serve the new deity. Sebayats and others are not allowed to enter the Gumuti. The deities

are propitiated by the Daitapatis as per their own way of worship. In the Gumuti no electric lamp is lighted, only the Duhuri (one-wick candle in oil) is used. No rich sacred food is offered except fruits, pana, water etc. The Lipasanskar Niti (Wrapping up with cloth strips) are performed over the new deities with seven fold work. The secret rituals like Basunga pata cloth, Jhuna, Phulurilagi, Chakabije, Khadilagi, Rajaprasad bije, Ghanalagi, Banaklagi etc are performed before chitrakar paints the deities. The deities are remained cadestinely from Devasnan Purnami upto Ubha Amabasya day for 45 days (three fortnights) then appear before the devotees on the last day of dark fortnight. Devotees see the Nabajauban Besa after the priest paints the pupils of the eyes of the deities on new-moon day of bright fortnight of lunar Asadha month. World famous car festival of Sri Jagannath is performed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of bright fortnight of Asadha. So the Nabakalebar function is completed in two-Ashadha months.

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Navakalevara occurred in 1977. The Car Festival was held on 18 July. But due to delay in the performance of *nitis* the Chhera Pamhara was finished at 7.30 p.m. The chariots could not be pulled on that day. On the next day i.e., on 19<sup>th</sup> July, the Balabhadra's chariot was pulled at about 10 a.m., but just after a short distance six wheels were broken down. Only on next day, i.e., on 20<sup>th</sup> July the chariots could reach Gundicha temple by evening. It caused complete disappointment among the pilgrims and resentment of all concerned. The issue was also agitated on the floor of the Assembly and in press.

In exercise of the powers conferred under section 3 of the Commission of Enquiry Act, 1952, (Act 60 of 1952) the state government in

their notification number 140/EC dated 27.07.1077, appointed a one man Commission of Enquiry, by a retired Judge of the Orissa High Court, to enquire, determine and report regarding the causes and circumstances of delay in performance of Navakalevara rituals, adequacy of preparation for the festivals, the role of the organisations connected with it and remedial measures of alteration, modification or improvement of the performance of rituals.

In pursuance of clause-b of sub-rule 1 of rule of the Orissa Commission of Enquiry Rule, the Commission invited statement of facts on aforesaid issues from individuals, societies, associations and other persons acquainted with the subject-matter of the enquiry. The commission

## 1977 Navakalevara – An Administrative Profile

*Sarat Chandra Mahapatra*



determined the procedure on 12.12.77 and the enquiry commenced on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1978 on the basis of affidavits and statements received. It issued a direction to the temple Administrator on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1978 for not dismantling the base structure of Taladvaja Ratha of Lord Balabhadra and Nandighosa Ratha of Lord Jagannath. Local inspection in presence of the advocates, the Administrator, S.D.O. (R&B) Puri, was conducted on 4<sup>th</sup> January 1978 and report was submitted. Sixty nine witnesses were examined whose evidences run to 829 pages. The Commission of Enquiry submitted its 204 pages report on 31 August 1978.



The Commission of Enquiry, before determining the causes of delay, from the mass of evidence collected by him he has narrated various rituals for the observance of Navakalevara, which runs thus:

During an ordinary year a period of fifteen days only is observed as *anabasar* period commencing from the Jyestha Purnima, otherwise known as Snana Purnima. On that day the deities are brought in Pahandi from the Ratna Singhasana inside the temple on to the Snana Bedi where the deities are bathed with holy water in a ceremonial manner. It may be incidentally mentioned that this is the only day in the year when the deities as actually bathed in the sense that holy water is poured over the idols. On the other days of the year the bathing of the deities, known as Abakash, means only Mantra Snana. Water is not actually poured over the idols but poured over a brass mirror placed in front of each deity. After the deities are duly bathed on the Snana Mandap and after certain other rituals are observed, the idols are taken back inside the temple and placed not on the Ratna Bedi as before but in the Anasara Pindi situated just behind the Chandan (Argali). A bamboo screen is then placed alongside The Chandan Argali so that the idols would not be visible to the public. On the other side of the bamboo screen are placed the Dasabotar Thakura brought from the Dakkinagarh and three paintings of the three deities. Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath and all the prescribed daily *nitis* are performed before these Vije Pratima, otherwise known as "Tati Dians". During these 15 days of Anabasara period certain *nitis*, which are considered secret, are done in respect of the main idols in the Anasarghar, and these *nitis* are performed exclusively by a set of Sevakas called Daitapatis. During *anabasar*, the Pati Mahapatra, who is the priest of the Daitas, has certain functions to perform before the idols,

and towards the close of the *anabasar* period the Data Mahapatra also comes in to do the painting of the faces of the deities, a ritual known as Banak Lagi. Excepting the Sevakas above mentioned, no other group of Sevak and no other functionary of the temple including the Administrator, has access, into the *anasaraghar*. Although by tradition certain items of work relating to the idols have to be done on certain prescribed days during the *anabasar* period, it is not possible for the administration to keep a watch on the progress of the work there excepting getting an idea thereof through requisitions made from time to time by Daitapatis of the articles required for the prescribed *nitis* and also by such oral accounts given by the Daitapatis themselves of the progress made inside the *anasaraghar*.

It has already been said that during the *anabasara* period the daily prescribed *nitis* of the deities are performed before the Tati Dians placed in front of the bamboo screen. It is an established custom that so long as any *niti* is being performed before the Tati Dians, no work in connection with the idols placed in the anabasarghar can take place. In other words, Daitapati should come out of the anabasarghar before performance of any *nitis* before the Tati dians. It is also the rule that on no day during the ananabasara period, excepting on the Dwadasi preceding Gundicha, the Daitapatis can enter the anabasarghar prior to Madhyanha Dhup before the Tati Dians. When these are the established rules, traditions and customs, it is quite apparent that unless there is close co-operation between those Sevaks, who are engaged in the observance of daily *nitis* before the Tati Dians on the one hand, and the Daitapatis who are engaged in the performance of certain works and rituals in connection with the idols inside the anabasarghar on the other, there cannot be satisfactory progress on either side. Undoubtedly, the responsibility to



ensure such co-operation must rest on the temple administration.

The first step taken in connection with the observance of rituals during a Nabakalebar year is the procurement of "Daru". For this purpose, a party consisting of certain Daitapatis, Pati Mahapatra, Bhitarchhu Mahapatra, Deula Karan and certain other set out in search of Daru. It is unnecessary for the purpose of this enquiry to refer to the elaborate rituals and the procedure followed for locating the Neem trees, which are felled and the timber subsequently ceremonially brought to the temple for the making of the Idols. During the year 1977, the Daru was brought to the temple as required by the tradition before the Snana Purnima.

During a Nabakalebar year the Anabasara period extends over a period of 45 days commencing from and including Snana Purnima. To distinguish this from the usual Anabasara, which extends over a period of 15 days only, the Anabasara period during a Nabakalebar year is also known as Maha Anabasara. The Maha Anabasara period can be broadly divided into three parts. During the first fifteen days "Murti Nirman" is done in Koili Baikuntha. During the four days following Snana Purnima, Ankuraropana is done and the actual construction of the idols from out of the Daru starts from the fifth day. This part of the work was duly completed by Chaturdasi (15.6.77) and the newly prepared wooden idols were taken to the anabasraghar inside the temple on the night of the 15<sup>th</sup> June 1977. That very night the transfer of "Brahma" from inside the old Bigrahas to inside the new Bigrahas took place, and the old idols were taken to Koili Baikuntha for being buried. It may be incidentally mentioned that it is only during a Nabakalebar year that new idols are made to replace the old ones, and the new idols



are sanctified by the transfer of Brahma from the old idols to the new, where after the old idols are ceremonially taken to Koili Baikuntha, which is said to be the burial ground of the Thakurs. There is no dispute that this part of the work was done in time and according to the prescribed rituals, which as already stated are of secret nature.

During the first fifteen days of Maha Anabasara the several wrappings of silk and cotton cloth of the old deities are removed in the anasaraghar so much so that by the time the new idols are brought into the anasaraghar on the night of Chaturdasi, what would remain of the old deities would be the bare wooden idols. The pieces of silk and other clothes removed from the old deities are taken away by the Daitapatis.

The second period of fifteen days is devoted to what is called "Sri Murti Gathan", which means that the required pieces of cloth, silk, rexin, etc applied to the wooden idols to bring them to the required shape and form. All materials necessary for this purpose are provided by the temple administration and there is no dispute that these have been provided, and we have the evidence of the several Daitapatis examined in this enquiry that this part of the work was completed in time and as per schedule.

The third and last fortnight of Maha Anabasara commences from Mala Ashadha Purnima and ends with the following Amavasya, which in the year 1977, was confined to period from the 1st to 15<sup>th</sup> July. It is in evidence that the several works done and *nitis* performed in respect of the new Idols during this period, more or less, correspond to the work done and *nitis* performed, before the idols during the *anabasara* period of an ordinary year. It is only during this period in 1977, and especially during the second part of this period, that delays and irregularities in this performance of the several *nitis* are alleged



to have taken place. The particular items of work that have to be done during this period are as follows:-

**Panchami** : Phuluri Lagi, which means gingili oil mixed with “chuan” and camphor has to be applied to all the four idols.

**Dasami** : Chaka Bijje – The new idols after being brought from Koili Baikuntha are placed on the floor of the anasaraghar. It is on Dasami that the idols are placed on three cylindrical stone pieces called “chaka” and this function is called Chaka Bijje.

**Ekdasi** : This is also called Chandan Lagi Ekdasi. On this day Khali is first applied to the deities and, after the Sandhya Dhupa before the Dasavatar Thakur is performed and not before that event, a large quantity of thick sandal paste mixed with camphor and certain other materials is applied over the bodies of the idols.

**Dwadasi** : Raj Prasad is to be taken to the Raja’s palace. After the Bhog Mandap on that day as many silver trays as there are members in the Raj family are taken out of the Bhandar and supplied to the Daitapatis. On each Thali a silk cloth is spread. These are taken inside the anasaraghar where the Daitapatis place the Raj Prasad, Chandan and Koralo Chandan taken from the bodies of the deities are placed in the Thalies and they are ceremonially taken to the accompaniment of *ghanta* and *kahali* to the Raja’s palace. In return the Raja gives “Sadhi” to the Daitapatis, Pati Mahapatra, Swain Mahapatra, Deula Karan and Talichhu Mahapatra who accompany the Daitas. After returning from the palace the Daitapatis are expected to undertake preparations for Ghana Lagi which is to take place on the following day.

**Trayodasi (14.7.77)** : It is a very important day and a lot of work is done in respect of the new

idols. The first is Ghan Lagi. For this purpose thick silk ropes are wound round the deities. The silk required for this purpose is of a specific quality and design and the silk clothes supplied for the purpose are processed into ropes. To expedite this work on Trayodasi it is necessary that the preparations are undertaken on the night of Dwadasi. It is done after the Daitas return from the palace after the delivery of Raj Prasad. After that Ghana Lagi, Khali Lagi and Khadi Lagi are done. Khali Prasad is brought from the house of Sudha Suar in procession to the accompaniment of *Ghanta* and *Kahali*. After finishing Bhoga Mandapa that day Khadi Prasad is brought from the house of Datta Mahapatra in a similar procession. After Khadi is applied to the deities Khadi Prasad is taken to the Rajabati to be delivered to the Raj family in respect of Raj Prasad on the Dwadasi day.

**Chaturdasi (15.7.77)** : On this day after the Bada Singhar Dhup before the Dasavatar deities is over, the Datta Mahapatra does what is called Banak Lagi otherwise known as “Mukha Singhar” which means the painting of the faces of the deities is different colours. Thereafter *Choka Appasara* takes place, which means that thick quilts are placed at the back of each deity and the deities are kept in the slightly reclining position.

After the above items of work are completed on the Chaturdasi day, by which time it is normally the dawn of Amavasya, Mangala Alati is offered simultaneously to the Dasavatar deities on the front side of the bamboo screen and to the newly consecrated deities in the anabasaraghar behind the bamboo screen, thereafter the Dasavatar Thakurs are removed to the Dhakinadwar. The bamboo screen is then removed and the new deities and for the first time, exposed for *darshan* to the public, and this is called Navajauban Darshan. The above, in brief,



is the schedule to be observed during the last days of Maha Anabasara.

Non-adherence of prescribed time table due to dispute among the Sevakas and ineffectiveness of the administration resulted in total failure of the pre-determined routine which caused consequential inconvenience and disappointment of the pilgrims. While suggesting remedial measures, he suggested amendment of the Act for conferring more powers on the Managing Committee and the Administrator. All the Administrators and the Sevakas examined by the Commission of Enquiry deposed that the disputes among the Sevakas like Pujapandas and Suaras, Administration and Daitas, Khuntias and Mekaps are mainly responsible for the delay and irregular performance of the *nitis*. In Chapter XXVIII of the report, the nature of disputes which hold up the *nitis* has been described in following words:

All the ex-Administrators and almost all the Sevakas and other persons examined during the enquiry are unanimous in their opinion that the only inter se dispute amongst Sevakas which mainly stand in the way of the regular performance of the *nities* is the one between the Puja Pandas and the Suaras. It is not that there are no disputes inter se between other groups of Sevakas. They do arise now and then but they are such that with a little amount of vigilance on the part of the administration such disputes can be easily and quickly decided. One of such disputes which occasionally arises is between the Puspalakas on one side and the Khuntias and Mekaps on the other at the time of SahanMela. The pilgrims who go up to Gambhira at the time of Sahan Mela put their offerings in the Jharis (receptacles) placed in front of each of the three deities. Out of such offerings the Khuntias and Mekaps on duty are entitled to take all the coins of 5 Naya Paise and below and out of the balance they are entitled to



a share of one anna in the rupee. The Puspalakas who at the time of Sahan Mela sit in front of the deities on the Ratna Singhasana are not entitled to any share in the collections made in the Jharis. But if it that time the pilgrims throw their offerings near the feet of the deities such offerings would come in the category of “Srianga Lagi” and therein the share of the Puspalakas is 4 annas in the rupee, the rest going for the share of the temple. The Khuntias and Mekaps have no share in such offerings. There is a complaint and it does not appear to be unfounded that very often at the time the pilgrims attempt to put their offerings in the Jharis, the Puspalakas snatch the same from their hands and in the ensuing struggle the offerings intended to be put in the Jharis are thrown near the deities fast, thereby putting the same in the category of “Sreeanga Lagi”. This naturally is resented by the Khuntias and Mekaps on duty and there arises a clash between them in the very presence of the numerous Jattris gathered there for Darshan. Apart from the fact that it creates an ugly scene, such disputes also hold up the progress of Sahan Mela. No responsible officer of the Administration is usually present at the time of Sahan Mela to control such situations and the minor official who is usually present they are either incapable of controlling such situations or as is alleged, he very often colludes with the erring Sevakas obviously with a view to getting a share in their illegal gains. Such incidents which fortunately are not frequent can be easily avoided if a responsible officer of the Administration is present there to exercise control.

Another dispute which usually arises at the time of Ratha Jatra is the one between the Administration and the Daitas. It is customary that all offerings made by the pilgrims whether by way of Pindika or Bheta during the period commencing from Sukla Trayodasi preceding Snana Purnima and ending with Niladri Bije when the deities after



the close of Ratha Jatra are taken back into the temple, go to the Daitas and neither the Temple nor any other category of Sevaka have got any share therein. Large offerings are made by the pilgrims at the time of Navajauvan Darshan inside the main Temple and at the time of Sandhya Darshan, on Navami preceding Bahuda Jatra, in the Gundicha Ghar. On such occasion the Daitas generally insist on extending the period set apart for Darshan because the more the number of Jatris, the more would be their collections from Bheta. The Administration is anxious on its part to restrict the Darshan to a limited period to ensure the subsequent Nitis culminating in the Pahandi of the deities take place according to schedule. Sri Kanhucharan Mahapatra, one of the ex-Administrators has stated that such minor disputes which do arise almost every year are generally resolved by mutual discussion between the Administrator and the Daitas and never assume any unmanageable proportions. But the very discussion to resolve the dispute, sometime takes a long time and occurring as they do on the night preceding Bahuda Jatra, when daily Nitis are required to be finished quickly with a view to taking up preparations for Pahandi (like Senapata, Bahuta, etc.) they have the effect of delaying Pahandi. It is therefore, necessary that by mutual discussion between the Administration and the Daitas well ahead of Sandhya Darshan the minor points of conflict are resolved, so that Nitis scheduled for that night proceed without any hitch.

Most of the witnesses however complained that minor disputes either between individual Sevaks inter se or between one group of Sevaks and another or between one group of Sevaks and the Administration, brought up before the Administration are not decided quickly. Consequently the grievances either of the individuals or of the group mount up and at a critical juncture they burst out in the shape of non-

cooperation by the Sevaks or the group concerned. The occasions when these burst out are such that an immediate solution becomes inevitable. In such circumstances instead of a decision arrived at after a clear thinking and consideration of all attendant circumstances, the Administration under compulsive circumstances gives an ad hoc decision which very often turns out to be wrong. This adds to the already existing complication. Some of these disputes require consideration by the Managing Committee which does not meet as frequently as it should and when actually it meets, consideration of these disputes is deferred on some plea or other. It is therefore, imperative that any grievances or complaints brought up before the Administration should be quickly looked into by the Administrator or by the Managing Committee as the case may be and a clear decision given. The Managing Committee should constitute a Standing Committee of three members who should meet as frequently as it would be necessary to consider these disputes and give their decisions. No such Standing Committee appears to have been constituted, or if constituted it has not functioned regularly.

Whatever reforms are brought about in the Administration of the Temple and however elaborate the rules and regulations may be for management of this institution, disputes whether well founded or otherwise, are likely to arise frequently in an institution of the magnitude of Shree Jagannath Temple. Unless there is proper vigilance on the part of the Administration and steps are taken to resolve such disputes as and when they arise after consideration of the pros and cons of each such matter they would linger on thereby adversely affecting the general administration of the Temple affairs. The approach of the Administration is required to be such that all concerned, namely, the Sevaks, the employees, the Jatris should be able to feel that their grievances



are being heard and decisions are given. This would go a long way in keeping the Sevaks satisfied.

While summarising the causes for delay, the Commission of Enquiry, opined that –

- (a) The delay started on Chandan Lagi Ekadasi (12.7.77). The Palia Puja Pandas for the day are entirely responsible for the delay in performing Surya Puja at the time of the Sakal Dhup, and it is on account of this delay that Sarvanga Chandan Lagi scheduled for the day could not be done;
- (b) For the delay, which occurred on Dwadashi (13.7.77), again Palia Pujapandas are responsible;
- (c) The delay in the performance of *nitis* on Trayodasi was due to the unusually long time taken by the Daitapatis inside the anabasarghar to perform the necessary rituals there, as a result of which Khadi Lagi, which was prescribed to be done that day could not be done;
- (d) Failure to finish the items of work which remained to be done in the anabasarghar on the Chaturdasi day was mainly due to the delay committed by Pati Mahapatra and to some extent by the Daitapatis;
- (e) The delay in the performance of *nitis* caused on Amavasya, 16<sup>th</sup> July, and Pratipada, 17<sup>th</sup> July, was due to the fact that darshan was allowed to the public on both these days.

He emphasised the vital factor of delay in following works :

“I am, therefore, in complete agreement with the statement made by the Collector that the one single factor, which contributed mostly for the delay in the *pahandi* on the 18<sup>th</sup> was the decision to allow *darshan* on the evening of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, had this not been done, the delay

in the performance of other *nitis* on the day preceding Gundicha at least could not have been reflected on the *nitis* of the 18<sup>th</sup>, and there would have been no delay in starting *pahandi* as programmed”.

He also commented on the conduct of Suaras, who contrary to assurance given by them to the Administrator offered a very large quantity of Abhada in the Sandhya Dhupa on the 17<sup>th</sup>, with the result the clearance of *abhada* from Gambhira occupied an unusually long time. He suggested to cast duty on the Badagrahi Daitas of the three deities to report in writing at the end of the day to the Administrator whether or not the items of work commencing from Chandana Lagi Ekadasi, have been done or not, and if not done, the reasons therefore.

Puri is a small town. With the increase facilities of transport, the pilgrims during festive occasion come in multitude. They have two objectives-to get Darshan and take Mahaprasad. Any dislocation on the aforesaid expectations of the pilgrim causes disappointment and resentment. It is an administrative problem and chronic malady of Jagannath temple. To suggest reforms in the administration, the government of Orissa appointed another High Power Committee with the then Hon’ble Governor of Orissa, Shri Bhagwat Dayal Sharma as Chairman and eight other very eminent persons including two ex-Chief Ministers of Orissa, Dr. H. K. Mahatab and Sri Biswanath Das. The remedial measures suggested by the said High Power Committee which is popularly known as ‘Navagraha’ Committee, are almost identical in many recommendations like amendment of the Act, rationalisation of Sevaks, debarring the Courts to entertain the suits under sub-section 6 of section 24 of Sri Jagannath Temple Act, etc.

Both the reports of Commission of Enquiry and High Power Committee, remained





as historical document and never implemented with sincerity defeating the very purpose of their constitution. Lord Jagannath is gaining global popularity and his Car Festival has assumed an international character, being celebrated by various countries. The world has an eye on Puri Car Festival, performance of which should be ideal to the satisfaction of increasing flow of pilgrims day by day. Management of a temple is management of a state. The administrative department of a temple therefore, has tremendous responsibility. Different states have adopted different patterns of administration. In Uttar Pradesh, a separate department of religious endowments has been constituted functioning directly under the Chief Minister, with a Special Secretary. Administration of Kasi-Viswanath temple, (taken over by government in 1983) and Brindavan group of temples improved considerably within a very short span of time. Paradoxically, the administration of Sri Jagannath temple is deteriorating day by day with utter indiscipline, inconvenience and resentment of the pilgrims, insanitation, which indicates categorically to the apathy of the state government.

Navakalevara is a unique feature of Jagannath temple, which will occur at intervals of 8<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> years, being calculated on the basis of lunar months. It is very complex process involving elaborate rituals, as indicated in foregoing paragraphs and ever increasing number of pilgrims coming to the tiny town, Puri. Unless there is effective co-ordination of performance of *nitis* inside the temple and management of pilgrims, there will be definitely emergence of human problems, casting a responsibility on the government to improve upon administration of the temple.

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## LORD JAGANNATH

*Dr. Amulya Ranjan Mohapatra*

O Lord ! You are omnipotent  
You are omniscient  
You are all in all.

O Lord ! You are kind and great  
Love and blessed  
Truth and beauty.

O Lord ! You are power of all powers  
Sweet and sublime  
Pure and perfect.

O Lord ! You are soul of all self  
God of the Universe  
Friend of all.

O Lord ! You are within and without  
Form of no forms  
Qualities of no qualities.

O Lord ! You are Thy grace supreme  
Doer of all good  
Destiny of all Jivas.

O Lord ! You are the principal primal guide  
Shelter of all  
Devotion of devotees.

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Dr. Amulya Ranjan Mohapatra, MIG-14, Housing Board, Koraput-764020.



Lord Jagannath, the presiding deity of Puri, into whose shrine sometimes curious visitors from the West, as it is reported in the Press, try to enter is today well-known all over the world. As a religious town Puri has drawn pilgrims from outside from ninth-tenth centuries A.D. onwards. There is mention of Jagannath as Purushottam and of Puri as Shrikshetra or Purushottam or Purushottam Kshetra or Shankha Ksherta in Sanskrit as well as Odia Puranas. Some of the Puranas which mention Puri and its presiding deity are mentioned here - Bamana Purana, Skanda Purana, Shiba Purana, Bruhat Nrusingha Purana, Utkal Mahatmya, Tantra Jamala, Brahma Purana, Kurma Purana, Padma Purana, Narada Purana, Sarala Das' Mahabharat and Nilamabar Das' Deula Tola etc. Some

Puranas highly glorify Puri and Purushottam. Bruhat Nrusingha Purana says: "There is no place on earth holier than Purushottam. It is a veritable paradise on earth; even gods aspire to see it". Shiva Purana says: "Purushottam is the only place on earth which can confer liberation from earthly bondage; it is the place where the Supreme Lord has assumed wooden form."<sup>1</sup>

According to "Vishnudharma," an early Sanskrit manuscript (belonging to 3rd century A.D.) Krishna was known as Purushottam in the Odra country. Vaman Purana, a work of seventh century A.D. mentions Purushottam deity of Puri. Anargha Raghava Natakam of Murari Mishra, composed in mid-ninth century A.D. describes the Purushottam deity of Puri with consort Kamala

## Jagannath Dharma

*Dr. Atul Chandra Pradhan*



on His lap. The Sarada Devi temple inscription of Maihar, which is situated in the Satna district of Madhya Pradesh and assigned to tenth century A.D. refers to the Purushottam deity of Odra country, located on the sea-shore. Literary and epigraphic evidences show the reputation of the Purushottam deity of Puri by the tenth century A.D. When Somavamshi rule was established in coastal Odisha in tenth century, A.D. in recognition of the importance of the Purushottam deity of Puri, Yayati-I (922 AD. to 955 A.D) constructed a temple for the deity. Some scholars are of opinion that the sculptural remains of the Somavamshi period are still to be found in the premises of the Jagannath temple.



Vaishnavism appears to have spread in Odisha during the Mathara rule, i.e. from mid-4th century A.D. to the end of fifth century A.D. The propagation of Vaishnavism by Ramanuja and Jayadeva in the twelfth century AD reinforced the Vaishnavism of Odisha which had grown with Lord Jagannath as the central deity. Chodaganga Deva, who founded the Ganga empire in Utkal early in twelfth century A.D. attached due importance to the cult of Jagannath and raised a gigantic temple for the deity, eventhough personally he was a devotee of Shiva. He and his successors regarded Jagannath as their patron deity. A powerful Ganga monarch like Anangabhimadeva-III called his empire Purushottam Samrajya and himself the deity's Routa or deputy. The same importance of Purushottam-Jagannath continued in the Suryavamshi period. Kapilendra, the founder of the Suryavamshi dynasty claimed to have become the king of Utkal at the command of Purushottam<sup>2</sup>; he invoked the name of Jagannath in the day-to-day administration; he sought the blessings of the deity by visiting Puri for suppressing the rebellious feudatories.<sup>3</sup> Purushottam, the son of Gajapati Kapilendra Deva, who became the next Gajapati, superseding his elder brother Hamvira according to the so-called wish of Lord Jagannath professed great devotion to the deity, gave costly presents to the deity after ascending the throne in 1497;<sup>4</sup> he wrote *Abhinava Gitagovindam* for singing the glory of Lord Jagannath. Gobinda Vidyadhar, the Bhoi king who killed the two sons of Prataparudra and usurped the Gajapati throne in 1541 sought to secure people's allegiance by invoking Lord Jagannath; he threatened his rebellious feudatories with the wrath of the deity.<sup>5</sup>

During Ganga and Suryavamshi periods kingship and cult of Jagannath got inter-woven; calling themselves the Routas or deputies of Lord Jagannath, the kings justified their actions in His

name. In the words of Hermann Kulke, "Kingship became part of the cult and the cult became part of Orissan kingship and its main source of legitimation".<sup>6</sup> The traditional practice of Chhera Panhara (ceremonial sweeping at the time of car festival by the Gajapati) is attributed by many to the acceptance of overlordship of Lord Jagannath. Kapilendra's usurpation of the throne and choice of Purushottam as the heir-apparent were legitimized by invoking the so-called will of Lord Jagannath.

The Puranas give a mythical account of the origin of Lord Jagannath which is not historically acceptable. These myths however suggest tribal as well as Vaishnavite links of the deity in hoary past. Analysing the legendary association of Lord Jagannath with a class of aborigines, called Sabaras, the peculiar nature of wooden icon of the deity and his associates - Balabhadra and Subhadra and association of a class of non-Brahmin priests, called Daitas who are presumed to be of tribal origin with the worship of the deity, many hold that Jagannath was originally a tribal deity. Ancharlott Eschmann holds that the Navakalevar i.e. the ceremony of renewal of the deity is a tribal custom, as practices of renewal of wooden deity are to be found among the primitive tribes like Saoras and Kandhas.<sup>7</sup>

'Jagannath', the name by which the deity is today known came to be used in literary texts and inscriptions at a later period. Perhaps it was first mentioned in the Sanskrit text *Jnana Siddhi*, a work of eighth century A.D., composed by Indrabhuti, a Tantrik Buddhist. Epigraphically speaking, it was for the first time used in a fourteenth century inscription of the Ganga king Bhanudeva-II. According to some, the word 'Jagannath' is derived from the tribal name of the deity 'Jaganta' or 'Jagun'. Some say that as Jagannath was identified with Buddha, the ninth



incarnation of Vishnu and that as Jagannath is one of the epithets of Buddha, the deity was called Jagannath. Though in Brahmanical literature Purushottam has been mentioned as the name of the deity, probably in popular parlance Purushottam and Jagannath were used interchangeably or together as Purushottam - Jagannath. Eschmann holds that in his earliest form as an image of Vishnu Jagannath was known as Nrusingha, the lion incarnation of Vishnu. Her contention is based on the fact that Navakalevar ritual considers Jagannath figure to be Nrusingha. She says: "Narasingha is that iconological aspect of Jagannath which recedes in later theology; it can easily be associated with tribal cults and was probably instrumental for the development of the Jagannath iconography".<sup>8</sup>

The name 'Purushottam' has always clung to the deity. 'Purushottam' represents the erotic aspect of Vishnu and is to be found with Laxmi. In Anargha Raghava Natakam Murari Mishra described Purushottam with Laxmi on lap. Jayadeva, the twelfth century poet who regarded Jagannath as Krishna, while describing the erotic sports of Krishna with Radha in Gita Govinda has identified Radha with Kamala or Laxmi. The Purushottam Mahatmya of Skanda Purana (a work of 13th century A.D.) and Vishnu Rahasya (a work of 16th century A.D) refer to the female wooden image between Jagannath and Balabhadra as Laxmi. Probably initially Purushottam-Jagannath was worshipped with Lakshmi; at a later stage Balabhadra and Subhadra were seated in the sanctum and Lakshmi was worshipped in a separate temple.

ShriChaitanya who was regarded by his devotees as the embodiment of Jagannath completed the process of identification of the deity with Krushna, begun by Jayadeva. Though overwhelmingly influenced by Vaishnavism, Puri in general and Jagannath temple complex in

particular bear the imprint of other religious movements such as Buddhism, Jainism, Shaivism and Shakti cult. Some Tantrik deities such as Vimala have been absorbed into the Jagannath system. The prevalence of Shakti cult at Puri is borne out by the discovery of Sapta Matraka image near Markandeya tank. Some Tantrik Buddhists like Indrabhuti attributed Buddhahood to Lord Jagannath. Others treated Lord Jagannath as a Tantrik deity. The Kalika Purana declares Jagannath and Katyayani as the presiding deities of Odrapitha (Puri).<sup>9</sup> The Bata Avakasha of Balaram Das, the early sixteenth century poet holds that Jagannath is attended by sixty four yoginis, Katyayani, Saptamatruka, Vimala and Viraja. The Utkal Khanda of Skanda Purana describes Subhadra as the Shakti of Jagannath. The prevalence of Shaivism in Puri is borne out by the existence of Shiva temples like Markandeyeshwar, Pataleshwar and Lokanath. At one time these Shiva temples were looked after by the authorities of the Jagannath temple. In 1805 Charles Grome, the Collector of Puri observed: 'The Deul Purchas of the Temple of Jagannath were accustomed to superintend and manage the Thakurs, Nirsingnath and the five Mahadebs, Lokenath, Jumessur, Kapaul Mochun, Markund Isser, Nilkaunt Isser in the town of Poorshootum, besides all the other Thakoors which surround Juggunnath but now they have entirely neglected them, they should therefore be compelled to pay them the usual and customary attention.'<sup>10</sup>

So far as the influence of Buddhism on Jagananth cult is concerned, the deity himself has been identified with Buddha by Sarala Das and Jagannath Das. Sarala Das thus invoked Lord Jagannath: "You have appeared as Buddha in the Kaliyuga to redeem the sinners of the world".

Jagannath Das invoked the Lord as follows: "Oh Prabuddha you have appeared as



the incarnation of Buddha to turn away the mind' of people from the dharma of Vedas.”

‘It is said that the tooth relic of Buddha is preserved in the image of Jagannath, that the three deities - Jagannath, Subhadra and Balabhadra represent Buddha, Dharma and Sangha respectively, that the Snana Yatra (bathing festival) and Ratha Yatra (Car festival) are of Buddhist origin. The sharing of Mahaprasad on equal footing by people of all castes high and low is attributed to Buddhist impact. Evidently there was a synthesis or compromise between Buddhism on one hand and orthodox Hinduism on the other hand and Jagannath cult bears its imprint.

From religious point of view a temple is meant for the worship of glorification of the transcendental power. But as a social institution it is bound to be influenced by the movements within the society. Jagannath Dharma as it is found today is the outcome of Sanskritisation of the indigenous tribal deity and culture. The sharing of Mahaprasad on equal footing by the people of all castes appears to be the result of a conflict or compromise between the socially deprived or subalterns and privileged sections, which is allegorically represented by Balaram Das, the leading figure of Panchasakha movement which was basically a heterodox movement in his poem Laxmi Purana. In this poem through the challenge of Goddess Laxmi to her husband Lord Jagannath and his elder brother, Lord Balabhadra by accepting the worship of an untouchable lady, named Shriya for which she was ousted from the temple. Balaram Das has advocated feminism, caste equality and primacy of material needs over



social status and gender inequality and articulated consciousness and identity of the oppressed.

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**W**ho is this Jagannath at Puri? Scholars have been speculating *ad nauseum* about Jagannath and yet there seems to be no end to these speculations. There is certainly something about Jagannath which is both evasive as well as eternally attractive. To this point I will come later for a more elaborate discussion, because it is the most characteristic feature of Jagannath according to me. Here I will be concerning myself, not with a historical or genetic enquiry but with the determination of the exact significance of a living cult coming down to us from the hoary past.

In spite of differences of opinion, certain important legends as well as facts regarding Jagannath are more or less straight forward. That Jagannath was originally the God of Sabaras and later on established as the Lord of the Universe by the King of Orissa in a temple at Puri is too well known a fact. Subsequently admitted and worshipped by the great Acharyas of Hindu philosophy and religion, it also is a fact the Buddhists, Jainas and even many Muslim devotees have found their aspirations fulfilled and their ideas realised in the Jagannath cult. Unity in diversity which is too well known a feature of Indian culture emphasized by a number of thinkers

## The Unique Vedantic Synthesis in Jagannath as Lokayata Brahma and Vaisnavism – A Philosophical Approach

*Prof. G.C. Nayak*



and writers like Tagore is so true of Jagannath also. It is therefore no wonder that Jagannath cult has been acclaimed to be the perfect expression of Indian culture at its best.

So far so good, so long as we stick to facts as they impinge on us, we are on safe grounds although it may also be true that there is always scope for further controversy regarding what the fact actually is. But at least this much cannot be denied that Jagannath, originally the deity of the aboriginals of Orissa, has miraculously proved himself capable of fulfilling the aspirations of the Indian mass irrespective of caste and creed throughout the ages and has found a footing recently even in the heart of the Westerners as is



evident from the popularity of Car Festival is U.S.A. and U.K. of to-day.

Now coming to different interpretations of Jagannath cult, we find unending controversy in the field. Some regard Jagannath as an incarnation of Lord Krishna while others consider him to be Sri Rama. Subhadra has been regarded as the sister of Jagannath by some, while others consider her to be the Prakriti or Shakti. According to the Tantric interpretation, Jagannath is supposed to be Bhairava while Subhadra is taken as Bhairavi<sup>2</sup>. Sometimes Jagannath is also identified with Dakshina Kalika. The four deities, viz Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarsana have also been regarded as four realities (caturbyuhas) of the Bhagabata school viz., Vasudeva, Sankarsana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. Jagannath as the incarnation of Buddha is too well known. In Jagannath people have also seen a symbol of world unity and world peace through the ideal of peaceful co-existence of diverse races, for example, the black colour of Jagannath representing the black people, the white colour of Balabhadra representing the white race, while the yellow colour of Subhadra standing for the Mongolians. All these speculations regarding Jagannath are alright so far as they go. But when we search for the real significance of Jagannath we are at a loss of find different antagonistic views being upheld at the same time. We do not know what to make out of all these. What will be our basis for sticking to one interpretation rather than the other? Theories built on human imagination may catch our fancy for some time. There is a delight in seeing a new gestalt, fresh forms, in one and the same fact. But how can we expect to arrive at the truth through mere speculation, which in any case works as a double-edged weapon? If one speculates in one way, another is free to speculate in a different manner so long as he can give a consistent picture.

But this procedure can at best lead us to different opinions, not to knowledge. As Acharya Sankara has aptly remarked, Jnana is Vastutantra, not Purusavyaparatantra. Knowledge is dependent on the object, not on human activity; the object must be depicted as it is. And that is why Acharya Sankara also condemned mere reasoning in the sense of speculative reasoning based on human imaginative faculty.<sup>3</sup>

Here I will concern myself with that significance of Jagannath which can be accepted with the minimum of assumptions? For this, we have to go as far back as to the writing of the Upanisads. Upanisads point to a reality which is formless and yet having diverse forms; it is conceived to be both *saguna* and *nirguna*. As a matter of fact, Upanisads speak of the reality as both formless and having varieties of forms at one and the same place.<sup>4</sup> Following this conception of Upanisads many later thinkers have found it to be the most ideal conception of reality, the apparent contradiction between Nirgunatva and Sagunatva being resolved by an appeal to the preference of the enquirer and the devotee and hence being considered to be of no consequence at all.

Thus Tulasi Das in Rama Charitamanasa says that there is actually no difference between the unqualified and the qualified; the unqualified becomes qualified because of the love of his devotees.<sup>5</sup> But the problem all along has been to give a consistent account of such a reality without involving oneself in contradiction. Upanisad however at times finds itself talking in an apparently contradictory language while referring to such a reality for example, *tadejati tannejati, taddure tadva cantika*,<sup>6</sup> while at the same time asserting that the highest good of man lies in no way other than knowing in the sense of realising such a reality.<sup>7</sup>



Jagannath's significance seems to lie in the fact that it is a successful attempt in the form of an image to express the reality of the Upanisads which is both *nirguna* and *saguna* and in whom the salvation of mankind rests. Jagannath originally may have Very little to do with the Vedas and the Upanisads; even Sayanacharya's explicit reference to Purusottama in his commentary on the Rig Veda, 10,155.3 does not conclusively prove that Jagannath was a Vedic God<sup>8</sup> and Sri Chaitanya's reference to Jagannath as one who is sung in the Upanisads (Srutiganasikha Gita charita)<sup>9</sup> may well be construed as simply the admiration of a devotee, perhaps, proving nothing.

But as I have already remarked I am not concerned here with a mere genetic enquiry. My main concern here is to pinpoint that significance of this cult which has sustained it as a source of inspiration for mankind throughout the ages. And the significance seems to lie in the fact that Jagannath is a unique expression of the ultimate reality of the Upanisads, which having a form is at the sametime formless. To say that the form of Jagannath is abnormal is to miss a significant point, the point that has the capacity to express the formless in a way which is unique in the history of mankind. It is no wonder that Jagannath being the expression of such a reality has proved himself capable of fulfilling the aspirations of varieties of races and cults throughout the ages. And only in his background one can understand how diverse, antagonistic, and mutually contradictory theories are built and flourish side by side in connection with one and the same reality, i.e. Jagannath.<sup>10</sup> It is quite natural therefore that Jagannath cult should in principle have no antagonism towards and should not be opposed to any religion, caste or creed just as the Upanisadic culture of India based on the conception of Brahmanas both *saguna* and *nirguna* is neutrally disposed towards contending metaphysical theories and religious

beliefs. It is another matter. If in actual practice it may not always be so on account of a number of social factors.

It is noteworthy that the mysterious entity which is supposed to be hidden inside the image and is transferred at the time of Navakalevara from the old to the new image is called Brahma and Jagannath is known as Daru Brahma. Various forms of worship in accordance with one's belief and disposition do make sense in the context of Brahman of course and here in Jagannath we encounter an astonishing amalgamation of diverse types of religious practices and worship. So much for the spiritual aspect of Jagannath. And yet this is not all that is there to it. Here we also find an interesting co-existence of the sacred and the profane, the philosophical and the secular, the unfamiliar and the familiar, and it partly explains the mysterious attraction this culture has for the mass mind, the laity. Look, for example, at the profuse pourings of abusive words, out of devotion of course, on Jagannath as Kala Sarpa (the serpent of time) or simply as Jaga His pomp and grandeur are beyond comparison and he is no doubt the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings, and yet for whom does He come out of the temple to ascend the car during the world-famous car festival? Certainly not for the fortunate few who are born with silver spoon in their mouth, but for the unfortunate millions, the downtrodden, the neglected who are otherwise deprived of the normal amenities of life on account of rigid social customs. What is most significant to note here is that during that time any Tom, Dick and Harry is allowed not only to touch but also to embrace the Daru Brahma and is also permitted even to tear away a part of the Lord's outer garment from Him as a relic to be treasured for ever and ever by him or her. Moreover, it is quite intriguing to find that Jagannath undergoes physical suffering like ordinary human beings. At the time of





*anavasara* He takes rest and lives on a prescribed diet. The most astonishing fact is that the Lord also undergoes reincarnation like any one of us. “Vasamsi jirnani yatha vihaya .....” says the Gita. The embodied person leaves the old body and accepts a new one as one throws away the torn cloth and takes a new one. Jagannath is also not free from transmigration as depicted above in the Bhagavad Gita. It is for this that, in spite of being the ultimate Brahman, Jagannath is as if one from amongst us a very near and dear one-the most intimate of all. He is beyond our reach and yet very near to us- ‘durastham cantikeca tat’.

It is this particular aspect, viz the commonistic component as I understand it in the life of the highest spirit (Daru Brahma), which make Jagannath an extraordinarily elusive as well as an eternally attractive Deity representing what I would designate as a unique variety of ‘Lokayata Brahmavada’ or Commonistic component at I understand it in the life of the highest sprit (Daru Brahma), which make Jagannath an extraordinarily elusive as well as eternally attractive Deity representing what I would designate as a unique variety of ‘Lokayata Brahmavada’ or Commonistic absolutism’. Jagannath, from this point of view, can be regarded as what I would call a Lokayata Brahma, a common man’s Brahman, with a unique Vedantic synthesis, available to and doing His *lila* amidst the laity-meant for the common man particularly for the present age particularly known as Kali Yuga.

If something is Lokayata, available to the mass, the laity, it cannot be Brahman, for Brahman is that which is not available for empirical use. But here is a unique instance of Daru Brahma being available to the laity during Kaliyuga: At least that is what is at the back of this conception of Daru Brahma who is subject to all sorts of joy and

sorrow and is even subject to mortality and reincarnation like any one of us and has His daily life linked with the daily life of the laity.

The conception is not entirely novel, of course; it can be traced back in a germinal form at least to certain ideas prevalent in Vaisnava Bhakti movement. The idea, for example, seems to be at the back of the following expressions in the Vaisnava literature such as those where Brahman is regarded as the intimate associate of the Cowherd boy<sup>11</sup> or where Brahman, like any ordinary Cowherd boy, is supposed to be dancing with a body besmeared with dust particles.<sup>12</sup> The primary objective here is of course to extol the devotee and eulogise devotion or Bhakti, but at the same time there seems to be a certain tendency here to grasp the ungraspable as it were in a somewhat commonistic framework, for making Brahman available to us in our day-to-day ordinary life, so to say. In case of Jagannath this tendency has become quite explicit. The uniqueness of Jagannath lies in the fact that all paraphernalia and a whole tradition have been built up here around Jagannath to demonstrate as it were what a Lokayata Brahma could be like a common man’s Brahman who is also Patitapavana (the purifier of the depraved) through whom the downtrodden and the condemned even can get final deliverance.

This concern for the common man and his sentiments is according to me, one of the characteristic aspects also of Vaisnavism. Let us consider the well-known Vaisnava tenet as enunciated by Sri Chaitanya in his *Siksastakam*, viz. “*Trnadapi sunicena taroriva sahisnuna, amanina manadena kirtaniyah sada Harih*”, which means, one who assumes a position lower than even a tuft of grass, is as tolerant as a tree, and is a respecter of persons without caring for one’s own prestige, he alone is fit to worship Hari,



the Lord of Lords. This shows how a Vaisnava is to remain unconcerned about his own worldly status while being concerned about the welfare of those around him. “*Abhimanan surapanam gauravam rouravam saman, pratistha sukarivistha trayam tyaktva Harimbhajat*”. This also points to a lack of concern for getting a special position, a VIP status, on the part of a Vaisnava. Once again, it is another matter if in actual practice, Vaisnavas always do not conform to this standard and as a matter of fact, a Vaisnava in the true sense of the term is not that easy to find. The concept of Bhakti involves the idea of being not only a servant of the Lord, but also a servant of His servant.<sup>13</sup> ‘Bhaj’ stands for seva (i.e. service); service, therefore, is what a devotee is expected to perform.<sup>14</sup> Service to the Lord involves a number of factors, where the common man also has a rightful place of his own, only if he is a devotee, irrespective of his social position. Bhaktidharma is thus a common man’s religion as distinguished from the *moksha dharma* of the Absolutistic Vedanta. Can there be a better example of the evidently and avowedly communistic thought than the following? “*Kivavipra kiva nyasi sudra kene naya, Jei Krsnatattvavetta sei Guru hai*”.<sup>15</sup> Even a Sudra can be considered to be a spiritual guide for the disciples in this framework, provided he has realised the very essence of Krishna.

One of the most significant aspect of *Bhakti dharma* of the Vaisnavas is that a true Vaisnava does not care so much for *mukti* as he is an aspirant for the service or the *bhakti* of the Lord. Bhakti or service to the Lord is considered to be higher than all the *purusarthas* all the four covetable values of life, *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* and is therefore considered to be the fifth *purusartha* in this tradition. “*Na nakprstham na ca sarvabhaumam na*

*paramesthyam na rasadhipatyam, na yagasiddhirapunatbhavam va vanchanti yatpada rajah prapannah*”, says the *Srimad Bhagavata*.<sup>16</sup> As service of the Lord is the *summum bonum* here, one refuses to accept liberation in any form if it is offered to him in the absence of any such scope for service.<sup>17</sup> Nammalvar, for example, who lives in the first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, denied that man’s highest goal lies in liberation. For Nammalvar, man is related to the Lord as is the predicate to the subject, or attribute to substance; the soul being utterly dependent on God, it should aspire for god with all its being. For Alvars, *Yoga*, *tyaga* or *vairagya* are of no avail; for the soul, the love of God is the highest goal, and this can only be achieved when, through pangs of separation in not realizing the Lord, he considers himself as a woman and surrenders himself to the mercy of his Love-Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu even goes to the extent of decrying *moksha*, the *sayujya mukti*, in very strong terms. “*Sayujya sunite bhakter haya ghrna bhaya, naraka vanchaye tavu sayujya na laya*.”<sup>18</sup> The devotee feels hatred and fear even at the sound of *sayujya mukti*; he prefers hell to such *mukti*. For Vedanta Desika, this worldly life itself becomes a state of liberation, only if he is capable of being completely devoted to and is in the proximity of his Lord, and also is in the company of his servants.<sup>19</sup>

Liberation gives a special status, a VIP position so to say, rather the most important, the most valued position that can be aspired for the *parama purusartha*, as it is called; the devotee prefers to remain as the servant of the Lord, not to become one with the Lord of Lords. “*Cini hate caine Mago, cini khete bhalo vasi*”, said Sadhak Ramprasad in the context of *Sakta bhakti*.



It is to be noted however that the Paramananda, of which Sankara, the *nirguna Brahmavadin*, the propounder of the doctrine of unqualified Brahman, speak, lies in the bliss of the self or Brahman which is *nityananda*, the eternal bliss, as distinguished from pleasures of sense. It is certainly not a sense. It is certainly not a question of someone becoming one with sugar vis a vis tasting sugar. This analogy somehow does not fit into the context of Sankara. “*Yanyani visayendriya sambandhajanitani anandajatani tanyapeksya esosya paramananda nityatvat. “Yo vai Bhuma tat sukham (Cha. Up. 7.23.1) iti/srutyantarat”*”, says Sankara in his commentary on the Brahadaranyaka, 4.3.32. *Anubhava* or experience is an important means of valid knowledge (*pramana*) in case of *Brahmajnana* or *Atmajnana* that liberates us. It is interesting to note that Sankara even goes to the extent of calling it ‘*svahridaya pratyaya*’ or heart-felt experience in his commentary on the *Brahma sutra*, 4.1.15, while referring to *Jivanmukti* consisting of *Brahmajnana* even when one continues to have the body.

The main difference, however, between the Vedantic tradition of Sankara and Ramanuja, the Visistadvaitin, lies in the characterisation of the *anubhava* of *nirguna* or *nirvisesa* (unqualified) Brahman, or Atman, whereas for Ramanuja it is the *anubhava* of *savisesa* or *saguna Brahman* or *Isvara* which alone is the goal of man. For according to Ramanuja, the highest Being whom we need to realise is a qualified Being who is endowed with all the best qualities: He is “*Asamkhyeya kalyanagunagana Purusottamah*”.<sup>20</sup> ‘*Analochitavisesasasaranya*’, ‘*Parama Karunika*’, ‘*Asritavarsalyajaladhi*’<sup>21</sup> etc. Moreover, in Ramanuja’s conceptual frame-

work, it is impossible to have the *anubhava* of anything *nirvisesa* or *nirguna*, devoid of all qualifications. In his Sribhasya on Brahma Sutra, 1.1.1., while discussing the ‘*Mahasiddhanta*’, Ramanuja points out, “*Yastu- ‘svanubhavasiddham’ iti svagosthinistah samayah sopyatmasaksika savisesanu-bhavadeva nirastah; idamahamadarsamiti kenocid visesenavisistavisayatvat sarvesamanubhavanam*”. Different approaches to the spiritual experiences of these Acharyas are thus inevitable, even if their doctrines are supposed to be based on *sruti* texts, reasoning as well as *anubhava*; there are certain fundamental differences in their outlook and approach which cannot be undermined with any pre-conceived notion of unity or harmony in the name of revelation, Vedantic tradition, spiritualism and the like.

Vaisnavism is a cult of *bhakti* par excellence where the Love-Lord, who is not only *saguna* but is also the abode of all virtues, all beauty, all excellences, in the supreme object of our love and devotion, and everything else is merely secondary. Love for Krishna without hypocrisy of any sort (*akaitava prema*) being the model here, anything that is likely to hinder such love is regarded as nothing but hypocrisy, and the desire for liberation (*mokshavancha*) constitutes the best form of hypocrisy (*kaitava pradhan*) in this tradition.<sup>22</sup> Absolute self-surrender to the Love-Lord makes one realize the Lord even in the smaller than the smallest creature to whom the devotee is ever ready to extend his service. “*Mahabhagavata dekhe sthavara jangam, Tahan tahan hai thar Sri Krishna sphuran*.”<sup>23</sup> Vaisnavism can thus be regarded as a form of commonistic absolutism; Sri Krishna who is the Param Brahma, the highest reality, is to be seen, to be realised, everywhere irrespective of the outer form.



The God-head who is the highest, to whom the devotee owes his entire dedication and service, would differ of course from one school of thought to the other in the Vaisnava tradition itself. The object of devotion may be Rama, Krishna, Narayan with his consort Laksmi or perhaps even Sri Radha may be extolled as higher than Sri Krishna himself. There would be different systems of thought as well as different loyalties in accordance with the different ontologies to which they would be subscribing. A residence in Brindaban could be more covetable,<sup>24</sup> for example, in one system than being a denizen of Vaikuntha. Just as in one system that *saguna Brahman* is supposed to be higher than the *nirguna Brahman*, so that it is only when one is not capable of having love for God that he has to take resort to the path of knowledge,<sup>25</sup> similarly, even amongst the devotees also some may prefer Krishna to Rama or vice versa. While it is “*Krishnat param kimapi tattvamaham na jane*” for Madhusudana saraswati or “*Krishnastu Bhagavan svayam*” for the Srimad Bhagavata, for example, it is “*Dhanurdharam padma visala lochanam, bhajami nityam na paran bhajisyeh*” in the Adhyatma Ramayana.<sup>26</sup> What is most interesting is that whether they are the devotees of Rama, Krishna or Narayan, all the great Vaisnavas of different traditions have found their Istadeva or the ideal Deity in Jagannath who is the Para Brahman getting Himself available in the form of an image that gives ample scope for the devotees to see their respective ideal Deities in Him; this is what I designate as the Lokayata Brahman.

It is worth noting here that the devotees of Siva in the Bhakti tradition have been no less vociferous in eulogising Siva and in totally surrendering to him in devotion, ignoring all ideas of liberation. Manikka Vasagar, a great Tamil

devotee of Lord siva for example, prays as follows:

I ask not kin, nor name, nor place,  
Nor learned men's society;  
Men's lore for me no value has,  
Kuttalam's Lord, I come to thee.  
Wilt thou one boon on me bestow,  
A heart to melt in longing sweet,  
As yearns o'er new-born calf the cow,  
In yearning, or thy sacred feet ?<sup>27</sup>

This finds a beautiful parallel later in the ecstasy of intense longing for the Love-Lord, Sri Krishna, in Sri Chaitanya of the sixteenth century, as expressed in his Sikshastakam - “*Nadhanam na Janam na sundarim kavitam va Jagadisakamaye, Mama janmanisvare bhavatad bhaktirahaituki tvayi*” - I covet no wealth, nor retinue, nor even lovely poesy ! let me have only the unconditional devotion to Thee throughout my successive lives. Be pleased, O Lord, to grant me such selfless devotion alone.

How are we to evaluate these different ontologies after all ? Now there is, indeed, something strange about such ontologies. A particular ontology may seem to be totally convincing, until of course, one encounters another powerful ontology which carries him away through what would seem to him to be sheer force of logic' or 'invincible arguments". And this may go on *ad nauseam* without the person concerned ever realizing that his total commitment to these diverse, at times mutually exclusive, ontologies at different times may have nothing to do either with logic in the strict sense or with truth in the sense of being something objectively compelling. On the other hand, one's entire life may be committed totally without any change whatsoever to a particular ontology which may be regarded by the person concerned to be the truth, the only and the whole



truth for that matter, while all along he may be blissfully unaware of the fact that truth has simply been given a lip-loyalty. There are, of course, arguments and counter-arguments, brilliant points made and points undermined, apparent victory and defeat in logic peculiar to the ontologies advocated by rival groups. But ultimately it may simply be a matter of cognizing or failing to cognize the value of one ontology vis-a-vis others, and the truth-claim in the connection is, consequently, to be understood only in this light. Is it then a question of falling in love with some ontology or the other? But even if it may be so, this is not all that is there to it. Though one takes resort to arguments and counter-arguments, when one is in love he will not ordinarily stake his love on the success or failure of the arguments, whereas the whole stake in case of ontologies seems to lie in the success or failure of the arguments. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the arguments indulged in here are more of the persuasive types than of the compelling varieties, and to that extent they are as good as arguments put forward by a lover to persuade the opponent to see beauty, the whole beauty, of the world for the matter, in the eyes of his beloved. But this seems to be the case also with appreciation or undermining of an artist's creation, a painter's painting, a piece of sculpture, music or even poetry. Both arguments and counter arguments may seem to be convincing, only if the person concerned knows how to make his point in a highly persuasive manner of convincing style. But what about the truth-claim in ontologies ? How are they to be assessed ? How are we going to evaluate the ideas of God, soul and the typical relationship between the Lord and his devotees advocated in one ontology (e.g. like that of Ramanuja or Baladeva of the Achintyabhedabheda school) as against ontologies of similar variety (e.g. like those of other Vaisnava thinkers) and those of very different type (e.g. like those of Sankara, Bradley, etc) ?

Of course, ontologies, it is true, can be judged in accordance with some criteria of adequacy, in the manner, perhaps, envisaged by philosophers like Emmet<sup>28</sup> and Berlin<sup>29</sup>, but, to my mind, it appears that when we come to deal with rival ontologies, not of the naive but of sophisticated varieties, there may not be any straight forward way available for doing this, so that one of such ontologies could be rejected in favour of another, as there is no uniform and straightforward manner in which we could evaluate great works of art belonging to different ages and regions of the world. In case of works of art belonging to different periods and regions, rival schools may continue to hold sway on our minds as being significant and interesting in their own way. Their value lies in making us see certain profiles which would ordinarily miss our eyes. Ultimately it is a question of rival ontologies. As I understand them, these diverse ontologies, no less than works of art, make us see things hitherto unseen, and to that extent they can be both revealing and exhilarating. The exhilaration is because of being able to see things which were hitherto unnoticed or were very vague in their outline until the typical ontology or the typical work of art was revealed to us, and hence there is this clinging to the same as being of utmost and unique importance. The truth-claim in case of ontologies is only a further step ahead in this direction, and is to be understood only in this light. It is thus rival ontologies may flourish side by side, and may be severally illuminating in so far as they highlight different cross-sections of our actual and possible experiences.<sup>30</sup>

#### References :

1. Cf. R.N. Tagore, Gitanjali "*Hethay ariya, hetha amarya, hethay dravida chin saka huna dal pathan mogal ek dehe hala lin.*"
2. Cf. "*Jagannathastu Bhairavah*".



3. Cf. "Nirgamah purusot preksamatrani-ibandhanastarka apratesthita bhavanti, at preksaya nirankusatvat"(Sankara's Bhasya on Brahma Sutra, 2.1.11).
4. Cf. "Svetasvatara Upanisad, 3.16.17. Sarratah panipadam tat sarvatoksi siromukham Sarvatah srutimalloke srvam vrtiyatisthati. Sarvendriya gunabhasam sarvendriya vivarjitam Satvasya prabhumisanam sarvasya saranam brhat". Also Sri Chaitanya Chandrodaya, 6.68 "Ya Ya srutirjalpati nirvisesam", Sa sabhidhatte savise sameva".
5. Cf. "Sagunahi agunahi nahi kachhu bheda, gavahi muni purana budha beda, Aguna arupa alakha aja joi Bhagata prema basa saguna so ho".  
Cf. Also "Tomyathayathopaste tadeva bhavati".
6. Cf. "Yasyamatam tasyamatam matam yasya na veda sah, avijnatam vijanatam vijanatamavi janatam."
7. Cf. Yada carmavadakasam vastayisyanti manavah Tada devamavijnaya duhkhasyantobhavisyati," And also "Tamevaviditvatimrtvumetinanyah pansha vidyate ayanaya".
8. Cf. The reference here is to the well known Vedic mantra, "Ado Yaddaru plavate sindhoh pare a purusam tadar abhasva druhamo tena gatcha parastaram." Rgveda 10. 155. 3.
9. Cf. Jagannathastakam of Sri Chaitanya also at times ascribed to Sri Sankaracarya), 4<sup>th</sup> Verse.
10. Cf. Srimad Bhagavata, 1.8.28 "Saman carantamsarvatra bhatanam yanmithah kalih" and 1.8.29. "Yasmin visama matimrnam."
11. "Aho bhagyam aho bhagyam Nanda gopa brajaukasam. Yanmitram Paramananda purna Brahma sanatanam".
12. Srnu sakhi kautakamekam Nandaniketaganane maya drstam Godhulidhusarango nrtvati Vedanta siddhantah.
13. Cf. "Tvadbhrtya bhrtya paricaraka bhrtya bhrtya bhrtyasya bhrtya iti mam smara Lokanatha."
14. Cf. "Bhaja ityesa vai dhatuh sevayam parikirtitah, tasmat seva budhah prokta bhaktih sadhanabhuyasi", Jiva Goswami, Sri Bhakti Sandarbha.
15. Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita.
16. Cf. Srimad Bhagavatam, 10.16.37.
17. Cf. Ibid., 3.29.13, "Salakya sarstisamipyas arupyaikatvamapyuta, diyamanam na grhanti vina ma sevanam janah."
18. Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita.
19. Cf. Vedanta Desika, Varadaraja Pancasat, 43, "Tvam cet prasidasi Tavasmi samipatascet, Tvayyasi bhakti ranagha karisailanatha, Sansrjyate yadi ca dasajana stvadiyah, sansara esa Bhagavanna pavarga eva."
20. Cf. Ramanuja, Sri Bhasya.
21. Cf. Ramanuja, Srimad Bhagavad Gita Bhasya, 14, 26.
22. Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita, "Tar Madhye moksavancha kaitava pradhan jahan haite Krishna bhakti hai antardhan." Cf. also, "Bhukti mukti sprha yavat Pisaci hrdivartate, Tavad bhakti sukhasyatra kathamabhudayo bhavet."
23. Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita. Also Cf. Srimad Bhagavatam, 11.12.45. "Sarva bhute su yoh pasyet Bhagovodbhovamatmanah, Bhutani Bhagavat yatmany sa Bhagavatattamah."
24. Cf. "Syamameva param rupam puri madhupuri vara, Vayah kaiserakam dhyeyamaayo eva para rasah."
25. Cf. Sri Ramanuja Bhasya Srimad Bhagavad Gita, 12.12, 'Bhakti yagobhyasa satakasya Atmanistsia evo sreysi.'
26. Adhyatma Ramayana, 1.5.45.
27. As quoted in R.C. Zaehner, Hinduism (Oxford University Press, 1966) p.133.
28. Cf. D.M. Emmet, The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking (London, 1945): 'A metaphysical theory is prevented from being a merely subjective impression by the need to achieve some measure of comprehensiveness .... no metaphysical theory can be sustained which does not respect empirical propositions in their own sphere.'
29. Cf. Isaiah Berlin, Concepts and Categories (Oxford University Press, London, 1980) : 'These models often collide; some are rendered inadequate by failing to account for too many aspects of experience, and are in their turn replaced by other models which emphasize what these last have omitted by in their turn may obscure what the others have rendered clear.'
30. C., R. Nozick, Philosophical Explanations (Oxford University Press, London, 1984, p.647) : An artistic philosophy would welcome (and appreciate) other shapings, other philosophical visions as part of the basketful, while striving itself for a prominent position in the ranking.' Also : 'The philosopher aimed at truth states a theory that presents a possible truth and so a way of understanding the actual world (including its value) in its matrix of possible neighbours. In his artistic reshaping, he also may lift the mind from being totally filled with the actual world in which it happens to find self.'

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Nothing is immortal in this mortal world even the divine figures follow the suit and this is the only eternal truth. As such the idols of the trinity, including the divine wheel, the Sudarsana Chakra have a limited period of life span. A couplet from the Bhagabat is relevant here, I suppose. “*Martyamandale dehabahi, devata helebi marai.*” The essence in the couplet is that everything in this world is perishable, even the gods and goddesses. It has been estimated that statues made up of sapphire and gems have a lifespan of ten thousand years. But statues made up of other metals have a lifespan of one thousand years. Wooden statues have a life span of twelve

years whereas pictorial images have a life span of one year. Images made out of earth have a lifespan of only one month. This is why the earthen images made on the eve of different festive occasions are immersed immediately after the concerned rituals. The idols of the trinity including Sudarsana are made of wood. As such these idols need change from time to time. According to the above doctrine this takes place approximately at an interval of twelve years coinciding with the year having twin Ashadha (lunar) months which usually appears once in twelve years (though not always). This change of idols of the trinity is known as Nabakalebara. The last Nabakalebara was held

## Nabakalebara - Change of the Idols

*Pramoda Chandra Pattanayak*



after an interval of nineteen years. Coincidentally the present Nabakalebara also falls after nineteen years due to the reasons mentioned above. For the information of the readers so far as trinity is concerned, Nabakalebara is of two kinds – change of the dresses only (which is done in exceptional cases) and change of the body. The present piece envisages the change of the body. The changing process of the body of the trinity along with Sudarsana is a very complicated and cumbersome task starting from the trip in search of the particular neem (*Azadirachta indica*) tree to the point of restoration of the new idols in place of the old ones over the sanctum sanctorum. Traditionally it has been followed probably ab intio. Selection of the neem tree against other trees for the purpose of idols has some significance. As



per the scripture this tree is worshipped by people irrespective of caste, creed and colour. Again the Neem tree is considered as a male tree and very strong in comparison with other trees. The selection of Neem trees for the purpose of the idols depends on various attributes as prescribed in scriptures and that too differs for different deities.

The history of Nabakalebara is obscure and full of disputes. At this point I want to invite the attention of the readers to the popular legend on this score linking lord Jagannath to Sri Krishna, incarnation of Sri Rama. Krishna while resting inside a jungle was pierced with an arrow of Jara Sabara by an error of vision. Jara Sabara was Angad, son of Bali in his previous birth, Bali was killed by Rama and Angad then vowed to take the revenge. The present act of Jara Sabara was the result of that vow though without any intention. When Jara Sabara knew his folly he repented and prostrated before Krishna in his dying stage for pardon. But Lord Krishna explaining the event of his last birth told that nothing to be repented and *che sara sara*. But he requested him to inform Arjuna, about his condition. As an obedient disciple Jara Sabara ran uninterruptedly and informed Arjuna who being grief-stricken rushed to the spot without losing time on getting the sad news from Jara Sabara. But by the time Arjuna arrived, Krishna succumbed. So Arjuna and Jara Sabara cremated the body of Krishna, the fire of which continued for six days but the middle(navel) portion didn't catch the fire. At this point of time there was a voice from above directing them to put the unburnt part of the body in the sea. So this part was immersed in the sea which was ultimately found by king Indradyumna. This part has been preserved inside the idol of Jagannath. But there is again some dispute over this score. While some Pundits opine that this portion has been implanted as Bramha inside the idol of



Jagannath others say that this portion of Krishna has been preserved inside Ratnasinghasana and Bramha which are implanted in trinity are nothing but Jivantamanjari or Salagrama of river Ganduki. Yet another popular view exists that Bramha is nothing but tooth of Buddha which has been implanted inside the idol. There is another side of this legend in the backdrop of the entire episode- Indradyumna the king of Malaya was an ardent devotee of lord Vishnu. The king along with his family and a young Brahmin, Vidyapati started in a voyage in pursuit of his revered god, Vishnu and arrived at Puri in the long run. Indradyumna decided to have a temple for his god Vishnu at Puri. Temple was built. Vidyapati was sent to find the idol of Vishnu. He roamed far and wide and in the long run came to the village of Viswabasu, chief of a Sabara village. Vidyapati was received as a guest in the house of Viswabasu. Time rolled on. By and by Vidyapati developed intimacy with the young daughter of Viswabasu. Taking advantage of intimacy, he could know that Viswabasu was worshipping Vishnu in a cave away from his house secretly which was not known to others except his daughter. With the help of the daughter of Viswabasu, Vidyapati could locate the cave and could find blue Sapphire, Neelamadhab inside the cave. He sent this message to the king Indradyumna who with a platoon of soldiers arrived and fought with Viswabasu to take away the idol. But to everybody's astonishment the idol was vanished. However there was a heavenly voice that the god would be found in the shape of a log in the shore of Mahodadhi. As such the king rushed to the shore and found the log. So he asked the people to lift it. But it could not move even an inch. At this point there was again a heavenly voice that it would be possible to lift only when the king himself, Vidyapati and Viswabasu forgetting their past enmity would lift. Viswabasu was then in





prison. He was freed from the prison and king Indradyumna embraced him. Then three of them tried to lift and it was done.

However due to the first legend, lord Jagannath is believed to be the incarnation of Lord Krishna and since that happened in the year with twin Ashadha month's Nabakalebaras have been performed only in the year with twin Ashadha. But it is also not certain that Nabakalebaras have been held in all the years with twin Ashadha in the past. During the dynasties of Soma, Ganga and Surya, the records of Nabakalebaras are not available. It is assumed that these records have been destroyed by different tyrant rulers and Kalapahada. However, as per the information available from Madala Panji, Nabakalebars have been followed at an interval of eight, twelve or nineteen years in accordance with the year having twin Ashadha months since 1665 AD. Conversely another information is also available that since the establishment of the Bhoi dynasty, Nabakalebars have been performed during 1575, 1593, 1608, 1625 and 1646 AD also.

The search for the prescribed trees for Nabakalebars is conducted by Daitapatis along with some other servitors of the temple. The tree must be very old one to the eye estimation as exact year has not been prescribed. The tree should be straight from the root to the level of bifurcation of the branches and this height should be 10 feet approximately and without any visible signs of damage of any sort. The girth of the trunk should be more than 6 feet. Further, there should be no sign of nesting by any birds whatsoever presently or in the past. The situation of the tree should be near about a running river or big water body or lake which is mandatory. There should be anthills at the root of the tree so as to allow snakes (cobra) to live in. These are but few situational criteria. Again there must be some divine signs on the trees like a natural picture of a conch, wheel and lotus on the tree trunk. As such the

search for the prescribed tree is an uphill task for the Daitapatis and the expertise on this score pass on from the elders to the young generations who gained the experience by accompanying with the group of elders. The group of Daitapatis for the purpose of finding the trees conducts a trip to Devi Mangala of Kakatpur for a blessing to be successful in locating the trees for the four deities. They observe certain stringent discipline of activities during the entire period which are not very easy to follow. Even they do not return to their respective homes under any circumstances whatsoever may be the situation from the D-Day of this trip till the arrival of the Daru at the Koili Baikuntha. However on finding the trees which should have particular attributes for the particular deities a number of paraphernalia are involved at every step. After selection of the trees felling and logging takes place, the tree meant for Sudarsana gets the priority in felling over others. The lifting of the logs now called Daru is done by new cartels (an innovation of the bullock carts) prepared for the purpose and which are pulled by the devotees up to Koili Baikuntha. These cartels loaded with the Daru enter Koili Baikuntha through the northern gate of the temple. The carving of the deities is done with top secret. Probably this is why Koili Baikuntha is otherwise known as "Guptapitha". A number of sheds are constructed inside the Koili Baikuntha for the purpose of workshop for carving out the deities. The carving of the deities are done by the fixed carpenters the right of which they inherit by discendancy from generation to generation by enjoying some landed property in lieu thereof.

The most important job of the Nabakalebara is the transfer of the Brahma from the old statues to new ones. This is done on the fourteenth day of dark fortnight of month of Ashadha at the dead of the night observing utmost secrecy. For this purpose all the rituals of the temple complex are completed by the evening on this particular day and the four gates of the temple



are closed for the devotees. Only Deulakaran with a sword in hand guard at the Baisi Pahacha while a group of Daitapatis and Pati Mohapatra remain inside the inner yard of the temple for lifting of the new statues from Koili Baikuntha to Anasara Mandap and transfer of the Brahma from old statues to the new ones. Brahma is something of a make belief affair. Since time immemorial, people have been trying to define Brahma, but end at a point of faith and trust that something with supernatural and immortal power which is also called the Atma (Soul). However, the transfer of Brahma is extremely secret and performed by Daitapatis only. It is said by some Daitapatis who have performed this job that the feelings at the time of transfer of the Brahma is difficult to describe. Some Daitapati said that, he felt like a rabbit jumping out of his palms. During the art of transfer of Brahma, the entire temple complex is made dark by putting off the light points. In fact the entire city is made black out. It is believed that anybody trying to have a look of the process out of curiosity succumbs. This important job is usually done by the elder members of the Daitapatis. They are blind folded and the palms are also covered by winding with a piece of pata cloth so as not to get either the vision or touch of the Brahma. After the transfer of Brahma from the old statues to the new ones, old statues are taken back to Koili Baikuntha for further processing towards burial. All the old furnitures, fixtures and side deities of the three cars are also buried along with the old statues. As such all the above structures are also made the de novo along with the deities.

However, the above descriptions do not give a complete picture of Nabakalebara. It is not possible due to the fact that every stage right from D-Day of the journey for the tree till the restoration of the idols involves a lot of *yajna* incantation and other scheduled worships which are rather not very easy to describe. Again there are a lot of rites which are strictly kept secret for



us. That is the reason for which we accept Daru Debata (wooden deities) as mysterious. We have to trust and have faith without slightest hesitation on the divine power of the deities. Universally trinity has been accepted as mysterious God.

Lord Jagannath is unique God. Though considered superior being, many of the activities have the similarity of the common customs and traditions of human beings in our society. As such burial of the trinity is observed by the Daitapatis by spending a mourning period of ten days. At the end of the mourning period Daitapatis go for head shaving, oil massaging and bathing. Then entire Daitapati families wear new clothes and are entertained with Mahaprasad. All these steps are followed traditionally in case of a death of a person in our society. A lot of daily routine rituals of trinity like dressing, eating, sleeping, ailing and treatment etc. are performed just like a common man of the society. Again His preference in visiting aunt's house call on the people irrespective of the caste creed, colour by coming out of the temple leaving the comfortable Ratna Singhasana to the road in cars, are symbolic of humanity. That is why Lord Jagannath is otherwise known as Jagabandhu, a friend of the human race.

The new statues after getting the Brahma from the old to the new one are worshipped and onward rituals performed as usual. To have a first sight of the idols after Nabakalebara of the trinity, the devotees throng in millions across the world covering long distances. The gathering often becomes beyond control of the administration in spite of an elaborate preparation. However the Nabakalebara reminds us that nothing is permanent in this world and a day comes to call it a day in everybody's life without exception.

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Pramoda Chandra Pattanayak, 678, Laxmisagar, Bhubaneswar -6.



The wooden images of Balabhadra, Subhadra, Jagannath and Sudarshan on the high pavilion inside the inner sanctum of the great temple are not decent human figures. Carving of beautiful forms of the deities according to scriptural prescriptions with Neem wood could have been quite possible. Balabhadra and Jagannath have two hands each projecting forward without ankle bends and fingers. Subhadra has no hands. None of the images have ears and portions of body below the waist. Their figures were more crude when carved, but made up to look like their present form after application of several pastes and wrapping of several layers of clothes. Their faces are painted, so that their eyes, nose, lips, forehead etc. are discernible.

What are the reasons of such peculiarities behind the cult of Darubrahma Sri Jagannath? There is a complete hymn in the Rgveda called Purusha Sukta (x.90), in which the creation of the world from the primordial Purusha has been described both in stages and also in length. The evolution of religious thought in the Rgveda led to the conception of a creator distinct from any of the chief deity superior to all the gods. He appeared under various names of 'Purusha', 'Hiranyagarbha or Prajapati'.

### **Daru-vrksha, the real representative of the Brahman —**

In this world everything has a beginning and an end, with an intervening period of existence,

## **Daru - Vrksa to Darubrahma : Vedic and Agamic Ethics in God Incarnation**

*Padmanabha Mahapatra*



it is natural for the human intelligence to conceive of a beginning for this creation and to posit an eternal God who existed before the creation and from Whom the creation proceeded. '*Sadeba somyeda-marga asit, ekameb-dwitiyam \*\*\* tadaiksata bahu syam prajayeya iti*'. In the beginning 'sat' alone existed, the One without a second. It reflected - 'May I become many! May I be born!' (Chandogya Upanishad 6.2.1-3) The 'many' that were created, needed a central integrating force, a law or a principle, for, otherwise, chaos would result. This law or principle is the Purusottam Dharma. This Purusottam Tatwa is the firm foundation upon which the entire universe rotates - '*dharmo*



*biswasya jagatah pratistha*'. (Mahanarayana Upanishad 79.7) The seeds of this, which is well-known as 'barna-asrama-dharma' is found in the Purushasukta of Rigveda (10th Mandal 90-1 to16) and Sri Purusottam Jagannath is that '*Saharshshirsha Purushaah*'.

*"Urdhwa mulo-avak- shakha esho ashwatthah sanatanah*

*Tadeba shukram tat brahma tadebamritamuchyate Tasminalokah shritah sarbe tadu natyeti kashchana. Etad bai tat"*

*(Kath-Upanishad . Part II. Canto III-1)*

*"Urdhwamulah"*, it is the tree which has its root above, this root is the state of the supreme Brahman. This tree is the symbol of the world, it comprises everything from unmanifested to the immovables. It has been expressed as a "*vrksa*", a tree because it is being felled. This tree has its birth, old age and death, it changes itself every moment. Such a tree is subject to hundreds of doubts in the minds of the skeptics, its reality is determined in its true colour, by the seekers of truth, its essence lies only in its root, it is the supreme Brahman, ascertained in Vedant. Such tree grows out of the seed of ignorance, desire, action and the unmanifested but its sprout is Hiranyagarbha. This Brahman comprises of two powers, i.e. the knowledge and the action. Its leaves are the Vedas, the Smrtis, the learnings and the instructions. Its charming flowers are the symbols of charity, austerity and sacrifice. Its different tastes are the feelings of happiness and sorrow. Its varieties of fruits are the life-substance of the worldly beings. It is felled by the weapon of detachment consisting of the realization of the identity of Brahman and the Self as enumerated by the Vedanta.

The name of this tree is '*aswatthah*', this is tree of the world, its nature being ever unsteady. The tree is '*avaksakhah*', it has four downward

branches symbolizing the heaven, hell and the states of beasts and ghosts. This tree is present from the time immemorial, no one knows its date of germination, so it is '*Sanatanah*'. '*Tat eba*' '*shukram*' - such root of the tree of the world is semen, it is white, pure, resplendent, – really being the light of the Self, it is the consciousness. '*Tat brahma, tat eva amrtam ucyate*' – that is the Brahman, the greatest of all. That is also called indestructible under any circumstances (amrtam), hence it is the supreme truth. During creation, existence and dissolution of the world no modification trespasses Him.

### **The real nature of Brahman —**

The entire universe moves on due to the existence of Brahman. He is like a raised thunderbolt and out of fear everyone abides by His law. Those who actually realize this Brahman become immortal. Because of Brahman's inevitable law, Fire burns, Sun shines, Indra, Bayu and Yama the lord of death, all proceed with their respective duties as assigned to them. His form does not exist within the range of human vision and nobody can see Him with the normal eye – '*Na sandrishe tisthati rupamasya na cakshusha pashyati kashchanainam*'. He can only be apprehended through a pure transparent mind imbibed with intuitive wisdom borne out of unalloyed devotional practices in the very core of one's own unstinted heart. Those who have really got the opportunity of having such vision, have gained the final beatitude.

Parambrahman Purusottam Jagannath is the very root of the world. He is '*Hiranyagarbhah*'. '*Hiranyagarbhah samabartatagre*' (Yajuh-23-1). At the cycle of creation, the great Sun and the Sauramandala, Meghamala within the Navomandal, the green Earth and the deep Ocean etc. got lost in the Hiranyagarbha and ultimately the Hiranyagarbha



evaporated into the cosmic infinity diminishing its glaze to zero. Hiranyagarbha is infinite effulgence without any definite shape. 'Na tasya pratima asti yasya nama Mahadasya Hiranyagarbhah'. Initially He had no image. He desired so 'kamayata bahu syam prajayeyeti.' (Taittiriya.2/6) First He became quadruped. 'Sarvam hi etat Brahma ayam atma Brahma sah ayamatma catuspat' (Mandukya Upanishad -2). This means – All this is surely Brahman. This self is Brahman. The self, such as it is, is possessed of four quarters.

### Then what are those four quarters?

The first quarter is Baiswanara whose sphere of action is the waking stage. He leads in diverse ways all the Bishwa and the beings (naras). Sri Balabhadra is the Jagaritabastha of Parambrahma Purusottam. Tajjasa is the second quarter, the dream state, as its sphere of activity is 'swapnasthanah'. Mother Subhadra is the Swapnabastha of Parambrahma. The third quarter is the 'Prajna', who has deep sleep as His sphere, in whom everything becomes undifferentiated, who is a mass of mere consciousness, who abounds in bliss, who is the doorway to the experience of the dream and waking states. Sri Jagannath represents to this third phase, the Susuptabastha of Parambrahma. The fourth phase is the lord of all; He is Antaryami, the inner controller. He gives birth to the universe together with its diversities, He is the source of all, He is the place of origin and dissolution of all the beings (bhutam). Sri Chakraraj Sudarshan represents to this Turiyabastha of Parambrahma. Keeping this aspect in view, four Neem trees are being identified for embodiment of four Bigrahas.

Purusottam is the seed of the whole world, He is the seed of all beings, for there is no creature, animate or inanimate, which exists without Him. 'Yaccapi sarbabhutanam bijam

tadahamarjuna'. (Gita 10/39) The worldly seed originates from the tree and in course of time vanishes after producing the tree. Shri Purusottam is not born, He has created innumerable world, He remains as He is. So He has declared Himself to be eternal and imperishable seed within world tree. He has assumed the form of a fish, a tortoise, a boar and what not. He may assume any form at any time, but always it is only He. He in the form of Hiranya-bidarak Nrusimha lacerates Hiranyakakshyapu but in the form of Laxmi-Nrusimha He blesses all His devotees. Sri Nrusimha is the first 'Archa Bigraha' of Mahavishnu, so He is the only worshipping deity through fire sacrifice in the entire Nabakalebar process within the 'Kalasha' placed on the Yajna Mandap. Even though four Daru Pratimas on the Ratnasimhasan attract the notice of the devotees, actually they are one, so far as their consecration is concerned. Only one Nyas Daru is consecrated on the Pratistha Mandap and thereafter cut into four pieces as per the prescribed size, to be suitably fixed as lids, so as to cover the cavities in the chest portions of the new Bigrahs containing the 'Brahmapadarth'. These lids are known as 'Brahma-kapatat'.

We have already discussed, Brahman comprises of two powers, the first is the knowledge and the second is the action. Jnana and Karma are the two poles recognized, either they may be combined in practice (samuccaya) or regarded as mutually exclusive (vikalpa). In the entire process of Nabakalebar the first part, the Yoga of knowledge, is practiced by the Shrotriya Brahmins and the second part, the Yoga of action, is practiced by the Daitapatis and the Biswakarmas.

### Why the Bigrahs are made of only Neem Daru?

With reference to 'Nilatantra' Chaitra vrksa i.e the aswatthah and the Bata vrksa are



debarred for construction of Pratimas – ‘*Chaitravrksha ch Nyagrodha achhedy pratimarhaya*’. Even though the literary meaning of Daru is a piece of wood, its *deshaj*, colloquial meaning is Neem Daru. Neem Daru is Deb-vrksha and worshippable like Peepul (aswatthah) tree. Neem tree after ten germinations becomes equivalent to the Peepul tree. A Neem tree near burning ground, white-ant-shed and hermitage is the best for construction of Daru-brahma – ‘*Nimba pradhanmetesham prtiam ch binirmitaue*’. (Pratima lakshana saudhagam) Baikhanasa Agama (Patal-10), Skanda Purana, (Utkal Khanda), Bamadev Samhita and Bhabisya Puran also support the above view. Under such analogy the Neem trees have been accepted as the Daru-vrksas for the Chturddhamurti.

A Daru-vrksha within a dense forest surrounded by furious beasts, snakes and ghosts is to be converted to Dev-vrksha, what are the Vedic and agamic procedures followed for the purpose? –

The Veda-s are the oldest records of Indian tradition, its derivative sense is that it provides a means to acquire knowledge of reality (*tattwa*). The Veda *tattwa* i.e. ‘Nigam’ does not suggest for idol-worship, ‘Agam’-based on the Vedic tradition, later than the Veda-s but definitely earlier to many later literary productions, suggest the shape of God in form of an idol. The root ‘gam’ which is found in both the above words means ‘to know’ besides having the sense ‘to go’. In Purusottam ‘Nigam’, ‘Agam’ and ‘Lokacar’ combinedly practiced with ‘Mantra’ ‘Yantra’ ‘Mandal’ and ‘Mudra’ converts the Daru-vrksha to Dev-vrksha (in phase 1) and thereafter the Dev-vrksha to Daru-bigrah. (in phase 2)

**Phase 1** — Consequent on completion of worship of Mother Durga (Basantik-

Nabadinatmak-Durga-Puja) on Sriram-Navami, on the next day of Basantik-Dashara the Daru-Sandhan process is started. The Daitapatis and the Brahmin Preceptors proceed to the temple of Maa Mangala at Kakatpur, the famous Adya-Shakti Devi-temple, all of them surrender at the feet of the Mother. On completion of Majana the Shrotriyas go on chanting the famous Durga Saptasati before Her and appease to get the clue of location of the Darus.

A few words about the preceptors — For the purpose of conversion of ‘Daru-vrksha’ to the ‘Dev-vrksha’ best preceptors, installation-experts and other sacrificial priests are to be engaged. They must be ‘Shrotriya Brahmins’. He can only be considered to be a Shrotriya, who reads, remembers the Vedas and the Samhitas and conducts accordingly. Others, who are only born in Brahmin sect, not thorough in Shastras, not doing Sandhya, Tarpana, Gayatri-japa regularly, they are only ‘namdhari Brahmins’, declared unfit for Vedic Karmas. (Skand-Kashikhand- 2/50/69-70)

After the identification of Daru-vrksha, the area around the tree is cleared, the area is made purified by sprinkling scented water with utterances of Vedic Mantras, this is called normal *bhumisuddhi*. The Sudarshan Cakra is placed near the root of the tree. The ritual bath of the tree by chanting of Purushsukta hymns is to be done. Fixation of Ajnamala, wrapping of white clothes, *majana*, then *parikrama* of the vrksa are chronologically taken up. A temporary Yajna Mandap and another Sambhargruha are to be constructed. The Mandap is to be covered by four Torans (flags), in its four sides four doors made of Aswastha, Plakhya, Bata and Udumbar are to be fitted in eastern, western, northern and western sides respectively, in its central point a Yajnja-vedi and amidst it, a Yajnja-kunda is to



be constructed. The next rite is Ankuraropana, this is taken up within the Sambhargruha with reference to the instructions of 'Yajnakalpadrumah' – p/182. The method of Ankurashala-karanam in a rectangular dimension has been codified in 'Suri Sarbaswam'- sm-2-sloka no.60.

The seeds selected for sowing are – Yaba (barley), Sali-dhanya (paddy), Godhuma (wheat), Tila (sesamum), Sarsapa (white mustard), Mudga (green beans), mass (black beans), Syamaka (Black wild-rice). Those are washed in lukewarm water, some sandal-turmeric water is then sprinkled on the seeds for further purification. The Acarya utters the *bija* 'AUM' followed with the *mantra* – '*Jitam te Pundarikakhya jitam te biswabhabana, jitam teastu Hrushikesh mahapurusha purbaja*'. Thereafter the seeds are sown in the rectangular bed, dug on the earth in east-west direction. Then the *puja* of Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu are performed one after another, thereafter the seed-bed is sprinkled with holy water of the Ganges along with the pious water incanted with Nrusimha-Bijamantra. Then the seed-bed is to be covered with a long cloth, after Dash-digpala *puja* and offering of *bali* the process of Ankuraropana is completed.

The process to be taken up thereafter is the fire sacrifice, i.e the Banajag Yajna. At least eleven or more Shrotriya Brahmins are to participate, they are Pradhanacarya, Brahma, Caru and Samidha Acarya, Pustakacarya or Pracharak, Mandalacarya, Mantrajapak Acaryas, Caturbed Homa Acaryas, Sadasyas and Mantrathakas etc. In the north-east corner of the Jagmandap Sarbatobhadra *mandal* is drawn up, on this *mandal* the prime deity Sri Nrusimha is worshipped. In the north-east corner on an eight-petalled lotus the weapons, three Astras (axe, each made of gold, silver and iron) are worshipped. In

the south-east corner the Bastu *mandal*, in the south side of the south-east corner the Swastika *mandal* and Nabagraha *mandal* are drawn up and respective gods are worshipped with all sanctification. A sum total of 32 Kalashas are placed on the Jagamandap and in those Kalashas ten Digpalas, Ganesh, Saraswati, Kali, Kshetrapal, Bhairab, eight Basus, Nag and Naguni etc. are initially invited and then worshipped with reference to the prescribed Bidhana.

The Acarya initiates the Baruna Puja (Puja of Ganesh, Baruna, Adityadi Nabagraha, Indradi Dashdigapal and Gram Debata i.e. Pancadev Pujanam), then makes the Barana of all the Shrotriyas for performing their respective allotted duties. The Acarya undertakes the Puja of Sri Nrusimha, Durga, other god and goddess in their respective Kalashs, makes Dashdigbandhan, Bhutocshadana around the Vrksa, then Bedisamskar, Agni-sthapana, Agnipuja are performed before taking up the Homa. After Kushatandika the first four Ahutis are offered to Prajapati, Indra, Agni and Soma. The successive Ahutis offered chronologically for – Bayu, Surya, Agni-Bayu-Surya, Agni-Bayu, Agni-Baruna, Agni, Baruna-Sabitri-Visnu-Baiswadeb-Maruta, Baruna and Prajapati respectively. The next is Punyahabacanam, Punah-sankalpa and Agnirakhyakaranam stotra-uccaranam.

In the entire Banajag- bidhan the principal worshippable Yajna-adhipati is Sri Laxmi-Nrusimha. After recitation of His Dhyamantra one thousand Ahutis are required to be offered in Yajnakunda in Patal Nrusimha Mantra. Another 108 Ahutis are to be offered in the name of the specific God to whom the particular Daruvrksa belongs, a few more Ahutis are also due for the Parswadebatas, Dwarpals, Nabagrahs and other Debatas invited and established in different



Kalashs. In four sides of the Mandap Caturveda Homa are to be taken up parallel in the respective *Sthandilas* by the Brahmins nominated for such purpose. At last the final touch of the fire-sacrifice is also made in Patal Nrusimha Mantra. The Yajna is quenched down by offering of varieties of sweets.

The Acarya, Bidyapati and Biswabasu after surrounding the Yajnavedi, charge their bodies on Nrusimha Mantraraj Mantra, proceed towards the Daru-vrksha, pray Visnu – ‘*Visnotwaddbimbartham Darum grunhami*’. The vrksha is to be worshipped with different *upacars* and chanting of Visnusuktas. Again 108 Ahutis are to be offered in a small Yajna-sthala below the vrksha, the three axes are worshipped in Astra Mantra, the vrksha is smeared with Yajna-bhasma and sampatajya. After a special bath of the vrksha with the left over Yajna-ghruta a picture of a human-being in an opposite direction (legs upward and head downward) is painted on its body with a *kusha*, Narayan-Visnu-Basudev *mantras* are pronounced, the vrksha is covered with a white cloth, the Bhuta-pretas are directed to vacate the place, a Kusmand *bali* is offered. The Kusmand is cut into small pieces, some blackgram and turmeric are added with it, it is offered as naibedyas to Dasha-digpals and the Bhuta-pretas. This gupta-puja is not to be seen by anybody. In the above mentioned process the Daru-vriksha is converted to Dev-vrksha. Thereafter the felling of Daruvriksha and its transportation into the Kaibalya-baikuntha are processed.

### Phase II - Pratistha Prakaranam —

According to the scriptural methodology Kaibalya Baikuntha or the Koili-Baikuntha is the Golak Dham, situated in the northern corner of outer *kurma-bedha* of Srimandir, where all the rituals of Nabakalebar are observed, (‘*Uttare sarbadevata uttare sarba-tirthani*’ - *Bihari Karmakanda*). Kaibalya Baikuntha is considered as the most sacred Pitha amongst the Naba-

Baikunthas where the carving of the new idols and the process of their consecration are performed.

The word ‘Pratistha’ is derived from the verbal root ‘stha’ prefixed by ‘Prati’. It is the act of installing the idol as the simulacrum in toto of the God, i.e. meant to be adored with all attributes and deeds. The ‘Supreme Self’ is all pervasive like Ether and He is free from any and all attributes. Such God with attributes is installed in the idol by means of chanting of Veda Mantras. The ‘Pratistha’ of Sri Visnu in shape of wooden idols relies upon such sacred installation in order to attain Vaisnava, the place highest.

The Pratistha becomes meaningful only when the preceptor has a clear understanding of and faith in the science of subtle sound vibration of mystic syllables, *beeja mantra* and their related symbolism, based on which the great seers (mantra-drastas) established various rituals. As he progresses in Pratistha, the preceptor will gradually be able to attain concentration and absorption in it, culminating in the transformation of his consciousness. Of course, this transformation also depends on other important factors like the preceptor’s intensity of faith, purity of mind and devotional fervor.

According to the scriptural procedure, the consecration of the Bigrahs and its ancillaries are taken up in the Pratistha Mandap, side by side the making of the new idols are also taken up in the Nirmana Mandap. So the Pratistha of the Bigrahs directly is not practicable. The Nyasa Daru is the prime factor for consecration. Nyasa Daru is a different piece of Daru collected for divine Bigrahs, it is a part of one Daru Vrksha out of the four, the specification of which can not be disclosed, it is transported to Koili Baikuntha in one of the Daru Shagadis. Nyasa Daru is a symbolic representation of the new idols, it is only worshipped in all ancillaries of consecration rituals, it remains in use till the new idols are brought to fore. After Pratistha the Nyasa Daru is cut into





four pieces as per the prescribed size, to be suitably used as lids, so as to cover the cavities in the chest portions of the new Bigrahs containing the 'Brahmapadartha'.

Seven Mandaps are required to be constructed, those are – Daru Mandap (for retention of Daru logs), Nirmana Mandap (for idol-making), Nrusimha Mandap (for continuous worship of Laxmi-Nrusimha on Khat-shej), Sambhar Mandap (for Ankuraropana), Snan Mandop, Adhibash Mandap (for Jaladhibash), Pratistha Mandap (for Homa-Yajna and consecration etc). The Mandols to be drawn up by the Mandalacarya are – Cakrabja Mandol, Sarbatobhadra Mandol, Bastu Mandol, Swastik Mandol, Nabagraha Mandol, Padma Mandol, Ankuraropana Mandol, Diggpal Mandol and Sri Visnu Mandol etc. The preceptors nominated for consecration within the Koili Baikuntha are – Acarya, Nyasacarya, Brahma, Caru and Samidha Acaryas, 2 Pracarakas, Pustakacarya, 3 Swastibacakas, Pratinidhi, 4 Caturdwar Yagnikas, Murtidhar, Shala-rakhyaka, 5 Sadasyas, 10 Japakas, Mandalacarya and Daibagnya Brahmana. 2 preceptors nominated for Abhiseka in Shiba temples within Srimandir (Aisaneswar and Baikuntheswar) and others for Abhiseka in Shiba temples within Srikshetra (Yameswar, Markandeswar, Lokanath, Kapalmocan, Nilakantha and Astasambhu etc). Preceptors nominated for Candipatha in the Devi Mandaps of Bimala, Batamangala, Bhubaneswari, Uttarayani (within Srimandir) and Dakshinakalika, Alamcandi, Carcika, Marcika, Shamakali, Baseli, Barahi, Ardhasani and Bisweswari etc. (within Srikshetra).

The consecration *bidhan* starts on 'Krishnapaksha Dwitiya' and continues till the 'Krishnapaksha caturdashi' of the month of Ashadha. . The metallic Calanti Pratima of Sri Laxminrusimha constantly remains on the Khat-seja in the *agneya* corner of the Cakrabja Mandol, He is the prime worshippable deity

during the entire Pratistha Bidhan. The chronology of performances in Pratistha Bidhan are – Acaryadi Baranam, Ankurarpana Bidhanam, Pratisthartham Sambharsangrahanam, Jagshala kalpanam, Dhruvpratimadyadhibasah, Bastu Homah, Adhar Homah, Kumbhpuja, Dhruvpratimadinam Kalashsnapanam, Sayanadhibasah, Pratisthanga Homah, Nidraghat Pratisthartham Ratnadi- byahruti-matruka-mantra- bijakhyar nyasah and Purnahuti by the Gajapati. No more details can be disclosed in this regard, as the entire process of consecration is Top secret, Top secret and Top secret. After the change of the Brahmapadarthas (Life Substances) from the old idols to the new idols on the Anabasarpindi in the midnight of the 14<sup>th</sup> lunar day of Ashadha Krishnapaksha the Devvrksa becomes the Daru Brahma.

### Conclusion

Darubrahma is doing His Lila (sport) in Kaliyuga, the age of vice and irreligion. Assuming any form He may do any Lila (sport), but our sight should not deviate from Him. He says – 'He who sees Me present in all beings, and sees all beings existing in Me, I am never out of sight of him, nor is he ever sight of Me'. (Gita 6/30) There is nothing except Darubrahma, He alone has assumed many forms. He alone is manifested in infinite forms. There is no necessity of any action or object in realizing Him, only sentiment (Bhaba) is required. He says - '*mameba ye prapadyante mayametam taranti te.*' (Gita- 7/14) He who takes refuge in Me alone, crosses the Divine illusion. Sri Purusottam Jagannath considers His devotee as His crest-jewel – '*maim to hum bhagatanako dasa, bhagata mere mukutmani*' – 'I am only the servant of the devotee and the devotee is my crest-jewel !' He is our Mother, so also our Father for infinite births.

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Padmanabha Mahapatra, Srimandir Purohit,  
Matimandap Sahi, Puri.



The historic Car Festival of Puri in Odisha is an important facet of Hindu civilisation in Indian Peninsula since ages. It is important because it annually registers global brotherhood and offers an unprecedented access to the humanity at large to come closer to the divinity. Man and God and God and Man become one in the Ratha Jatra. No distinction in whatever form exists.

The Car Festival of Lord Jagannath, Puri is a popular Festival celebrated all over the world. Even in Communist country like Russia, a city has been named as 'Purusottam Kshetra' and festival is observed with intense

enthusiasm by the mass. The ISKCON devotees have spread the message of the Lord all over the world and by the year 1997, in 62 foreign countries this festival is observed.

Some historians ascribe the origin of the Car Festival to Buddhist Convention. Fa-hien, the Chinese traveller in 4<sup>th</sup> century have described the Car Festival in Khotan, a city in West China, where the image of Buddha was installed in chariot, and the king of Khotan used to sprinkle water and sweep the chariot in broomstick. It was observed in the month of June, which synchronizes with the period of Car Festival at Puri. He has also seen the Car

## The Famous Car Festival of Puri

*Rabindra Kumar Behuria*



Festival at Pataliputra on the birth day of Buddha. From such historical evidences this scholar infer that Car Festival at Puri have its source from Buddhism.

The Rig Vedic *sloka* runs thus:

**'A Krushnena Rajasubartamano  
Nibartayant mamrutam Martyam cha  
Hiranmayena Sabita Rathena  
Deho Jati Bhubanani Pashyan'**

In Ramayana and Mahabharat there is mention of Ratha in number of times. Ratha or Chariot was in an insignia of aristocracy used by royal order. Artha Sashtra of Kautilya (4<sup>th</sup> Century B.C) mentions about the cars used by Gods. In Odisha Car Festival of Lord Lingaraj is observed in Bhubaneswar, in the month the



Chaitra (April-May) on Ashokastami day. During the said month the Car Festival of goddess Minakshi is also observed in Madurai (Tamilnadu). In case of Goddess Biraja in Jajpur, the Car Festival is also celebrated in the month of Ashwin (September -October).

The Puranic and Scriptural references on Ratha or Chariot lead to inescapable conclusion that 'Ratha' is basically Hindu concept, which has been adopted by different religious communities with regional variations in different parts of India, traceable from a remote antiquity. In the early Christian era of 2<sup>nd</sup> Century, the chariots are depicted in sculptural art at Amaravati, Buddhalaya and Kerala, as the seated Sun God is drawn in Chariot.

During the period of Eastern Ganga king Chodaganga Deva, the builder of Jagannath Temple and his illustrious successor Anangabhima III (1211-1238 A.D). Lord Jagannath was given the status of Suite Deity and entire temple was dedicated as Purosottam Samrajya. The sculptural description of Ratha or Chariot, with twenty four-wheels at Konark, as has been said earlier, suggests the popular and religious acceptance of Ratha or movement of deities on Ratha ceremonially. Many foreign and non-Hindu scholars have described the Car Festival in their own way as far as back 1321 A.D.

The Muslim historian Abul Fazl describes about Jagannath Temple in the following manner :

“In the town of Purusottam on the bank of the Sea, stands the temple of Jagannath, where the three images of Lord Krishna, His brother and sister are installed. They are washed six times every day and freshly clothed;

fifty or sixty Brahmin Priests are used to be on their feet in their service and each time they are washed and made to new garments. They are made an offering of large dishes of food, the leavings of which are taken by twenty thousand people. The Brahmins at certain times carry the image in procession upon a carriage of sixteen wheels, which in the Hindu Language is called Ratha, and they believe that whoever assists in drawing it along obtains remission of all his sins.”

Alexander Hamilton who visited Puri in 1708 A.D. has furnished a second-hand report on the Car Festival and has mentioned: Jagarynat's effigy is carried abroad in procession, mounted on a coach four storeyed high and people fell flat on the ground to have the honour to be crushed to pieces by each wheel.'

'After the British occupation of Orissa, Harcourt visited Puri and witnessed the car festival in 1805. According to him the Festival was witnessed by at least five lakhs of people. He says: "I was astonished at the order and regularity preserved. There was not the least tumult or disposition to violence."

James Fergusson witnessed the Car Festival in 1837 A.D. He published his impressions in his book 'picturesque illustrations of Ancient Architecture in Hindustan' in 1847 A.D. as follows: I was most agreeably disappointed to find the pilgrims hurrying to the spot talking and laughing, like people going to a fair in England, which in fact, it is, 'He saw no victims crushed under the wheels of the Chariot.'

Charles Grome, the collector of Jagannath (Puri) in 1805 and George Webb, the collector of Cuttack in 1807 at the behest of Governor General in Council made



exhaustive probe in respect of the management of the temple of Lord Jagannath which included various modes of ritual worship, temple revenues, the role of Mathas, the inflow of pilgrims to Puri, the structure of the prevailing pilgrim tax etc in a rational manner. No disrespect was shown by them. The British even honoured the Raja of Puri as the Superintendent of the Temple and as the first servitor of Lord Jagannath by 1809, the practice which was said to have been discontinued since 1760 A.D. during the Marahatta rule.

The Ratha Yatra of Puri is to be historically analysed to trace its origin. Eminent historians like Dr. S.N. Rajguru, Prof. K.S. Behera, Dr. Herman Kulke and many others tender divergent views. Many other Odia, Sanskrit and Hindi literary works contain descriptions of Car Festivals. Out of such huge number of literary works, a few can be cited as very popular work, 'Basantotsava Kavyam' of Haladhar Mishra (17<sup>th</sup> Century), 'Gundicha Champu' of Bakravak Chakrapani Pattanaik, 'Gundichautsava Vernanam' of Bhaguveta Brahma and Gundicha Vije, of the 18<sup>th</sup> century by poet Brajanath Badajena, Pandit Narahari composed a commentary on the Meghadutam of Kalidas, entitled Brahma Prakasika Tika, in which he interpreted the text in the light of the Car-Festival of Lord Jagannath. In the Ganga-Vamsanucharitam by Vasudev Rath (18<sup>th</sup> Century) an interesting description of the festival is given. The Odia poet-philosophers of Mediaeval Orissa, including Salabega, a Muslim devotee, have expressed through poetry, their poignant visions of Lord Jagannath and the glory of the Car-Festival.

Many other foreign travellers like Mohammad-Bin-Amirwala (1626), W. Brutton



(1633), Sebastian Menrique (1636), Bernier (1667), and Thomas Bowery (1669-79) have written about Lord Jagannath.

### **Ratha Yatra**

The world famous Car-Festival of Lord Jagannath is held on 'Ashadha Sukla Dwitiya' i.e the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the bright fortnight of Ashadha (June-July) every year. This festival is popularly known as Ratha Yatra, Gundicha Yatra and also Ghosha Yatra. On the Car Festival day, the deities are carried to the Chariots in a traditional ceremonial manner first Sudarshana, then followed by Balabhadra, Subhadra and Jagannath are made to swing forward and backward in a manner called 'Pahandi'.

The Chariot of Lord Jagannath is known as Nandighosha. It has 16 (sixteen) wheels and the colour of the fabrics that cover the roof of the Chariot are red and yellow. The Chariot of Lord Balabhadra is known as Taladhawaja. It has 14 (fourteen) wheels and the colour of the fabrics are red and green. Subhadra's chariot 'Devadalan' has 12 (twelve) wheels and fabrics are red and black. Sudarshana is seated by the side of the Subhadra in her Chariot. Madanmohan, a representative deity of Jagannath sits in the chariot of Lord Jagannath. So also two other small idols-Rama and Krishna take their seats in the chariot of Balabhadra. These small idols are made of metal. Thus actually seven deities namely Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra, Sudarshana, Madanmohan, Rama and Krishna are seated on three chariots and moved to a temple known as 'Gundicha Ghar' which is at a distance of about 3 kms away from Jagannath temple. The chariot of Balabhadra is dragged first, followed by those of Subhadra and Jagannath.

On the first day if any chariot cannot reach the Gundicha Ghar, it is dragged on the next day. On the Return Car Festival day, the deities are brought to the Singhadwar area of



the Jagannath Temple. A ritual performed on the 5<sup>th</sup> day (starting from and including the day of Car Festival) is known as “Hera Panchami” when Goddess Laxmi proceeds to Gundicha. In the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> day (i.e the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the bright fortnight of Asadha) the deities are adorned with gold ornaments and dressed gorgeously in their respective chariots parked in the Simhadwar area. On the same day another ritual called ‘Hari Sayan Ekadasi’ is performed. On the following day i.e. the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the bright fortnight, another important ceremony known as ‘Adharapana Bhog’ is performed. A sweet drink is offered to the deities. On the evening of the following day, the deities are taken to the temple in a traditional procession amidst gathering of thousands of devotees.

The most distinctive feature of Ratha Yatra of Puri is the close and peculiar religious linkage of the Gajapati king of Odisha with Lord Jagannath. Sweeping of the Cars by the king before the multitude of devotees standing below is the height of religious humility incomparable and unconceivable. Besides, such a grand function suggests equality of human beings before the God who carries the entire humanity with Him in a festival.

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# NABAKALEBAR

*Bharati Nayak*

The soul of all souls  
Oh Supreme !  
You are present in me  
And all.

You take your 'Avatars'  
To let us feel  
That You are present  
As one amongst us  
As any living being  
You go through  
All pleasure and pains,  
From birth to death.

Like a common man does,  
From morning till night  
When time comes for sleep  
You go into slumber  
And wake up  
In the next morning  
A Yuga turns its leaf  
To see You  
In Your new birth.

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Bharati Nayak, MIG-1/180, Satyasai Enclave,  
Khandagiri, Bhubaneswar-30.



**N**avakalebara is the new embodiment ceremony of the wooden images of the Jagannath temple which is unique in many respects in the field of Hindu religious worship. The ceremony involves a total replacement of the five worshippable images through the new ones after a certain period. The old statues are then discarded and buried underground.

In the ‘Srimad Bhagavatgita’ Bhagavan Shrikrushna has explained to Arjuna regarding the body and the soul. The soul is eternal, whereas the body is transcient. 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.

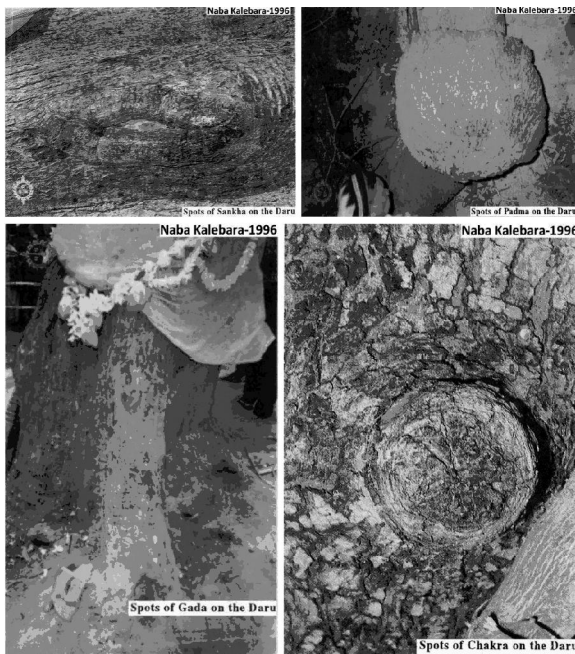
Srimad Bhagavatam (xi.27/12) prescribes that stone, wood, iron, metal, gems painting, may be used for images. The images of painting/drawing etc. are worshipped for a year. Wooden images are worshipped for a span of twelve years, metal for a thousand and stone images for ten thousand years. Under this circumstances the wooden body of the deities needs to be changed.

Traditionally to change the Daru or wooden body a “Leap Month” (Mala Masa) Ashadha is chosen to be the right one.

The worship of wooden images in Shri Jagannath Temple, Puri apparently suggests the

## The First Navakalebara of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

*Pitambar Pradhani*



possibility of a periodical renewal since their incipient consecration. No textual evidence, however, is available to prove the practice of the Navakalebara ceremony. The year in which the wooden body of deities are to be changed is fixed by the astrologers. It would be that- year when there are two months of Ashadha. Navakalebara which literally means “new body” is being made out of a newly cut Neem tree and is chosen to last till the next Navakalebara.

The legend of Indradyumna, the king of Malawa is uniform in texts like Niladri Mahodaya, Skanda Purana and Padma Purana. Indradyumna engaged his priest Vidyapati to pay a visit to Lord Vishnu at Nilachala. Vidyapati came all the way and reached a place near the eastern seacoast. It



was a big sand dune, and shrouded with green growth and looking like a green mountain. He met the Savara king Viswvasu and with his help he could succeed in having the rare sight of the Brahma. But soon after the Brahma disappeared, Vidyapati went back to Malwa and narrated to the king Indradyumna regarding the Lord of the blue mountain. Indradyumna came and 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 about the existence of a floating-log at the sea shore. In the morning people informed him what exactly 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 to Sonapur where they lay buried underground for 146 years. Thereafter king Yajati brought back the deities and solemnized Navakalebara. The date is fixed as 950 A.D. or tenth century A.D.

The second one being around 1568 A.D. after the invasion of Kalapahada (the general, Suleman Karrani). Rama Chandra Deva-I of Bhoi dynasty brought the Brahma from Kujanga Garh and constructed the new images in Neem wood (Daru) at Gopaijew 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 Shri Jagannath Temple in the year 1575 A.D.

Shri Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra, Sudarshan and Madhaba of Shri Jagannath Temple are images in a similar fashion. The change of Vighras is known as “Nabakalebara”. 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 falls after a gap of 7,11,12 or 19 years depending upon the occurrence of dual Ashadha month. The other Ashadha 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 Ashadha month is known as ‘Purusottam Masa’ all over India. It is also called as the ‘Adhimasa’ (or intercalary month) whereas the common people term it as ‘Malamasa’. As per recorded history, this ceremony had been performed as many as 8 times in 1863, 1893, 1912, 1931, 1950, 1969, 1977 and 1996. The first Nabakalebara ceremony of 21<sup>st</sup> century has been celebrated recently in the year 2015.

Astronomical considerations: - The reason of replacement of images in every 12 or 19 years is in corroboration with some astronomical and astrological calculations. Usually either in the 12<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> 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 (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 Bharna, 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. The ceremony of Navakalebara starts on the 10th day of the bright fortnight of Chaitra. A posse of priests comprising 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 Neem tree in the forest. The journey is known as Banajag-Jatra.

They had to carry lots of material for the ceremonies which they have to perform at every Daru. The materials are carried in two bullock carts. After spending the first night at Jagannath Ballav Math, Puri, they go to Kakatpur and stay at Deuli Math. Being blessed by Maa 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 choosing an appropriate Daru for image making certain traditional features of the Daru are to be sought for. The Neem trees are especially considered for the four deities as per the specific marks, sign and colour.

- (1) A Baruna bush must have grown in the vicinity of a nearby pond. 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 (hermitage) near the tree.
- (4) There must be a cremation ground near it.
- (5) There must be the four sacred signs of Chakra (disc), Sankha (conch) Gada (mace) and Padma (lotus).
- (6) The tree should have no branches up to a certain height (probably 12 feet) from the ground.
- (7) There must be an ant-hill at the foot of the tree.
- (8) There should be no bird's nest 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 would first touch the Daru with a golden axe. Then Daitapati Sevak known as Viswabasu would do the same with a silver axe. Then the 4 Viswakarmas (carpenters) would start cutting.

The Darus would be selected for the deities in secret. Actually 5 deities need new bodies. They are Shri Jagannath, Shri Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra, Shri Sudarshan and Shri 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 not based on fact. The transfer of the inner contents is done in a sealed room in the presence of the Badagrahi Daitapati and Pati Mohapatra Sevak. When the transfer of the Bramha or inner contents is completed all the Daitapatis of Shri Jagannath Temple observe a period of mourning as if a close relation of theirs is dead. They observe this period of mourning for 11 days and on the 12<sup>th</sup> day more than a thousand persons are fed Mahaprasad for which contributions are received from many sources. The proceedings of all the ceremonies from the bathing festival (Snana Jatra on full moon of the Jestha) to Netrotsava are kept a secret. The period is called Maha Anasar during Navakalebara.

Location 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 - Patarudrapur, Nua Sahi, Puri



*Jagannath temple with the Koili Vaikuntha garden*

#### **Navakalebara-1931**

Sudarshan-Deuli Matha (Kakatpur, Puri)

Balabhadra-Satwikapur

Subhadra-Niali, Cuttack

Jagannath-Gabapara

#### **Navakalebara-1950**

Sudarshan - Dalaiipur (Cuttack District)

Balabhadra - Jalarpur, Kakatpur (Puri District).

Subhadra - Nuahata (Puri District)

Jagannath - Palunga, Kanpur (Cuttack District).

#### **Navakalebara - 1969**

Sudarshan-Balara, Banamalipur, Under Balipatna Police Station (Puri District).

Balabhadra - Plot No. 1285 at Village Bhakar Sahi, Gada Chari Pada, Balipatna Police Station, Puri District.

Subhadra - Plot No : 254 at Village Kanhupur, Govindapur Police Station, Cuttack District.

Jagannath - Plot No : 928 belonging to Gobardhan Brahma in village Champajhar, in undivided Puri District which belongs to the Ekharajat Mahal, the landed property of Lord Jagannath.

#### **Navakalebara -1977**

Sudarshan - Simha Sahi, Niali (Cuttack District)

Balabhadra - Odasapur, Dhamnagar, Bhogeswara Kandhla, Cuttack Dist.

Subhadra - Beraboi, Delanga (Puri District)

Jagannath - Hata Sahi near Raichakradharpur, Sakhigopal, Satyabadi Police Station, Puri District.

#### **Navakalebara -1996**

Sudarshan-Panimal, Niali Madhava (Cuttack District)



Balabhadra - Ramakrushnapur, Salepur P.S.  
(Cuttack District)

Subhadra - Malda, Astaranga Block (Puri  
District)

Jagannath-Dadhimachhagadia (Khurda District)

The Navakalevar festival, which is an important part of Jagannath consciousness exhibits a perfect balance between the tribal origin and the Brahminical Hinduism. 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.

Navakalebara ceremony takes place through certain phases i.e. Banajaga Yatra or searching of Daru, transportation of Daru, carving of images, consecration, Abhiseka of Nyasadaru

and fire sacrifice, change of Brahmopadartha, Burial of old images, infusion of life to images etc included.

Navakalebara is the most critical, expensive and auspicious occasion. In the Hindu pantheon, Shri Jagannath bears a separate identity. His “Navakalebara presupposes the death of the old Triad and the birth of the new God”. Divinity continues. The new is old and the old is new when renewed.

Instead of 10, 14 signs are prescribed for selection of new daru. Similarly for Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshan some specific symbols are prescribed.

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Pitambar Pradhani, Bimanbadu Sahi, Puri.



*Shri Rajkishore Mishra, Sri Atul Chandra Pradhan, Dr. Tulasi Ojha and Shri Damodar Pradhani, Members of Expert Committee constituted for selection of articles to be published in Nabakalebara Rath Yatra issues of Utkal Prasanga and Odisha Review. Editor and other staff are also present.*



Lord Sri Jagannath, the great magnetic quintessence, the presiding deity of the Odias and the national God of Odisha is unanimously vociferated as the Lord of the Cosmos. As God Himself is a great mystic of mystics, it is very difficult to understand any riddle of the mysticism. Navakalevara, one of the mysteries has come now to realize a strand of it. The Navakalevara of this year, 2015 is the first Navakalevara of this new millennium which has come after an interval of nineteen years with some uniqueness that starts with telecast at the very beginning of the Banajaga expedition.

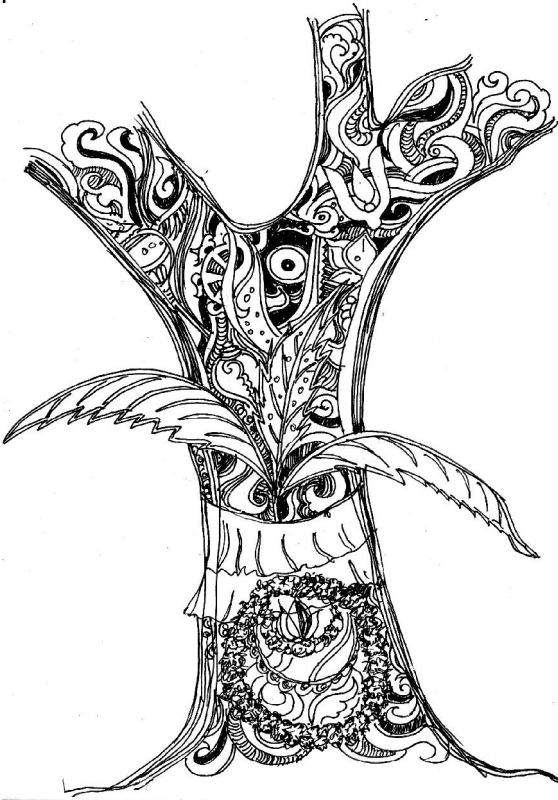
Rites and rituals of Navakalevara are generally of four phases, such as Banajaga Yatra

( Forest expedition) in search of Neem Daru for deities (2) Cutting & transportation of selected darus (3) Change of brahmas ( 4) the burial deeds of old deities i.e. Patalikaran. Then comes the display of navayayuvan of the new deities. All these deeds though very hard and strenuous are done more sincerely, spontaneously, strategically and honestly by daitas as they are the only servitors to perform because they have been performing this work since the inception of Sri Jagannath worship.

The first and foremost work of Banajaga Yatra is in search of Daru. As Daru Brahma is itself Lord Jagannath, so the search of Daru is the most vital work of the Navakalevara. When

## The Role of Daitas in Navakalevara

*Surendra Moharana*



Gajapati, the premier Sevak is sure of the celebration of Navakalevara, he calls as per tradition a general meeting of all servitors along with Badapanda, Mahantas of popular Mathas that are closely associated with the day to day activities of Srimandir along with Daitas and patis as well as important personalities who are linked with the temple deeds and advises Daitapatis for their preparatory deeds.

For the performance of Navakalevara a refresher training camp for the young servitors who are sure of joining this Banajaga yatra for the first time in quest of Daru is organized in the midst of March along with old experienced personnel who have earned pretty experience in the last Banajaga Yatra. Since last November



the administrative office of the temple has become too alert along with the State government. The Centre has also declared a sanction of Rs.50 Crores on 11<sup>th</sup> March for the smooth execution of the celebration and assures to provide all sorts of help under the scheme of Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD). However, Gajapati who has earned pretty experience in the last two Navakalevaras, 1977 and 1996 will certainly endeavour his best to manage and manipulate the core and condition of the situation as he is the first and foremost Sevak of Lord Sri Jagannath.

The auspicious Banajaga Yatra started on 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2015 (Sunday), the 10<sup>th</sup> day of bright fortnight of Chaitra i.e. Sixty-five days ere to the full moon of Jyestha, the Snana Purnima taking one hundred Daitas (out of one hundred and fifty servitors in the team) under the leadership of Haladhar Das Mohapatra, Badagrahi of Badabada. Nabakishore Pati Mohapatra, Sri Sudarshan Badagrahi, Rama Chandra Das Mohapatra, Badagrahi of Majhi Bada and Jagannath Swain Mohapatra, Badagrahi of Kalia Thakura, Narasingh Mohapatra, Vidyapati, Vinayaka Das Mohapatra, Vishwavas, four assistant team leaders such as Durga Prasad Das Mohapatra, Rama Krushna Das Mohapatra, Ganesh Das Mohapatra and Chandra Sekhar Das Mohapatra, four main Vishwakarmas such as Narayan Moharana Badagrahi of Sudarsana, Narasingh Mohapatra, Badagrahi of Badabada, Krushna Chandra Mohapatra, Badagrahi of Mahapravu Bada, Chandra Sekhar Mangaraj, Deul Karan, Sudhansu Sekhar Pattnaik, Tadhau Karan, Baidyanath Khuntia and Bishwajit Khuntia, Lenka Sevak are also to aid and assist the team leaders.

After the Mid-day Dhupa, on 29<sup>th</sup> March '15 ( Sunday) the Banajag rites started.

The construction work of Daru hall near Koili Baikuntha has also been inaugurated. At Anasara Pindi close to Kalahatdwar, Debraj Pati Mohapatra handed over Agyanmala to Haladhar Das Mohapatra, team leader of Banajag Yatra and to other three Badagrahis too. Then at Kalahat Bhabani Sankar Mohapatra, the Bhittarchha Servitor completed the head gear function by offering Khandua to all four Badagrahis. Five Servitors of Shudarshan Bada, thirty three Servitors of Badabada, forty five of Majhi Bada and nine of Mahaprabhu Bada got half saree. Deulakarana Chandra Sekhar Mangaraj and Tadhau Karan Sudhansu Sekhar Pattnaik, Behera Khuntia, Baidyanath Khuntia also got single Khandua each; but Narayan Mohanty, Lenka Sevak, Chief Vishwakarma Narayan Moharana, Sudarshan Bada, Ch.Vishwakarma Narsingh Mohapatra, Badabada, Ch.Vishwa Karma, Krushna Moharana Majhibada, Ch. Vishwa Karma Bijoy Mohapatra, Mohapravu Bada got cotton saree each. All of them came to Royal Palace. Though all of them waited at the gate, Binayak Das Mohapatra, the Vishwavas of the Banajaga team entered into the palace and got sunned rice betel leaf, betel nuts, coconut, gold Chokia etc from Gajapati Diba Singh Dev, the erstwhile royal family, the first and foremost servitor of Lord Sri Jagannath. It is called the Guateka Niti ( the go-ahead function) for the starting of the forest expedition in search of genuine Daru. Then they all went to Jagannath Ballav Matha being accompanied with fifty Sankirtan teams and more than six hundred visitors and devotees within a spiritual atmosphere.

Life in Banajaga Yatra is full of serenity, sanctity, simplicity and purity but full of austerities and penance with fasting of one meal (Habishanna). They have to follow a Code of Conduct which is quite different from day to day



worldly life. They have to follow a very strict and regulated life; so to say (a) They should not use tooth brush, paste, soap, oil, scented oil, powder. (b) They should use only tooth-stick (c) They should put on their uniform and head should be always covered with Khandua (d) Should put on only Dhoti and napkin on shoulder (e) Should not use any foot-wear (f) Should carry bag each with torch, napkin, cloth, a small jar for the sake of Puja and a rosary. (g) At the time of walking head should be covered up. (h) Should not take shelter / rest in any body's house; rather they should remain somewhere on the field under trees (i) Should always chant the good names of God and hymns, but never sing or listen to cinema songs, modern songs or mobile songs at all. (j) Should never overtake Lenka Servitor who is walking ahead with Chakra (k) Should always keep to the left (l) After crossing ten / fifteen Kilometres all of them should take rest but they should always think of God and take the good name of God only.

After staying one and half a day at Jagannath Ballav Matha the Banajaga yatra team left the Matha at the late hour of the night on Monday, the 30<sup>th</sup> March, '15 with a hope to reach Deuli Matha, Kakatpur on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2015. They will halt at Balighai Chhak (in a Garden) to take rest. On the way Nava Kishore Pati Mohapatra, Sudarshan Bada, Haladhar Das Mohapatra Badabada, Rama Chandra Das Mohapatra, Majhibada, Jagannath Swain Mohapatra, Mohaprabhu Bada, all these four Badagrahis along with Vinayak Das Mohapatra, Vishwasu and Narasingh Pati Mohapatra, the Vidyapati infatuate the young Daitas who have joined for the first time, with their past experiences and passing the time with Bhajan and Sankirtan, chanting the good name of God. They have taken three bullock carts, the caravans with all needful things for themselves and *mala* (garland)

Mohaprasad, Majana Things and Saree for Mother Goddess Mangala, even foodstuffs and sweet meats for the goddess and for themselves. The work of Navakalevara from 10<sup>th</sup> day of bright fortnight in the month of Chaitra to 12<sup>th</sup> bright fort night of Ashada i.e Niladri Bijey, consecutively four months, the whole work of Navakalevar is under the smooth management of the Daitas, though the Temple administrative office escorts, finances and controls the whole proceedings. In this stipulated period they follow up a very strict and strenuous way of life as per the instructions given by Raghav Das Matha; such as :- (1) Not to defend one another, (2) Not to sing (3) Not to play drums (4) Not to cry out in anger (5) Not to dance (6) Not to create any sound (7) Not to beat any stone or wood (8) Not to mix or mate (9) Not to use evil smelling things (10) Not to use sandal paste (11) Not to use garlands (12) To read only the Purushottam Mahatmyam (13) to chant Nrushingh Hymns (14) Not to use bell / gong (15) Not to draw any picture but to pay concentrated attention on God. Raghav Das Math appeals Daitapatis to follow up the above points to achieve their goal within no time.

Reaching Kakatpur after two days they at first go to Sidha Matha called Deuli Matha on the bank of the river Prachi as once Goddess Mangala, the presiding deity was there. Before starting their campaign a temporary reparation has been made there for their halage. They inform the manager of the temple office just after their arrival. The next morning the Sevakas of Mangala Temple come with drums / gongs to welcome the incoming guests. The Daitas take bath in the river Prachi and go to the temple. Lenka Servitor keeps his wheel, the emblem of Lord Sudarshan beside Goddess Mangala. The Daitas do the Majana deeds themselves getting into the temple. They make Goddess Mangala



bath with one hundred and eight *garas* of water, rubbing Chuha (decoction of Aguru), sandal Paste, camphor and Aguru chanting Gayatri, and Chandi. They put saree, garlands on mother Goddess which is called Bada Singhar. After finishing the rites and rituals of Goddess Mangala, they go to a nearby Shiva Temple to prostrate with deep concentration with fasting and chanting of sacred hymns and Stotras. The Acharya and Pati Mohapatra select a particular place for their Dharana (fasting with deep concentration). They also chant Swapnavati, hymns and Patali Nrusingh hymns one hundred and eight times each with deep concentration and sincerity at a lone place before sleep, so that it is sure for one to get divine voice in a dream within three or four days the hints where and how to get Darus. Sometimes flower sheds from Goddess' head or from garland from which they get hints to locate directions to get Daru. Some year no divine voice comes in dream if the Majana or Badasinghar is not done honestly for which the second time Majana is required as it happened in the year of 1969 Navakalevara depicted by Haladhar Das Mohapatra present Badagrahi, Badabada.

The Daitas at first venture to find out Sudarshan Daru. There are some symptoms and signs for the recognition of divine Daru; such as (1) The Neem tree must be on the bank of a river or pond or on any square where three roads run to in three directions or it is surrounded by three hills. (2) There must be a crematorium nearby. (3) There must be a Shiva temple or Matha, or Ashram. (4) There must not have any creeper or parasite on the tree. (5) No bird's nest will be on the tree. (6) No parts of the tree is damaged by cyclone or flash of lightning. (7) There must be an ant hill nearby. (8) There must be snakes to guard the tree. (9) There must be a Barun (Crotseva Aurfolis) or Shahada (Streblus Asher) or bael tree nearby. Besides

these there are some special signs for each of the four darus, For Jagannath Daru (a) the colour of the tree must be black or deep red. (b) The trunk must be straight or look nice. (c) There must be only four branches. (d) There must be signs of conch or Chakra. For Balabhadra Daru – (1) The tree must be white in colour. (2) It must have seven branches. (3) The top of the tree must be shaped like a canopy or a snake's hood. (4) There must be a sign of mace or ploughshare. For Subhadra Daru – (1) The colour of the tree must be yellow. (2) It must have five branches. (3) On the bark there must be a sign of lotus with five petals. For Sudarshan Daru (1) It must be red in colour. (2) It must have three branches. (3) There must be a mark of wheel on the bark.

At first they go on roaming in quest of Sudarshan Daru, then Balabhadra, Subhadra and Jagannath respectively. All the signs and symptoms may no be available in any Daru. But if some of the signs tally or satisfy the Badagrahis who are there, the Daru is to be selected by the senior most Badagrahis whom the Committee has entrusted the power of selection. So long the Daru is not available, the Daitas must be on venture in quest of it with the same uniform on bare feet and one time fasting food. (Habisanna). At evening they must be back to their sheltering place, Deuli Matha. If they find the tree, Pati Mohapatra, Vishwvasu, Badagrahis, Daitas and Vishwakarmas go there to tally the signs and symptoms of the Daru. Then the Gajapati Acharya, Brahma, Charu Hotta, Samidha Hotta and one in charge of book out of those Brahmins come out to perform their work. They have to build Shavarapalli to stay some days till the transportation of the same to Sri Mandir.

The adjacent area of that Daru is to be cleaned up. At first steps are to be taken up to recognize Sudarshan Daru and then to cut off.



A sacrificial pit (Yagnya Kunda) of sixteen cubits both in length and breadth each, rooms for germination of five crops, to keep all requisite things needed for sacrificial deeds and a Savarapalli to stay there are to be built up soon. Rajguru, preists, Vishwakarmas as per ritual practice start worshipping, making oblations to fire thousand times and more as per chanting of Patal Nrusingh hymns. Taking the order of garland of Sri Jagannath (Agyan Mala) they go round the tree seven times and offer that garland (Agyan Mala) to that tree. All of them fast without taking a drop of water till the falling of the tree.

The Servitor Lenka puts the Wheel of Sudarshan by the tree at first. Three axes of gold, silver and iron are worshipped. As per the old scripture, "Indra-Nilamani" and other texts Acharya with recitation of Sudarshan hymns, Pati Mohapatra, with recitation of Narayan hymns and Vasudev hymns touch the tree and cover it with white cloth and a white gourd is sacrificed to pacify the spirits. Vidyapati (Patimohapatra) strikes first with golden axe, Vishwavas, then with silver axe and Vishwakarma with iron axe to cut the tree.

After the fall of the tree, the Daitas break the fast and carpenters cut into logs as per their measurements. They bury all other twigs, branches and leaves etc in a big pit. The log is called Chaupata. They make improvised cart with banyan wheels, tamarind beams and diospyrous (Kendu) axles. The cart which is called Sagadi is covered with a new silken cloth and Chaupata is kept on it and covered with a silken cloth. At this time Brahmins chant Vedic hymns and the 34<sup>th</sup> chapter of Sankalpa Sutra. "The silken rope is tied down on the Sagadi on which the Daru is loaded and is dragged on by Daitas from the place of availability to the Alam Chandi temple near Atharanala. On the way people join the

procession with drums, gongs and Sankirtan teams. News is then sent to Gajapati who comes with *sadhus*, *santhas*, Mahantas of different Mathas and administrative staff along with trumpets, drums, gongs, Chhatras and Trsas etc. Sankirtan team of Radhakanta Matha also marches to welcome them. After reaching the northern gate of Sri Mandir the Daru Sagadi is taken to Darugriha near Koili Baikuntha. In this way four Darus of Sudarshan, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Jagannath come respectively to Darugriha before the full moon day of Jyestha (Snana Purnima).

If any mishap occurs to any Daita or any person who is in the expedition of Banajaga Yatra there is no harm or any restriction; but rather he goes on carrying his work so long he is in the team of expedition being out of home. In this period he can not have any sort of communication with any member of his home. If he meets any known person or any kith or kin he is not allowed to talk with him; rather he has to think of the situation where he is then with full concentration on God.

When the Darus reach the Darugriha, Patimohapatra makes the Darus bathe as per rituals and Gajapati feeds all the Banajaga Yatri well in the temple. On the full moon day of Jyestha (the Snana Purnima) all the deities come to Snana Mandap to take the last bath before their march to Golak Vishram. On the very day the new Darus also take bath in the Darugriha, in the north-west corner of Koili Baikuntha where other six Mandaps are created along with it. Mandap of Germination of five crops (Pancha Shasya) is on the northern side of Karmasala where white mustard, black gram, green gram, horse gram and wheat are sown on the very day of Snana Purnima for germination. Mandap of sacrifice, Karmasala and Mandap of workshop are important out of



them. On the eve of the construction of new deities Gajapati inviting one hundred and eight Brahmins arranges the grand sacrificial work on the very sacrificial Mandap. Brahmins are also invited for the performance of sacrificial deeds (for all side gods) on three sides of Sri Mandir. Gajapati also offers Agyan saree (Token of Order) to carry on the work with full speed. When the construction work is going on, none but Pati Mohapatra and Vishwakarmas are only allowed to enter into that Karmasala which is sixteen cubits both in length and breadth too on the western side of the sacrificial hall as per “Sutta Sangheeta”. When the sacrificial deeds start different ‘Sahashra namas,’ stotras of the Bhagabat, Panchrudra, Pancha Sakti, Sapta Sati Chandi, different chantings, Stutis, Rudraviseka etc. are to go on at Jagamohan from the starting of Banajag Parva to consecration of deities. There should be chantings of one lakh Patali Nrusingha hymns. To satisfy Astha Khetrapala, Asthanaga, and their consorts Asthayogini, Navadurga, Traimbika, demi-Gods of worship and sacrificial deeds also continue simultaneously. Following, the tantric way, “Kanti” the sweetened cake is also offered. In thirteenth new moon night “Kanti” is also offered as a sacrifice to Dasha Digapala and for fish-sacrifice a live-gudgeon is also sacrificed by the servitor Kotha Suashiya very secretly.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> day of dark fortnight, *brahma* is transformed from old to new deities at the dead of the night. Like all other days deeds of worship, chantings and sacrificial deeds go on. The newly constructed deities are bathed with medicated herbal water. Sesamum frumenty is offered as a part of sacrificial work keeping the deities at a sleeping state. Ere to this cows alongwith calves are donated to priests and Rajguru as a part of sacrificial work mentioned in “*Haribhakti bilash, Hayashastras,*

*Panchatantra Agama* and special worship is done to Nrusingha who is an admixture of Rama, Hari and Krishna. He is also the epitome of the admixture of Balabhadra, Jagannath and Subhadra and He is also worshipped by the hymns of Hare Rama Krishna. The main priest (Acharya) starts the preliminary work of insertion of life though the transformation of *brahma* is to be made in that very night. Vishwakarma chants Sri Suktam and Purusha Suktam and again the Daitas make the deities bathe after all these sacrificial deeds, Pati Mohapatra takes the full responsibility of the new deities.

None of the Gajapatis but Maharaj Divya Singh Dev-IV, Gajapati of the present time offered oblation onto the sacred fire of sacrifice in the Navakalavera, 1977 and 1996. The state is also fortunate that in the First Navakalavera of the new millennium, he has to offer the last oblation onto the fire of sacrifice to pacify the sacred fire.

On the eve of the evening hour Badasinghar Dhupa is completed and the interior of the temple is thoroughly vacated, washed and purified. All the four gates are closed. Besides no other men but three Badagrahis and Pati Mohapatra are allowed to stay inside the inner campus, the Kurma Bedha. Only the servitor Deula Karan stands alone holding royal sword (Pata Khanda) at the *gumuta* of Singhadwar (main entrance) though it is closed. The whole premises of Sri Mandir are made blackout. No sound is caused by any means. Dead silence reigns supreme then and there.

On the eve of twilight some selected Daru-branches are brought and kept in the Darugruha respectively for future use, but all other remnants are buried. A cart is made taking one wheel of each of the four Sagadis (that carried four Chaupatas) with a height of ten feet which is less than the height of Achhinda Pahand. And it





is kept near the Pataleswar temple. After the completion of all rituals and rites Brahmins give up the responsibilities with Brahma Kapatis to Daitas who keeping the new deities on the cart drag it seven rounds around the temple in the Kurma Bedha and carry the deities to *anasara pindi* to keep them near the old deities facing front to front. Though three great Badagrahies, great servitors remain there ready to assist, Pati Mohapatra is the only person to transform Brahmas to new deities. Their hands, legs and eyes are covered with seven layers of silk cloths. They have to perform their deeds to assist Pati Mohapatra to exchange very sincerely and honestly though it is pitch dark due to black out.

The auspicious moment comes for transformation of Brahmas. Pati Mohapatra brings out Brahma opening the *brahma kapati* by groping in darkness. Then he brings out old jasmine, sandal paste, tender shoot of holy basil and musk of the last Navakalevara and making it clean and chanting hymns and stotras keeps there fresh jasmine, sandal paste, tender shoot of holy basil and musk again on the *brahma petika*. Then inserting the *brahma petikas*, he closes the *Brahma Kapati* of the deities respectively. This is the end of the function which is called Brahma Paribartan (transformation of Brahma of the five deities).

When all the *brahmas* are ensconced within the new deities, the Badagrahis whose eyes are closed with silk clothes, ring the bells on their waists. Other Daitas who are anxiously waiting outside at a little distant place, *beharana* comes instantly to their rescue. Their hands, feet and eyes are tied down with seven layers of silk cloth, so that he can not feel anything at the time of exchanging Brahmas but he does everything systematically alone without anybody's help which make him so nervous and sub-conscious

that when he comes out of that dark dungeon, he automatically forgets everything and the mind becomes a clean slate. Really it is a great miracle, the *brahmakapati* is closed after the replacement of *brahma*. Then it is tied with *bajra-kachheni* not to be recognized well.

The old deities without *brahmas* are now considered dead. All the Daitas are to take those old deities to Koili Baikuntha. Long before it, the servitors Kotha Suasias have dug a pit nine cubit deep and six cubit length and breadth each. The ground is covered with a big red silk cloth. As SriKrishna breathed his last on 14<sup>th</sup> day of dark fortnight in the month of Ashada under Siali arbour, the four old deities take their Golak Vishram under the Siali arbour in Koili Baikuntha.

Three beds are prepared in that grave yard on the silk sheet where old deities Sri Jagannath Sri Balabhadra and Sri Subhadra are to sleep. They are covered with sandal, camphor and also covered with silk sheet. Charioteers, horses, side deities, door keepers, pitchers, parrots, flag staffs, beds, bed sheets and pillows etc which were used by them daily; even pahadas used for temporary rest are also buried with them. Towards the later part of the night the eternal rest or the Golak Vishram of the former deities are completed. The whole Daita-community is severely shocked and grievous as they themselves have buried their deities whom they have taken up so far as the elder members of their own family.

It is the very early part of the dawn; birds start chirping but have not left their nests. The mourned Daitas come to Mukti Mandap and taking sesamum oil kept at the end of the swing, go to Markand tank. Then they come to Lion's gate and keeping their bathing cloth's at the gate go away to their respective homes. They observe funeral fasting with one meal only. On the 9<sup>th</sup> day



of bright fortnight, they again come to Markand tank. Pati Mohapatra along with other three Badagrahies who had changed the *brahmas* shave their heads but others cut their hair and ladies pare their nails. After taking bath in Markand tank they (both men and women) put on new clothes given by temple office. They come to twenty two steps at Lion's gate, wash their feet with turmeric water, take Shanti Udaka (pacifying sacred water) for pacification and take Mahaprasad in the temple on 13<sup>th</sup> day of bright fortnight after two days. It is expected that more than fifty thousand people including Sadhu, Santhas, Brahmins, Chhahisha Nijoga, Daitas with their family members, all servitors, pundits of Mukti Mandap, innumerable invitees, political personalities will attend the sacred party of the funeral function.

After the transformation of brahmas, during the leap month of Ashada or mala masa, many secret vital deeds are performed by the daitas. According to "Niladri Mahodaya, the first half of this leap month is devoted to "Sapta Varana" which means seven coatings on the new deities. It is the work of insertion of bone, marrow, vein- artery, blood, flesh, skin and vital fluid i.e. the virility of the body. To create skin on skeletons Daitas at first cover their bodies with new silk cloths, just like skin on human body. "Neta Pata" is offered for the formation of blood and 'Pata Dora" for veins and arteries. The massage of oil on the Daru Bigraha forms marrow, the soft fatty substance in the cavities of bones. Ointment made of resin, camphor, saffron, Chua (decoction of Aguru) mixing up with sesamum oil is rubbed on deities. The coating of sandal, musk, fresh water (osha) and Khali is plastered on it. It serves as flesh on the Daru deities. Then cloths are covered layer after layer on the divine deities which act as skin. Plaster of eight scents coated on cloths work as the vital fluid of the divine deities. The first half of the leap month

passes away only with the deeds of Sapta Varana.

The second half of the leap month passes with few important deeds like massaging of different *lepas*, medicated and cented oil and Khali lagi. Then comes the work of "Sweta Anga Raga" followed by "Purna Anga Raga." The Dutta Khatani Niyoga starts Vanaka Lagi (Work of colouring) of the deities which is called "Kanakan Lagi". The circular pillows made of new cloths and cotton are also offered to deities. It is called *Chakka apasara*. Then comes the last of the Maha-anasara period named "Uvaniti". The next day is called Netrotsava which is followed by "Navayayuvan Darshan" i.e. the display of rejuvenation of the prime stage of Navakalevara.

The next day is the second day of bright fortnight which is the day of Car Festival. On the day of car festival all the Daitas do their duties sincerely though it is too strenuous. The Pahandi work is done only by the Daitas. Then comes the return journey, "Bahuda Yatra" after eight days and the function of Ekadashi i.e. the observance of fasting on 11<sup>th</sup> day on the Chariots. Then comes Adharapana, adornment of gold ornaments on deities, the tweetering of Laxmi Narayan on a feud and the last is Niladri Bijey; all these go on one after another without any halt. All these events happen within four months i.e. from 10<sup>th</sup> day of bright fortnight of Chaitra to 12<sup>th</sup> bright fortnight of Ashada (Niladri Bijey) and the Daitas as well as Paties play a predominant role that displays the prevailing custom and traditional heritage of Sabara culture with an admixture of Brahmin culture of Vedic period, which is the greatest embodiment of all the essence of religions, unity, integrity and tolerance for all terms of pacification in the true sense.

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In the earliest phase of traditional history, the Puranas contain references to various kings and dynasties, some of whom are also corroborated by the Vedic texts and epics. H C Rayachaudhury has tried to reconstruct our traditional history from the legendary king Parikshit to the well known Magadhan king Bimbisara. The first phase of this traditional history, takes one back to the legendary progenitor of all subsequent Indian dynasties. He highlights the major kingdoms like Kuru which lay between the Sarasvati in modern Kurukshetra, Kosala, Magadha, Taxila, Panchala, Surasena, Vatsa, Avanti, Videha, Kasi, Anga, Kalinga, Gandhara and Kamboja. Odisha in ancient times (around

6<sup>th</sup> century B.C) covered the geographical area of Kalinga, Utkala, Odra, and South Kosala. Broadly, the area at times stretches from the River Ganges to the River Godavari and sometimes it was from Vamsadhara to Mahanadi and Ganges. The material culture of Odisha now dates back to 7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century B.C, so far the city and urban life is concerned as known from the excavated sites of Golbai, Banka (Harirajpur), Suabarei, Sisupalgarh, Radhanagar, Asurgarh, and other places. The dated historical beginning of Odisha is known from the Kalinga empire with the Kalinga war in 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. It is referred to in various literature that the cities of this period like Dantapura, Kalinganagara, Toshali, Samapa are

## Puri : The Sacred City, Cosmic Order and Hindu Traditions

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very famous and had cultural interaction among the North and South Indian cities. Some examples could be cited like Magadha and Kalinga and cities like Rajgraha, Pataliputra, Champa, Gaya, and the south Indian cities like Pratisthana, Dhanyakataka were in close contact with Dantapura, Toshali and Samapa, as evidence shows in Odishan context at its earliest phase which of course, are Buddhist in nature. The routes and communication pattern in this geographical area are strengthened during Kushan period and well connected to northern highland and far beyond the South Sea. This is the phase where we find a number of port towns and capital cities along the eastern coast. Subsequently, religion played a vital role and the cultural layers are seen with the cities like Tamralipti,



Kalinganagara, Devapura, Simhapura, Celi-talo, Pusupo-ki-li, Po-lo-molo-kili, etc. (somewhere seen by Hiuen Tsang in 7<sup>th</sup> century). When we consider about the early history of a place, we must take into account the material culture that is visible on earth and date to historical periods which could be accepted as source of history. History of a place could be written or accepted on the basis of antiquarian remains apart from literature and place names. The methodology to study the history and heritage of a place largely depends on the material culture that are dated carefully by the archaeologists and historians, and ascertain its historicity (*itihasa*) and heritage (*aitihiya*) value of which, aspects of literature (*sahitya*), culture (*sanskriti*) and traditions (*parampara*) are taken apart.

Let us focus on the references about Puri and its earlier history. In the great epic, the *Mahabharata*, which in its *Tirthayatra* section of the *Vanaparva* contains three different accounts of celebrated land although, it mentions *Svyambhu* Lokesvara and the *Vedi*, a famous spot in Puri itself testifying the antiquity of Puri as a place on the pilgrimage route. But, there obviously existed no famous Vaishnava deity in this period, or any time up to the beginning of 10<sup>th</sup> century of course, the cultural and geographical orbit was created long before.

Pt. Krupasindhu Misra (*Utkala Itihas*) mentions that Jagannath Temple has been constructed during first-second century B.C. The name of this *kshetra* was Purusapura or Purusa Mandapa and in this Purusapura, Purusottama was worshipped much before 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang who travelled through Odishan region in c. 638 A.D., refers to a city called *Che-li-ta-lo*. Some scholars tend to identify Puri as *Che-li-ta-lo* or Charitrapura. But, whatever may be the opinions, Puri as a sacred place, a *kshetra*, must have gained ground from

the early historical period for which five major cults of India i.e. *Shiva*, *Sakta*, *Saura*, *Vishnu*, *Ganapatya* together with tribal affiliation has been overlapped here. It is the reason why we get reference of Puri as Srikshetra, Sankha Kshetra, Purusottama Kshetra, Dasavatara Kshetra, Nilachala in various *Puranas*. The *Puranas* like *Matsya Purana*, *Brahma Purana*, *Narada Purana*, *Padma Purana*, *Skanda Purana*, *Kapila Samhita*, *Niladri Mahodaya* and the Tantrik works like *Kalika Purana*, *Rudrayamala*, *Brahmayamala*, *Tantrayam* etc. which are mostly written between 4<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. has referred Puri as a significant *kshetra* in various names.

Further, Adi Sankaracharya (c.788-820 A.D.) towards early part of 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. had established his seat of learning (*Dhaam*) here at Puri. Scholars in the past have concluded that the entire early period of 600 years from 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D to the beginning of 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. has no inscriptional references about the existence of Purusottama-*Kshetra* or Purusottama temple. But recent archaeological research in and around Puri such as Manikapatna, Kanasa (area) and Prachi valley area have supplemented the historical evidences and the layers of historical settlement have started in this area long before 10<sup>th</sup> century CE.

Towards the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Yayati I established the Somavamsi rule in Utkala. The kings of Somavamsi have been credited with the establishment of the Lingaraja, Rajarani and other temples at Bhubaneswar. It is also certain that the older parts of Kapalamochana and Yamesvar temples of Puri belong to Somavamsi period. The present temples were much more in height than the existing. The Markandeswara temple of Puri also belongs to the Somavamsi period but was partly reconstructed at a later date.



The Markandesvara is the most important temple in Puri, when the Somavamsis were thrown and the Ganga dynasty came to power in Odisha. It contains an inscription of Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva dated in his 57<sup>th</sup> (*srahi*) year i.e 1131/32 A.D. which proves both its existence and importance at that time. The *Saptamatrika* images found on the bank of Markanda tank belong to Somavamsi period. It serves the benchmark for the study of the cultural stratigraphy of Puri's history and culture.

Similarly, the antiquity of Lokanath temple which is oriented towards west, can be determined as such the orientation of the Pasupata temples of Odisha were erected mainly in Sailodbhava period (c. 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> AD). Lokanath is an important deity of Puri and regarded as the part of Lord Jagannath. The location of the Lokanath temple is such that with its low level on which it stands must have greater antiquity, of course, the superstructure was built in the later period.

Prior to 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., some Vaishnava immigrants had penetrated in to the central Odisha, from north, but the archaeological remains of the Vaishnavas are restricted to the valley of the Prachi River. By the time 1130 A.D., Vaishnavites had reached central Odisha from north, south and from the west. Even the southern Pallava rulers and northern Pala rulers were devout Vasnavities as they have huge life size Visnu images (10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> A.D.).

*Madalapanji*, the palm-leaf chronicle of Sri Jagannath Temple states that, Yayati Keshari, the founder of the ruling Keshari dynasty of Odisha built a small temple of 38 cubits high for Purusottama and installed the wooden images of the deity in that temple. It is also claimed that Jagatguru Sankaracharya visited Puri during the reign of Yayati Keshari and gave him instruction about the form of the deities and mode of their

worship. He established a monastery in Puri to monitor the management of religious affairs in the temple. Some scholars are of opinion that the present Narasimha shrine within the premises of Jagannath temple happens to be the "Potala" (temple) built by Yayati Kesari. Epigraphic records also supports that some Somavamsi rulers were worshippers of Narsimha incarnation of Vishnu. The temple contains a large number of early inscriptions donating perpetual lamps to the Purusottama deity, of course during the Ganga period.

It is appropriate to mention here that the Kalidindi grant of eastern Chalukya king Rajaraj-I, (1022-23) A.D. mentions that the king worshipped Sri Purusottama of Sri Dhaam. It means that *Sridhaam* or *Srikshetra* (Puri) where Lord Purusottama was installed, attracted a King like Raja Raja I of Eastern Chalukya dynasty who visited during Somavamsi rule, but it is certain that it was Yayati who really began the construction of the temple of Jagannath, and left it incomplete. It was Chodaganga who undertook the construction of the lofty temple and brought it to completion in the later period.

Here, again *Madalapanji* mentions an event that Raktavahu who is described as a Yavana King coming with a large cargo along the sea-route, caused a great devastation at Puri which is 146 years before accession of Yayati. This story and the legend is still active in Chilika area also. Scholars like Romila Thapar says that Yavanas are described as descendants of the Turvasa, who, as segment of Chandravamsa arrived as peaceful traders. There was hostility between the Brahmans and Yavanas. The historicity of this legend is still in paucity of evidence and further research could make it clear. But trade contact in this part of coastal Odisha is known from the excavated archaeological port sites of Manikapatna and Khalkatapatna on either



side of Puri. The traders from Africa as well as China were in touch with this land during 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

It was during the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. that the temple town Puri might have assumed the greatest prominence under the dynastic rule of imperial Gangas of Odisha. The present magnificent temple of Purusottama – Jagannath was constructed during this period. Several copper plate inscriptions of the period credit one ‘Gangesvara’ as the builder of the temple and this Gangesvara has rightly been identified with Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva (1078-1147 A.D.). But the exact date of construction is not known. It is known from an inscription of the Srikurmam Temple that at least towards 1135 A.D. the entire kingdom from Bhagirathi Ganga in the east up to the Goutami (Godavari) in the south came under the sway of Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva. This could be accomplished when he satisfied the gods (*Devas*), the hermits (*Risris*) and the forefathers (*Pitras*) by performing *tarpana* and making charities. After restoration of peace and tranquility in his kingdom Chodaganga must have shifted his capital from Kalinganagar (the present Mukhalingam) to Varanasi-Kataka (modern Cuttack). It is known from 14 copper plate inscriptions of Chodaganga and particularly the Dasgoba copper plate of Raja Raja III, (1198 A.D.) about the achievements of Chodaganga which reads as :

“What king can be named that could erect a temple to such a god as Purusottama, whose feet are the three worlds, whose navel is the entire sky, whose ears the cardinal points, whose eyes the sun and the moon, and whose head the heaven (above). This task which had been hitherto neglected by previous kings was fulfilled by Gangesvara.”



The first half of the verse is a simple *prasasti* or adoration of god Purusottama whose feet are the earth, navel the sky, ears the cardinal points, eyes the sun and the moon and head the heaven. The second half is historically important. Scholars including M.M Chakravarti have interpreted the verse like, previous kings had neglected to construct a suitable place (temple) for God Purusottama, thinking that who the king can be able to do such task ? which was fulfilled by Chodaganga alias Gangesvara.

S.N. Rajguru was of opinion that Chodaganga Deva started the construction of the great temple, but was completed by Anangabhima Deva-II (1190-98), and Anangabhima Deva III consecrated the temple. The relevant verses are also reproduced in charters of Anangabhima III, Narasimha II, Bhanudev II, and Narasimha IV. Here is also a reference to the construction of a temple of Laxmi by the same monarch (Cf / V. 28 of the prashasti).

As has been described earlier, Anantavarmana Chodagangadeva acquired a large amount of wealth after conquering the country of Mahendra in Gouda and defeating the kings of Utkala and Vengi. According to a popular tradition, it is said that the wealth was carried on the back of his war elephants and was poured in to a well, which was dug in the premises of the present temple of Jagannatha, is still called by the name Suna Kuan (the gold well). When the well was filled to the brim, the temple work was started. K C Dash has conclusively tried to prove that the work of construction of Jagannath Temple was so rapid that within ten years A.D. 1112-13 to 1124-25, Chodaganga was able to erect the gargantuan structure for Vishnu-Purusottama. It is felt that on examination of the architectural features and from *pistha* portion to *beki* level the whole structure of the Vimana must have been completed under supervision of a single



patroness or King that may be Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva.

It is also mentioned in an inscription in the temple of Garttesvara (Siva) at Alagum, that Chodaganga seems to have invited some selected *Brahmana-Pandits* or Vaishnavas, Kanchi and settled them near Sri Purusottama–*Kshetra* for propagation of dvaita-philosophy. The inscription was incised during Chodaganga's 62<sup>nd</sup> Sarahi corresponding to 1136 A.D.

During the last part of his reign i.e. 1135 A.D several Pundits, *Brahmanas* and *Sadhus* (Sages) did settle in different parts of the empire and peace was established which is known from a Telugu inscription of the Srikurma Temple.

It is believed that King Chodaganga Dev patronized Vaishnavism under the influence of the great Vaishnava saint Ramanuja (1056-1136 A.D). Ramanuja advocated the *visistadvaita* philosophy of Vedanta. He was a pioneer of *Sri-Sampradaya*. Scholars believe that Ramanuja might have visited Puri during the time of Chodagangadeva and was closely associated with the rituals of the temple. Vaishnavism in India, particularly in southern India had witnessed development of different philosophical trends and devotional practices with Vishnu or Krishna as the god of worship. Saints like Nimbarka, Visnuswami and Madhava, had also visited Puri at different times. They had established their *mathas* (monasteries) at Puri.

After securing peace in all parts of the his dominion, Chodaganga Deva in 1148 A.D organized the consecration ceremony of his son Kamarnava Deva's *Murdha-bhiseka* at Sarvalokaikanatha. Further, the coronation ceremony (*Abhiseka*) of Kamarnava Deva had taken before Lord Purusottama or Narasimha is a question to be answered. But, from an inscription

of Narasimha temple, it is clearly known that a '*Dipa-dana*' was made in the name of Sri Purusottama during the 5<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Kamarnava Deva i.e. 1150 A.D.

In the Draksarma inscription dated 1216 A.D, Anangabhima Deva called himself Sri *Purusottamaputra*, *Rudraputra*, *Durgaputra* and *Rauta*. (SII, IV, 1329). But in Arul Permul inscription (EI,XXXI,1955, p.86) he declares himself as the son and deputy (*rauta*) of only Purusottama. The donation was made by Somaladevi by order of Purusottama as recorded in this inscription. The Puri inscription (EI,XXX,1954) dated 1237 A.D opens with the praise of the 'increasingly victorious reign of Lord Purusottama.(*Sri Purusottma Pravardharmana Vijayarjye*). King Anangabhima-III depicts himself as *rauta* or a deputy of the Lord. In the Lingraja temple inscription (EI,XXX, No.74. JASB, LXXII,1903) the *anka* year also is recorded as the *anka* year of Lord Purusottama (*Parvardhamane Purusottama Samrajya Chatus trimsattame anka*). The Madalapanji records that Anangabhima abandoned his coronation ceremony saying that Sri Jagannath is the Lord of Odisha. He dedicated his kingdom to the Lord Purusottama and ruled the kingdom as his deputy. The Arul Permul inscription (E.I. XXXI, p.94-98) informs that Anangabhima Deva III became free from the evil effect of Kali age by observing *Ekadasivrataraja*, (the king of *vratas*) and obtained supreme bliss by constant meditation on the meaning of mahavakya (i.e *Tattvamasi* or *Aham Brahmasami*). He has been called as *Haripadapriya* (attached to the feet of Hari) and *Srimat Purusottama Charana Kamaja matta madhukara* (an intoxicated bee under the lotus feet of the Lord Purusottama (SII,IV,1252).).

The next powerful king Narasimha Deva of this dynasty, the builder of Sun Temple



at Konarak, also calls himself a *Paramamahesvara*, *Durgaputra*, and *Purusottamaputra* and followed the 'deputy' ideal of kingship i.e *rauta*. This conception may be inferred from the sculptural depiction of *Jagannath*, *Durga* and *Sivalinga* on the wall of Sun Temple at Konarak. He regarded Purusottama was the lord of the kingdom, Siva was the family deity and Sun was the personal God. Narasimha I describes that he could build a *Kutira* (cottage) for *Umarasmi* (Sun God) at Konakona.

Similarly, in the years to come the land of Lord Jagannath continued with sacred complex even in *Madalapanji* (*Rajbhoga* section) and *Kaifiyat of Jagannath* mentioned that Kapilendra Deva (Kapila Rauta) become the king of Odisha as per desire of Lord Jagannath and established the Solar Dynasty. The Gopinathpur temple inscription mentioned that 'by order of the Nilagiri who is the lord of the three worlds, there was born in the Odradesa a king named Kapilendra, the ornament of Solar dynasty. The king also declared himself a *Sevaka* (servant) of Lord Jagannath. It is also said that Kapilendra nominated Purusottamadeva the next king as the choice of Lord Jagannath.

During this period in India, there were constructions of new monumental temples hitherto unknown height. They exceeded the previous temples of the respective regions, some cases two or three times and reached a height, which was never achieved again. The gigantic temples sprang up corresponding exactly with the rise of the great regional kingdoms in India. Here, examples can be given with Kandariya Mahadeva temple in Khajuraho (1002 A.D.), Brahadisvara temple at Tanjore (1012 A.D.), Udayesvara temple in Udayapur (1059-1080 A.D.), Lingaraj temple at Bhubaneswar (1000 A.D.) and Jagannath temple at Puri (1138 A. D.). This development was

culminated in the construction of Sun temple at Konark about in 1250 A.D. Thus, there emerged huge temple structures and temple towns like Puri in places of scared, political and economic importance due to continuous building under royal patronage and community participation in temple building. While royal sponsorship and patronage in temple building activity arose out of the legitimate role of the integrative institution organizing the social, economic and cultural life of the people the expansion of temple complex represents the gradual integration of various socio-economic, tribal-ethnic groups into temple society, making the temple the reference point for the enhancement of social status through ritual, economic progress and political influence.

The temples in general and Sri Jagannath temple in particular symbolizes, by means of its architecture, the universe, its manifestation and integration. It incorporates in its structure all the images. The pillar of the universe is believed to be inherent in it as the main shrine is believed to be the universe in its likeness. As the symbol of world mountain, the *prasada* carries all the world's strata along its axis, which is the central pillar of the temple visible above its curvilinear superstructure, in the form of its neck (*griva*). The *amlaka* (ribbed myrobalan) and the *stupi* (finial) are the shapes and symbols of the vertical axis of the temple where it emerges into visibility. Thus the finial extends into mid-space. The finial rises above the *harmya* (high temple). The *amalaka* above the *stupika*, the highest point, marks the limit between the unmanifest and the manifest. The hierarchy of divine manifestation is thus accommodated in the monument, located within its vertical axis, the cosmic pillar. The *kalasa* surmounting the top is the most important part as it in this jar that the symbolic golden man (*prasada purusa*) is installed and then a large flag is fixed at the top. Cosmic structures are reflected in the location of various shrines within the temple, as





the temple is conceived as cosmos in miniature. The position of the various temples within the settlement and also outside of it and in relation to it are also determined by cosmic orientation with reference to the sun, metaphysical orientation with reference to the center of the *vastupurusamandala* and the centre of the settlement. Thus, the place where the temple stands, the Temple itself and the outer rituals that attached to the place (*kshetra*) all are in cosmic order and Puri is the brightest living example in India.

Here, we may discuss about *tirtha* which could be attested very well, particularly, after establishment of the stable kingdom and its godhead as is at Puri. A place of pilgrimage is a *tirtha* or *tirthasthana*. A pilgrimage is a *tirthayatra* and a pilgrim is a *tirthayatri*. The meaning of a *tirtha* is a sacred place charged with the power of Gods and Goddesses and resonant with purity. A *tirtha* possesses three elements that make it so sacred -it is *suchi*, pure; it brings *punya*; merit and goodness and it is *shubha*; auspicious. This makes a *tirtha* a place where you can gain Nirvana; enlightenment and achieve *Moksha* or liberation. Pilgrims aspire to attain salvation by visiting holy shrines to prepare for release from the temporal world. *Moksha* cannot be attained before fulfilling one's duty towards one's family and society. Pilgrimage, thus, came to be consciously promoted by traditions that have grown up around a shrine and its locale. They are used to explain and sustain the shrine's claim to sanctity. Thus, arose a large corpus of literature called *Sthalapuranas* (ancient stories of a sacred site) or *Mahatmya* (greatness of a shrine /site). A sacred geography is created by the process of bringing together cult centres of a particular tradition through myths and symbols. In India this has happened at various levels i.e. local, regional and pan-Indian. Cults created their own religious topography through links with other

regional centres by means of myths and legends evolving around a specific cult. Much such cultic geography emerged in India particularly in south India between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The cult of Balajee, as the famous Venkateswara at Tirupati (a Vishnu temple) is known, acquired a pan-Indian status being elevated to it after the Vijayanagar rulers made Venkateswar their tutelary deity. So also the cult of Jagannath acquired a pan-Indian status after the Gangas and later Gajapatis made Lord Jagannath as their state deity. In fact, pilgrim networks expanded in the Ganga and post-Ganga periods when significant reorganization, elaboration and changes in the temple ritual and festivals, incorporating manifold Vedic and Agamic practices, took place. In course of time, when the Vedic religion of sacrifice (*yajna*) gave place / mingled to the Puranic cults dominated by *bhakti* (devotion) and worship of personal deities like Vishnu and Siva, the temple became the focus of every sphere of human activity. It became necessity to be seen (*darshan*). Art enhances it and it becomes a holy site (*tirtha*). The purpose of visiting a temple was and still is to have a *darshan* of the temple, the seat, abode and body of divinity and to worship the divinity. Offerings and gifts (*dana*) have made it sacred and ritual.

It is interesting to know that in this *kshetra*, layers of cultural or historical traits are seen in the way of living traditions such as rituals and festivals. It could be observed that such powerful ethos pertaining to the cultural layers in Indian context also seen /observed in some of the sacred *Kshetras* like Kasi, Kanchipuram, Gaya, Ujjain, Nasik, Tirupati, Madurai, etc, and kept alive the Indian tradition which is some way or other bounded by divine order written in the scriptures, believed in practice and followed the unseen instruction whatever difficult which all are part of cosmic order. Puri is such a place



where the living Godhead play like human being, suffer like a common man, partake among the ocean of humanity in the way of festivals like Rath Yatra that exhibits all the Godly and human traits. The cosmic order thus created with *Kshetra* (Sankha), *Mandalas* (Temples and Astahans), *Jani-Yatra* (Festivals) and *Puja* (Rituals) according to the scheduled time and space, of course, there is not only a revelation of the whole world, but also a breakdown of the barriers between gods and men. On this occasion, ‘humans (*manusya*) could see gods (*deva*) and gods could see humans, face to face, without the one having to look down or the other having to look up.

The major outcome is the Navakalevara ritual which is a godly affair observed by the human beings in the time and space. G.C. Tripathy has stated some unpublished literary sources. Around 16<sup>th</sup> century, Telenga Mukunda Deva patronized Bajapayee to compile ‘*Pratishtha Pradeep*’ and ‘*Vanajaga Veedhi*’, two treatises. Another treatise is *Chalasri Murti Pratistha Vidhi*. This was a part of *Haribhakta Vilasa* written by Sri Gopala Bhatta in 1590 A.D. G.C. Tripathy opines that several local Sevayats were compiled the treatise following the rituals of Nabakalevara in the temple. These treatises *Pratistha Pradeepa* and *Vanajaga Veedhi* are now kept in Odisha State Museum and at Hiedelburg University, Germany. There are two treatises describing the location of Daru and *Vanajaga Paddhatti*. Bidyakara Vajapayee (1330 to 1360 A.D.) in his *Nityachara Padhattee* describes the consecration *Padhatti* of Daru. Besides, two manuscripts *Navanirmita Darubrahmas Pratishtha Veedhi* are also found from Kendrapara and Keonjhar. These two describe elaborately on consecration of Daru. Similarly, Sadasiba of Kantilo (1800 A.D.) has

written *Yatra Padhati* which also refers the Nabakalevara ritual.

It has preserved the long tradition of Hindus and the activities of long procedure of search of Daru, (Banajaga vidhi), observing the penance during the period, recital *Sapnavati Mantra* and seeking blessings of Goddess Mangala (Kakatpur) by the group of the Servitors (Daitapatis) and locating of Daru with severe penance of 12 days stay at Deuli Matha and (after wards) its location done with severe and strict observance as per tradition, still is a wonder to the modern world. The periodical consecration/ making as per the procedure and tradition comes in the year 8, 12 and 19 only in the year having two Ashadhas. Some literary sources like: *Baikhanasa Agama* describes about the sacred and great norms of Daru (wooden log). The tree *neem* is considered as the best log for *daru*. *Vamadeva Samhita*, a literary text mentions that *neem* is the ideal wood for preparation for Daru. The process of locating, carving and making of the divine bodily aspects is called Nabakalevara- the Death and Re –birth of the Lord, which takes place from 10<sup>th</sup> day of the bright fortnight of the month of *Chaitra* (29<sup>th</sup> March 2015) which is 65 days before the great bathing festival (*snanayatra*) on *puernima* of the month of *Jyestha*. This year the Darus of the four divine bodies were located at Gadakantunia village near Bhubaneswar (Sudarshan) in Khurda District, Jhankada (Balabhadra) near Sarala temple, Adhangagada (Subhadra) and Kharipadia at Raghunathpur (Jagannath) in Jagatsinghpur District. Earlier in the year 1996 the Neem trees were located for Daru of Balabhadra at Salepur in Cuttack District, Subhadra at Malda in Puri District, Jagannatha at Dadhimachhagadia in Khurda District and Sudarshan at Niali in Cuttack District.



Perhaps this is why we people call everything is great at Puri like Bada Thakura, Bada Deula, Bada Panda, Bada Danda, and everything is sacred from ocean (Mahodadhi) to Nilachakra (sky). In the anthropological, historical and sociological sense the events from a *mandala* (sacred space) to cosmic order (time) that represent universe is having the effects and maintain the human order and finds its linkage in Egypt, Sumeria, Africa, Java or in India. It should be realized by way of understanding of greater aura of Jagannath culture. This is why we observe the *Samkranti*, *Purnima*, *Ekadasi*, *Amabasya*, *Dussehra*, *Ramanavami*, *Krishnajanma*, *Nabanna*, *Uttarayana*, *Dakshinayana*, *Devadipavali*, which all are division of time and accordingly the cosmic order revolves of which the society of servitors are attached to carry forward the system. We are fortunate enough to be part of it by seeing the Daru, making of idols from a living tree, and celebrate it with great grand festival like Ratha Yatra. It is our civilization that has preserved the intangible heritage since time immemorial where history fails to trace the time or link because of Godly affairs. It is observed by the community participation, it sustains by the community and its continuity also depends on the community itself for which separate class of servitors in the name of different titles who discharge assigned duties, and it is their tradition or our lineage for which we should give all respect and follow whatever rituals so that its continuity will be kept alive.

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**Abstract:** The Baladev cult of Odisha also known as Balaram and Balabhadra bears a special identity in the annals of religious history of Odisha. Cults are studied here in the context of a particular ritualized tradition, colouring the faiths and beliefs of a particular people. Rites, rituals and festivals play a major role in the life of every person, irrespective of religious affiliations. Therefore, it has a greater role in Baladevjew temples of Odisha. However, this is more prominent in the case of the Hindus. Right from the time of conception and birth, up to a person's passing away and even after it, rites and rituals follow a Hindu at all times, much like a shadow. Indeed, there is one or the other rite, ritual or custom that comes into play for Hindus three hundred and sixty five days of the year. However, unlike other religions where many customs are mandatory, the Hindu way of life is comparatively flexible, with people in different regions following a variety of customs and traditions in Odisha. The study of practices and rituals associated with the Baladev cult as well as the pilgrimage to Baladevjew, show that if the Jagannath worship was a royal cult that came to express Orissan identity and nationalism, the Baladeva cult can be seen as a sub cult of the Jagannath cult, visible in certain places in northern and western Odisha.

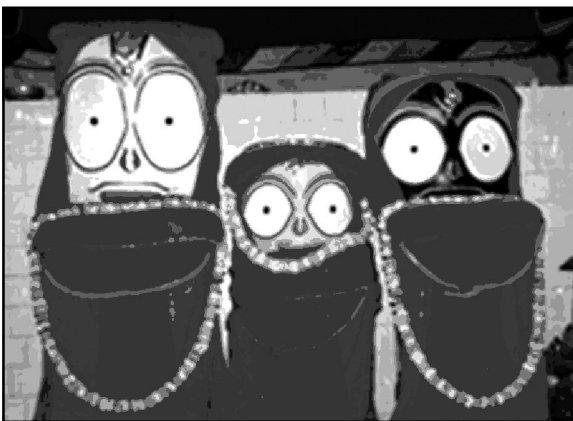
**Key words:** - Rites, Rituals, Ceremonies, Festivals, Identity and Nationalism, Culture & Tradition.

These ancient cities are like living symbols of history. The concept of *tirtha* in the Indian context originates from the time when Puranas began to be composed around the fourth century A.D. The increase in numbers of

continual addition to the Puranic list. According to the *Brahma Purana*, their number is so large that they cannot be enumerated. A rough statistical estimate prepared by P.V Kane fixes the number of Puranic verses devoted entirely to the subject

## Rites, Rituals, Festivals and the Pilgrimage of Baladevjew Cult in Odisha

Naresh Rout



the *tirthas* in some of the Puranas was clearly the result of their unprecedented proliferation and

of *tirthas* as about 1,200 in *Matsya Purana*, 3,182 in *Varaha Purana*, 4000 in *Padma Purana* and 6,700 in *Brahma Purana*. Some exclusive studies on the subject based on single *Purana*, especially *Skanda Purana*, would further bear testimony to such overgrowth. A statement in *Skanda Purana* claims as many as half crore *tirthas* in the country.

A place of pilgrimage is a *tirtha* or *tirthasthan*. A pilgrimage is a *tirthayatra* and a pilgrim is a *tirthayatri*. The meaning of a *tirtha* is a sacred place charged with the power of Gods and Goddesses and resonant with purity. The



process of bringing together cult centers of a particular tradition through myths and symbols creates a sacred geography. In India, this has happened at various levels i.e. local, regional and pan-Indian. Cults created their own religious topography through links with other regional centers by means of myths and legends evolving around a specific cult. The cult of Jagannath acquired a pan-Indian status after the Gangas and the Gajapatis made Jagannath their state deity. In fact, pilgrim networks expanded in the Ganga and post-Ganga periods when significant reorganization, elaboration and changes in the temple ritual and festivals, incorporating manifold Vedic and Agamic practices, took place.

The Baladev cult, given its spatial dispersion as I have studied later, as an expression of sub regional nationalism within Odisha? Travellers from within the land and abroad, visit a *tirtha* (pilgrimage) to discover the soul of India. *Tirthas* are seldom anonymous places. They all have their unique character and ambience. Places of pilgrimage are distributed throughout India and are called *tirthasthanas* or *Kshetras*. There are many rituals observed in the Baladev temple from morning to night. The daily rituals in the temple of Baladev are generally observed in the same way as practiced in the temple of Lord Jagannath. The deities are worshipped here in 'Sodasa Upachara' with Rudra, Durga and Vishnu *mantras* and stotras. The financial contingencies of the temple here have never allowed all the rituals to be observed like that of the great temple. Anyway, its pattern is more or less same as the deities in both the temples are worshipped in Vishnu *mantras* of the Vaishnavite cult.

The methods of worship involve certain rituals called *Upacharas* or services. Offering flowers to the deity during the *upachara* is an

integral and an important part of worship. It signifies submission of self to the Lord. *Puja* is the act of showing reverence to a god or to aspects of the divine through invocations, prayers, songs, and rituals. The literal meaning of *puja* is worship, honour, adoration, respect, homage etc. Through this *puja* and the image, a Hindu worshipper invites the presence of the deity with his or her cosmic energy. Thus, in the eye of devotees, the icon then becomes the deity, whose presence is reaffirmed by the daily rituals of honoring and invocation. There is also an opinion that suggests that *puja* representing submission of flowers to the deity with devotion and reverence is mainly a practice derived from Southern India. According to them, the term *puja* is derived from *pu* meaning flower in southern languages. Flowers constitute an important article of worship. The image in the sanctum is decorated with garlands flowers and with unstrung flowers. The flowers are offered to the deity at several stages in worship. Flowers gladden the heart and mind; and confer prosperity. Flowers offered with devotion gratify the Lord. The devotees who visit the temple also offer flowers as token of love and devotion.

An essential part of *puja* for the Hindu devotee is making a spiritual connection with a deity. Most often that contact is facilitated through an object: an element of nature, a sculpture, a vessel, a painting, or a print. Generally, special communication with a deity is made through the intervention of a Brahmin Hindu priest during a strictly regulated ritual in the temple or home. During *puja*, the divine presence is invoked by which the devotee obtains blessings.

The most significant aspect of the temple worship is its collective character. Peoples' participation is both the purpose and the means of a temple. The community is either actually or symbolically involved in temple worship. The



rituals that dominate temple worship are therefore socio- religious in character.

The worship in a temple has to satisfy the needs of individuals as also of the community. The worships that take place in the sanctum and within the temple premises are important; so are the festivals and occasional processions that involve direct participation of the entire community. They complement each other. While the worship of the deity in the sanctum might be an individual's spiritual or religious need; the festivals are the expression of a community's joy, exuberance, devotion, pride and are also an idiom of a community's cohesiveness.

The appointed priests carry out the worship in the temple on behalf of other devotees. It is hence *parartha*, a service conducted for the sake of others. Priests, generally, trained in ritual procedures, pursue the service at the temple as a profession. The texts employed in this regard describe the procedural details of temple worship, elaborately and precisely. In addition, the worship routine was rendered more colorful and attractive by incorporating a number of ceremonial services (*upacharas*) and presentations of music, dance, drama and other performing arts. These also ensured larger participation of the enthusiastic devotees.

They hold the view that *Japa*, *homa*, *dhyana* and *Archa* are the four methods of worshipping the divine; and of these, the *Archa* (worship) is the most comprehensive method. This is the faith on which the system is concerned with the attitudes, procedure and rituals of deity worship in the temples. However, it is related to icons and temple structures rather comprehensively. The rituals and sequences of worship are relevant only in the context of an icon worthy of worship; and such icon has to be



contained in a shrine. And an icon is meaningful only in the context of a shrine that is worthy to house it. The icon and its form; the temple and its structure; and the rituals and their details, are all thus interrelated.

Followings are the rites, rituals, and the festivals which are performed daily in the Baladevjew temple.

**Joy Mangala Arati:** - After sunrise early in the morning, *arati* is performed with camphor and *ghee bati arati* by the name of *Joy Mangala Arati*. A large number of people witness it. Local devotees gather in the morning to have the *darshan* of the gods and goddesses after *arati*. This is the common feature of every morning.

**Nitya Snana:** - In the second stage, *Joy Mangala Arati* is followed by *Nitya Snana*. It is performed daily after *arati*. The water used for the purpose is sanctified with sandal paste, champhor, honey, floras, curd, milk etc.

**Ballava Dhupa:** - After the sacred bath, the God is offered *Ballava Dhupa* which means early breakfast in which *Singar Ukhada* (made of sugar, molasses and fried rice), *Puri*, *Nadiakora* (Ladoos made of coconut), *Dalimba*, the betel and betel nut without lime (*bidia pan*) is also offered to the deities.

**Pahili Dhupa:** - In succession, *Pahili Dhupa* or *Khechudi Dhupa* forms the significant feature of every day activity. *Khechudi Dhupa* is offered to the God. It is served before noon. So it is called *pahili dhupa*. It is made of rice, mug dal vegetables and ghee. The plate on which the item is served also contains ripe banana, *kanipitha*, sugar, milk, coconut, along with four kinds of curries. After the *Dhupa*, the *arati* is performed. In the noon, almost the same items are placed before the deities as principal meal. The deities



are taken to sleep until the time of afternoon *Dhupa*.

**Dwiprahara Dhupa:** - The succession of *Khechudi Dhupa* forms the significant feature of everyday activity. In the afternoon *dhupa* or *dwiprahara dhupa*, white *ghee-anna*, *mug dal* and one item of curry are offered to the deities, which is popularly known as *Abadha* or otherwise known as *Maha Prasad*. It is one of the spectacular rituals of the Baladevjew.

**Sandhya Uthani Dhupa:** - In the evening the delicious elixir *Rasaballi*, *puri* and *Dalimba* are served along with *bidiapan*. Three different types of *Arati* are performed. A good number of devotees witness this unique sight both from far and near. *Rasabali Prasaad* is one of the outstanding foods of Baladevjew, where people are attracted to this *Rasabali* not only in Kendrapara but also outside the district. It is also a significant feature of the rituals of Baladevjew which is performed as an everyday activity.

**Ratri Dhupa:** - Everyday like that of the noon, in the night at 9 p.m. almost the same items (except *Khechudi* and *Kanipitha*) are being served to the deities. This is known as *Ratri Dhupa*.

**Badasinhara Dhupa:** - One of the most stupendous is the last *Dhupa* of the day is known as *Bada Singhara Dhupa* or *Bada Srungara Dhupa*. The singers entertain the deities reciting the *mantra* of Krishna, Hari, Narayana, Rudra and the substance of Gita and by singing devotional songs. The items like curd rice, fried vegetables are being served every day. The last *Arati* along with *Puspanjali* known as *Pahudalagi* are made to the deities. *Pahudalagi* means doors of the main temple *Garbhagriha* are closed.

In ritual worship (*puja*) or at the end of a collective *bhajan* or recitation, the last ritual is the *Arati* (also called *Dipa- Aradhana*) which is the ceremonial waving of a lighted lamp or camphor before the idolized God. Every Hindu temple will have such *Aratis* to all the deities of the temple at several prescribed times of the day. The Upanishadic passage above is one among the many that are recited at *Arati* time, at the conclusion of a *Puja* performed in the Vedic tradition.

### Offerings (Dhupa)

There are arrangements for 3 main offerings (Dhupa) and 5 minor offerings (Abakasha) for the deities.

Morning offering (Sakala Dhupa)	9.00 AM to 10 AM
Offering at pre-noon (Madhyanna Dhupa)	11.00 AM to 12 Noon
Rice offering (Dwiprahara Dhupa/ Anna Dhupa)	2.30 PM to 3.30 PM
Offering at evening (Sandhya Aarati Dhupa)	6.00 PM to 7.00 PM
Rice offering (Nisankhudi Dhupa)	8.00 PM to 9.00 PM
Offering at night (Badasinghar Dhupa)	9.30 PM 10.00 PM

Different types of offerings (Prasad) are made with trained traditional persons engaged solely for deities. Some of the delicacies are highly patronized in different historic regimes. A comprehensive list of the delicacies is given below.

Baula Gaintha, Upana Pitha, Mithei, Chaurashi Byanjana, Makara Chaula, Bhaja, Dali, Phalamula (fruits), Dry sweets, Ghanavarta, Pura Kakara, Rasabali, Potali Pitha, Chipa Kakara,



Karanji, Khaja, Magaja Ladoo, Dalimba, Khuduma, Nishankhudi, Mutha Gaja, Tala, Chhena Chakata.

### **Different Veshas (dress decorations) of Baladevjew:-**

The *veshas* of Sri Baladevjew symbolize various cultural and religious syntheses in the shrine. Since He has been adopted by the different faiths like Vaishnavism, Jainism, Buddhism, Tantricism, the three images are decorated in various ways in order to satisfy their spiritual aspirations. The venerated God Sri Sri Sidha Baladevjew of *Tulasikshetra* appears before his devotees in different *veshas* (dress decorations) at different times of the year to save the (down trodden) of the society. Particularly, God Baladeva is decorated in different designs after the name of different Gods, representing different famous incidents in the Hindu Puranas. Among the different *veshas* some are very ancient and some are ancient, which are performed in the temple of Baladevjew.

During *Snana Yatra*, the three images wear the mask of the elephant. This *vesha* is known as *Hati Vesha*. To satisfy the sentiment of this devotee, God appears in the form of Gajanana. Since then the *Hati Vesha* of the deities is being observed on the day of *Snana Yatra*. At the time of the termination of the car festival; *Suna Vesha* is observed near the *Singhadwara*. The images wear huge golden ornaments.

Apart from *Hati Vesha* and *Suna Vesha*, the twenty three other *Veshas* are *Nitya Vesha*, *Nrusingha Sesadeva Vesha*, *Gaja Udharana Vesha*, *Sri Gundicha Vesha*, *Sri Raghunatha Vesha*, *Gamhaviseka Vesha*, *Janmastami Vesha*, *Radha Damodar Vesha*, *Kaliya Dalana Vesha*, *Eka Lakshya Tulasi Arpana Vesha*,



*Madhu Sanhara Vesha*, *Pralambasura Samhara Vesha*, *Garuda Arohana Vesha*, *Dwibinda Banara Vesha*, *Bakasura Badha Vesha*, *Padma Vesha*, *Prathamastami Vesha*, *Dhenuka Mardhana Vesha*, *Pushyaviseka Vesha*, *Kanchi Kaberi Vesha*, *Kandarasura Sanhara Vesha*, *Krishna Balarama Vesha*, and *Sri Raghunatha Vesha* etc.

**Nitya Vesha:** - Everyday in the morning after the bath the three deities of the temple set dressed in different decorative colours. Lord Baladevjew wears dress i.e. *Nila Pata Bastra* (blue coloured dress), Lord Jagannath wears *Pita Bastra* (white coloured dress) and Maa Subhadra wears *Lohita Pata Bastra* (red coloured dress). In addition, they wear different ornament in different parts of the body such as in nose they wear ornament namely *nasika Basani* and in their arms they wear *Kundala* and in neck and over head wear *Tulasi mala*. A man can get heavenly peace in seeing these regular *Veshas* of Baladevjew.

**Nitya Badasrungara Vesha:** - The God is decorated in this *Badasrungara Vesha* every day at the time of sleeping. It is the last *vesa* of the day and the last *arati* along with *puspanjali* known as *pahudalagi* and it means the door of the main temple is closed after these offerings.

**Nitya Abakasa Vesha:** - This *Nitya Abakasa Vesha* is decorated everyday at the leisure time of the Baladevjew. In this *Vesha*, Baladevjew takes rest in a peaceful mood.

**Sri Nrusingha Sesadeva Vesha:** - On the 14<sup>th</sup> bright moon light of *Baisakha*, this *Vesha* is observed. Many people come to see this *Vesha* in this day. In this *Vesha*, Baladevjew is decorated with the incarnation of Shesadeva, which is called as *Nrusingh Avatar Vesha*. From *Akshaya Trutiya* (the festival for starting cultivation) it is





observed for the 21 days in the month of *Vaishakha*.

**Gaja Uddharana Vasha:** - On the 14<sup>th</sup> day of bright moon light of the month of *Baisakha* (*Baisakha Purnima*) both Baladev and Jagannath are decorated. As per the Purana, Lord Baladev gets decorated in *Gaja Udharana Vasha*. This decoration is known as *Gaja Udharana Vasha*. Both the deities are decorated like the face of elephants resembling Lord Ganesh. It is one of the outstanding dress decorations of the Baladev.

**Gajanana Vasha:** - On the moonlit night of *Jyestha* of *Deva Snana Purnima* this *Vasha* (decoration) is observed in the shrine of Baladev. Three deities are decorated in the *Vasha* of Gajanana (face of lord Ganesh) after their bath. It is decorated like the face of Lord Ganesh.

**Sri Gundicha Vasha:** - On the second bright moonlight of *Asadah* Lord Baladev gets this *Vasha* for the joyful event of *Ratha Yatra*. In this *Vasha*, he looks like a king while going to his aunt's house through *Ratha* (Chariot).

**Sri Raghunatha Vasha:** - At the end of his return journey to the temple of the *Bahuda Yatra*, Baladev wears this *Vasha* before entering the temple. It is usually observed on the 12<sup>th</sup> bright moonlight of *Asadah*. In this *Vasha* deities are decorated like Rama and Laxman. People from different parts of Odisha come to the temple to watch this significant decoration of Baladev.

**Gahmaviseka Vasha:** - *Jhulana Yatra* is celebrated in the temple from the day of the 10<sup>th</sup> moon of *Sravana* to the fullmoon of *Sravana* (*Sravana Purnima*). On this day, deities are decorated with the gold and silver ornament after

their coronation. This is called as *Gamha visekha Vasha*.

**Suna Vasha:** - On the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the month of *Bhadrab* and on the birth occasion of Bamana they are bejewelled with gold ornaments, which are known as *Suna Vasha* (adornment in gold). On reaching back the main temple, the deities, on their chariots, the golden attire or the *Suna Vasha* is done with solid gold. They are also offered sweet drinks, *adhara pana* on huge cylindrical earthen pots reaching up to their lips. They are taken down from the chariots in a ritual descent to enter the temple.

**Janmastami Vasha:** - On the 8<sup>th</sup> day of *Bhadrab* month, the deities of the temple are adorned in the costume and decoration of Srikrishna. It is called as *Janmastami Vasha*.

**Radha Damodar Vasha :-** From the second dark light of *Kartika* to full moon night of the same month, this *Radha damodar Vasha* is made in the temple.

**Kaliya Dalana Vasha:** - On the 8<sup>th</sup> day of month of *Kartik* the deities are adorned with the structural decoration of Kaliya Naga. Therefore, it is called the *Kaliya Dalana Vasha*.

**Eka Laksha Tulasi Arpana Vasha:** - On the bright fortnight of the month of *Kartika* the deities are offered one lakh Tulasi leaves. This is called as *Eka lakshya Tulasi Arpana Vasha*.

**Madhu Samhara Vasha:** - According to Puranic sources on the 10<sup>th</sup> bright fortnight of *Kartika* Lord Baladev had killed a ferocious demon called Madhu Daitya by his *Hala* and *Musala* (Plough). Because of this incident, this day is observed as *Madhu Samahara Vasha*.

**Pralambasura Samhara Vasha:** - In accordance with the Puranic sources on the 11<sup>th</sup>



bright fortnight of *Kartika* Lord Baladevjew had killed a ferocious demon Pralambasura by his *Hala* and *Musala* (Plough). Because of this incident, this day is observed as *Pralambasura Samhara Vesha*.

**Garuda Arohana Vesha:** - As said by the Puranic evidence on the 12<sup>th</sup> bright fortnight of the month of *Kartika*, lord Baladevjew had married Devi Tulasi. Lord Baladevjew went to marry her by sitting on the back of Garuda. Due to this incident, this day is observed as *Garuda Arohana Vesha*.

**Dwibinda Banara Vesha:** - On the 13<sup>th</sup> bright fortnight of *Kartika* Lord Baladevjew is seen in this *Dwibinda Banara Vesha*. According to the Puranic sources, Lord Baladevjew had killed to a brutal demon Dwibinda by forming a Banara (monkey). Because of this incident, this day is observed as *Dwibinda Banara Vesha*. This decoration of Baladevjew is too attractive in nature.

**Bakasura Badha Vesha:** - As said by Puranic sources on the 4<sup>th</sup> bright fortnight of *Kartika* Lord Baladevjew had killed to a vicious demon Bakasura by his *Hala* and *Musala* (Plough). For that reason, this day is observed as *Bakasura Badha Vesha*.

**Padma Vesha:** - On the eve of *Kartika Purnima* Lord Baladevjew is decorated with the lotus flower. This *Vesha* is called as *Padma Vesha*.

**Prathamastami Raja Vesha:** - On the month of *Margasira* deities are adorned with different ornaments and decorated in attractive dresses which are called as *Prathamastami Raja Vesha*.

**Dhenuka Mardhan Vesha:** - The Puranic sources tell us that on *Margasira Purnima* Lord Baladevjew had killed a ferocious demon

Dhenuka. For this incident this day is observed as *Dhenuka Mardhan Vesha*.

**Pushyaviseka Vesha:** - Deities are bejewelled in different ornaments after their *aviseka* (coronation) on *Pousa Purnima*, which is known as *Pushyaviseka Vesha* or *Raja Vesha*.

**Kanchi Kaveri Vesha:** - On the fifth bright day of Month *Magha* deities are decorated like a soldier sitting on the back of black and white horses. According to the *Purana*, on this day Baladev and Jagannath were riding towards the Kanchi and Kaveri expedition. It is borrowed from the Kanchi-Kaveri episode of the Puri temple, which took place during the reign of Prataparudra Deva. With this belief, this *Vesha* is observed in the temple.

**Kandarasura Samhara Vesha:** - On the full moon day of *Magha* the *Kandarasura Samhara Vesha* of the God Baladevjew takes place. In accordance with the Puranic sources, Lord Baladevjew had killed a fierce demon Kandarasura by his *Hala* and *Musala* (Plough). As a result of this incident this day is observed as *Kandarasura Samhara Vesha*.

**Krishna Balarama Vesha:** - On the day of *Dola Purnima* Lord Baladevjew appears in this *Krishana Balarama Vesha*.

**Sri Raghunatha Vesha:** - On the day of *Chaitra Purnima* deities are adorned with the incarnation of Rama and Laxman which is known as *Raghunatha Vesha*.

### Costume (*Vesha*)

3 deities on the *Ratna Simhasana* are decorated with different type of costumes, silks, and ornaments with Basil leaves and scented flowers. Some special costumes are organized on some special occasions. Some of the costumes are -



1. Nitya Vesha - Daily
2. Nrusingha Shesadeva Vesha – Baisakh Sukla Chaturdashi or Nrusingha Chaturdashi
3. Gaja Uddharana Vesha – Baisakh Purnima
4. Gajanana Vesha – Jyestha Purnima or Devasnana Purnima
5. Sri Gundhicha Raja Vesha – Ashadha Sukla Dwitiya
6. Sri Raghunath Vesha - Ashadha Sukla Dwadashi
7. Gamhabhisheka Vesha – From Sravana Sukla Dasami to Purnima
8. Suna Vesha, Janmastami Vesha – Bhadrab Dwadashi (Bamana Janma)
9. Radha Damodar Vesha – From Kartik Krushna Pratipada to Purnima
10. Kaliya Dalan Vesha – Kartika Astami
11. Ekalaksha Tulasi Arpan Vesha – Kartika Sukla Navami (Amla Navami)
12. Madhu Samhar Vesha - Kartika Sukla Dashami
13. Pralambasura Samhar Vesha - Kartika Sukla Ekadashi
14. Garuda Arohan Vesha - Kartika Sukla Dwadashi
15. Dwibinda Banar Vesha - Kartika Sukla Trayodashi
16. Bakasura Baddha Vesha - Kartika Sukla Chaturdashi
17. Padma Vesha – Kartika Purnima
18. Prathamastami Vesha – Margashira Krushna Astami
19. Dhenuka Marddana Vesha – Margashira Purnima (Pandu Purnima)
20. Pushyabhisheka Vesha – Pousha Purnima
21. Kanchikaveri Vesha – Magha Sukla Panchami (Sripanchami)
22. Kandarasura Baddha Vesha/ Kandara Mardana Vesha - Magha Purnima
23. Krushna Balaram Vesha – Dola Purnima
24. Sri Raghunath Vesha – Chaitra Purnima

Throughout the year, the decorations of Lord Baladev are attractive and outstanding. The daily decorations of Baladev attract the people from different part of the state. In addition, the worship routine is rendered more colorful and attractive by incorporating a number of ceremonial services (*upacharas*) and presentations of music, dance, drama and other performing arts. These are also ensured larger participation of the enthusiastic devotees.

### **Ceremonies and Festivals of God Baladev:-**

Every ceremonies and festival in India is celebrated with a divine purpose to receive the grace of the Almighty. Every state has its own festivals and rituals. Odisha being a land of ancient and sacred temples and a state where three religions flourished, is thronged by pilgrims throughout the year. There are a large number of fairs and festivals celebrated in the state. There are festivals relating to each religion, tribal festivals, and festivals relating to Lord Jagannath, the presiding deity of the Puri temple, and many seasonal exhibitions and fairs as well as special



festivals such as the Konark Festival, the Rajarani Music Festival, and the Puri Beach Festival etc. The fairs and festivals of a state is a mirror to the energy and enthusiasm of the people of the state.

Odisha is a land full of temples and there are festivals that are exclusive linked to many temples. With the eagerness that is shown by the people, these festivals often turn out to be more than just religious ceremonies. They become a cultural showcase of Odisha. *Rath Yatra* is the most anticipated festival of the year. Millions of devotees take part in this procession festival.

According to the Odia proverb '*Varamase Tera Parva*' means thirteen festivals in twelve months are observed. Odisha is famous for its varieties of festivals. Many festivals are seen in the Baladevjew temple. The most important among them are:

1. In the month of *Pausa* (January-February), *Dwadasi*, *Dhanu Sankranti*, *Pakudi Dhupa*, *Bakula Amabasya*, *Samba Dasami* and *Poushyabhiseka* are observed in the Baladevjew temple of Kendrapara.
2. *Makara Sankranti*, *Basanta Panchami*, *Maghasaptami*, *Agni Ustava*, and *Kandarapura Mardana* are observed in the month of *Magha* (February-March).
3. *Sivaratri*, *Harihara Vasha*, and *Dola Purnima* take place in the month of *Falguna*. (March-April).
4. *Ashokastami*, *Ramanabami* and *Damanaka Chaturdashi* fall in the month of *Chaitra* (April-May).
5. *Pana Sankranti*, *Baisakha Purnima* and *Chandan Yatra* are observed in the month of *Baisakha* (April- May). Baladevjew symbolizes the union of agriculture and

farmers, and the introductory works connected with the agriculture begin in the month of *Baisakha*.

6. The first festival is called *Chandan Yatra* and it starts in the month of *Baisakha*. This festival is the most outstanding and spectacular festival of Lord Baladevjew. The construction of the chariots starts on *Akshaya Trutiya*, the third day of the bright fortnight of *Baisakha*, with the ritual of fire worship. On this day, the new agricultural season starts and farmers begin their cultivation work in the fields.
7. *Jyestha Purnima* falls in the month of *Jyestha* (May-June). On the day, the deities are taken to *Snana Mandapa*.
8. *Chitalagi Amabasya* and *Jhulana Yatra* are observed in the month of *Sravana* (August-September).
9. *Balabhadra Janma*, *Saptapuri Amabasya*, *Ganesh Janma*, *Radhastami*, *Yatiyastami*, *Sunia* and *Vamana Janma* are observed in the month of *Vadraba* (September-October). This month, *Vadrava*, is one of the remarkable months for Baldevjew temple. In this month Balabhadra was born in this land *Tulasikshetra*. This month is the month for the cultivator and is celebrated in every festival falling in this month.
10. *Dussehra Parva* and *Kumara Purnima* are celebrated in the month of *Aswina*.
11. *Gobardhana Puja*, *Garuda Janma*, *Tulasi Vivaha*, *Rasa Purnima* and *Dipabali Amabasya* are observed in the month of *Kartika*.
12. *Prathamastami* is celebrated in the month of *Margasira*.



## **Gahma Purnima, Baladev Janma or Go Purnima :-**

The full-moon day in the month of Shravana (August) is known as Gahma Purnima or Go Purnima. In the Hindu tradition even the animals and plants, who are beneficial to the human beings are propitiated. The cow is regarded as mother. So, Gahma Purnima is a festival of the agriculturists to worship the cattle. Bullocks are the most important animals for an agriculturist in India. When ploughing the field with bullocks is over the farmers venerate them for the service they have rendered. Along with the cattle the God of agriculture Baladeva is also worshipped. The religious scriptures testify that Balarama invented the plough and showed the people all methods of agriculture. Therefore, bullock is His vehicle and the plough, His weapon. He has been also taken in as an incarnation of Vishnu in holy scriptures. It is for this reason this festival is also known as Baladeva Puja or Baladeva Jayanti in some areas. On this day the cattle shed is cleaned and neatly plastered and sketches of bullocks, bullock carts, ploughs and other agricultural implements are drawn on the walls. Bullocks are bathed and decorated with flowers and sandal-paste. Their horns are oiled. The rituals of worship takes place in the cattle-shed itself for which Brahmins are not needed. A piece of new cloth is placed on the back of the bullocks and they are fed with rice-cakes and pulses. In the afternoon the bullocks are taken to a field where all the agriculturists gather. Each bullock is made to jump over an altar known as Gahma Bedi and this portion of the festival is called Gahma *dian*. It is said that this is reminiscent of similar festival first arranged by Baladeva Himself when He first took the bullocks to plough the land for agriculture.

**Ratha Yatra of Lord Baladevjew:-**The most outstanding feature of Odisha is its vast coastline

and the temple of Lord Jagannatha in Puri. Lord Jagannatha is the heart of Odishan culture and people of Puri are engaged throughout the year celebrating several festivals of Lord Jagannath. However, one of the most spectacular festivals which takes place at Puri is the car festival- *Rathayatra*. The world famous *Rathayatra* of Lord Jagannatha takes place in 'Ashdha Sukla Dwitiya' that is the second day of the fortnight of *Ashadha* (June-July) every year. As the name justifies the deities, Lord Balabhadra, Lord Jagannatha and Devi Subhadra, adorning three chariots namely *Taladhawaja*, *Nandighosha*, *Darpadalana*, respectively make a nine-day trip to *Gundicha Mandir* from *Srimandir*. Besides this, the *Ratha Yatra* of Baladevjew also deserves a special commendation in Odishan worship. It has its special identity in the *Ratha Yatra*, one of the spectacular festivals of Odisha. Among these festivals the most marvellous and notable festival is the *Ratha yatra* of Baladevjew. There are many festivals observed in the temple of Baladevjew but the *Ratha Yatra* occupies a significant position among all the *Yatras* and ceremonies observed in the Baladevjew temple. Among all the above-mentioned festivals, the *Rathayatra* or the car festival of Lord Baladevjew is noteworthy and illustrious not only in Kendrapara but in the whole of Odisha. There is no unanimity about the exact date among various researchers. Legend says that Baladevjew is worshipped here along with brother Jagannath, sister Subhadra and Sudarsana since the sixteenth century. We can find one distinction between the festivals at the Jagannath temple (Puri) and at the Baladevajew temple (Kendrapara) is that the chariot of the Baladevajew temple is one only known as *Taladhawaja* whereas in the Jagannath temple three chariots can be seen. According to Basudeva Das, who has been awarded Ph.D. degree on this topic entitled '*Tulasi Kshetra*',



the car festival began in 1763 A.D. under the supervision of Atibadi Jagannath Das who established all gods on the holy shrine called 'Ratna Vedi'. But other researchers differ saying that the car festival was celebrated in Kendrapara prior to the establishment of *Ratna Vedi* and at that time only Baladevjew was worshipped there. So according to legend, there was only one chariot. However, after the establishment of *Ratna Vedi*, there was a tradition of one chariot of God Baladevjew. *Ratha-yatra* signifies the Lord's love for his devotees. He personally comes to visit His devotees and the public who welcome him in the streets. Befitting the sentiment of its origin, the *Ratha-yatras* in the Hare Krishna movement also serve as reunions for devotees who come from everywhere to participate, meeting up with old friends around their common goal of serving Lord Jagannatha, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra. At last the appointed day for the great festival of chariots arrives. It is *Asadha Shukla Dwitiya*, the second day in the bright fortnight of the first monsoon month of the Indian seasonal calendar. It is typically in late June in normal years but every few years, after the adjustment of the solar and lunar calendars, with a double *Baisakha*, this occurs in July. The presiding deities of the temple Lord Jagannatha, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra, in a unique reversal of roles of the seeker and the sought, set out from within the sanctum of the temple to mingle with millions of their devotees. Every year, the smooth management of *Rathayatra* (Chariot Journey) of Lord Baladevjew is conducted by the district administration. The District Collector takes major steps to conduct the smooth managements of the chariot's journey by distributing the duties and responsibilities to the different concerned departments. Though essentially a festival of agriculturists, this festival has other religious and social significance too. The other name of the festival is Rakhi Purnima or Raksha Purnima. The

religious scriptures testify that on this day Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas vested the responsibilities of safety of her sons to Lord Krishna as the Kauravas wanted to kill them. So, the festival goes on from that date and is known as Rakshya Purnima or full-moon day of protection. On this occasion, the Brahmins of Odisha go from house to house and bind sacred threads on the wrist of the people invoking Gods to protect their lives. In northern India it is mostly a social festival in which sisters bind sacred threads on the wrists of their brothers to protect them from dishonour. This tradition though new to Odisha is slowly gaining ground.

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The deities quit Their old body but Their souls remain unchanged in the event of Nabakalebara. It is only the shifting of Brahma from old bodies to new bodies. No change is occurred in any form with the Brahma placed in the bodies of the Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarsan. The descendants of Bidyapati called the Pati Mahapatra Sevayat of Lord Jagannath Temple are the persons who shift the Brahma from the old body of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra into Their newly built bodies where as the Daitapatis shift the Brahma placed in the old body of Sudarsan into His newly built body. The authenticity of this event is backed by no other document than the Record of Rights which is the

Her food is separate from Mahaprasada of Lord Jagannath and so on. Why the almighty Jagannath exhibits such type of negligence to His beloved wife is an enigma in the Jagannath culture.

This fine psychological insight into a woman's mind also reveals one of the typical features of Odia culture and the Odia woman's place in it. A woman has a rightful share in her husband's happiness. If the husband neglects her, and forces upon her a separation not in accord with her wishes, (inspite of her noble birth and breeding) her natural reaction would be jealousy and anger. Besides such a separation does not augur well for either of them; thus Goddess Laxmi is depicted as "**Adhira Mahalakshmi**" in the Jagannath culture.

## Adhira Mahalakshmi

*Damodar Pradhani*

guiding document in the administration of Jagannath Temple at Puri. But one major thing which is conspicuously absent in the ceremony is the Nabakalebara of the devoted spouse of Lord Jagannath i.e. Goddess Laxmi, the mother of the Universe, Who possesses the wealth and prosperity of the world. Nabakalebara of the Lord is such a festival, the entire Hindu community of the world is well aware of. Even Lord Jagannath launches His annual Car Festival accompanied by His brother Balabhadra and sister Subhadra but His spouse Goddess Laxmi is deprived of this pleasant privilege. Inside the temple premises, She is housed in a separate shrine. Her food is cooked in a separate kitchen.

Goddess Laxmi is not only an ideal and devoted wife, She is also rather loving sensitive. Sometimes She behaves like a sensitive Odiya housewife with Her husband for lack of mental understanding. This sensitiveness and touchiness by Goddess Laxmi is best manifested on two occasions. First, on Hera Panchami day (fifth day of the journey to Gundicha temple) and second, on the return journey of the Lord from Gundicha temple and re-entry to Shrimandir which is known as the festival of *duaraphita* or the opening the door. Even if Goddess Laxmi is polite, lovely and devoted to Her husband, She musters up Her courage to retaliate in her own style to exhibit Her anger against Her errant husband Lord



Jagannath. On the Herapanchami day, goddess Laxmi, the consort of Lord Jagannath starts secretly for the Gundicha temple in a fighting mood and on Her return therefrom She breaks one of the several spokes of the wheel of Lord Jagannath's Car "Nandighosh" and comes away surreptitiously. In the second event, nine days after, when Lord Jagannath returns home, Laxmi shuts the door for Him, as She felt herself slighted. The king of Puri tries to patch up the issue and sends an elephant to fetch Her from the temple which She promptly declines. But on renewed appeal She comes in a Palanquin to meet Her Lord. But Her feelings are hardly assuaged and She nurses Her neglect and humiliation. Thus when the Lord appeals to Laxmi to open the door, the Goddess replies "You are the Lord of all the three worlds, why do You come here. Take back Your sister with You, and leave me alone to feel the pangs of separation. In this context the aggrieved heroine raised a pertinent question of prime preference i.e. a wife or a sister and that is the theme of our discussion. Although Lord Jagannath pacified His wife by adducing some Odia social ethics i.e. in the presence of His elder brother Balabhadra how could He accommodate His wife in His itinerary ?

Originally Jagannath is the Lord of the tribals and He was worshipped in the form of "Nilamadhava" by the Sabars led by Biswabasu in Mahendragiri mountain. Lord Nilamadhav, came in the form of a Daru and reached Banki Muhana at Puri. Subsequently the Biswakarma carved out the holy idols from that sacred Daru as per direction of the Almighty. But still Lord Jagannath is the part and parcel of tribal culture and due respect and importance is being given to the descendants of Biswabasu, the head of the Daita tribes. To establish the brother and sister relationship is superior to the husband and wife relationship, the following story has certain relevance.

In a family of Dongaria Kandha two sisters although having attained more than the marriageable age, turned down all proposals for marriage and continued staying in the father's house even after their father's death because of their upgrowing younger brother, aged fifteen only. They had to work hard in their Swidden fields to earn livelihood for their family and had to wait for their brother to grow up, marry and settle his family. They also saved money little by little, selling the consumable surplus of farm and forest produce every year to meet the demands of bride price to secure a wife for their brother. The two sisters were held in high esteem in the village. After the marriage of their brother they got married and left for their respective husband's house. It is also the customary practice among the Dongaria Kandha that after the death of the husband a woman with a male child tries to stay back in the deceased husband's village, but if with a female child she comes back to her brother's village. This is a special Adivasi rule much in vogue in non-coastal parts of Odisha. Sisters, both ideally and in actuality enjoy residence in two villages, i.e., her parental and in law's villages. A sister works sincerely for her brother's family and wins the heart of his family including his wife. Often, a brother, in giving more importance to the sister than to the wife, creates jealousy in the latter's mind, but the importance of the sister in brother's heart never diminishes. That is the tribal philosophy in which the Lord Jagannath is also a subject. Hence, the superiority complex of the sister in Jagannath culture has been predominating through the centuries. The grievances of the aggrieved Goddess may be a fact and the consolation given by Her consort Lord Jagannath citing the presence of the elder brother Balabhadra (*Dedhasura*) may be apparent. The underneath philosophy behind the negligence to His spouse Laxmi is the corroborative fact of tribal social ethics.





Another case history may be cited here. Once during the car festival in Bisam Cuttack a Dongaria Kandha woman was found being dragged forcibly along the main road by a young man, while the woman was resisting not to go with him. The local public and the police inspector present on the spot did not interfere in the matter but the lady was rescued by somebody. On query, the lady disclosed that the man had already paid part of the bride price to her father and served two years in order to acquire her and that year she would have moved to the man's house. But her father died of snake bite leaving behind two minor brothers and the widowed mother, the reason for which she was not willing to join the man in wedlock and therefore appealed to him to defer till her brothers come of age. She also suggested an alternative to him to join her and come to her family as an adopted son in law and look after her parental swidden plots and trees and at the same time would establish his family with her. The police inspector present on the spot was convinced and asked the man not to harass the lady like that. The situation got quietened and every body dispersed.

These two cases exhibit the degree of attachment of ladies to their parental family and more particularly to the brothers. In most part of the tribal belt of Odisha the brother, sister relationship continues to be a living tradition and it also permeates through the Indian society in general. It appears that the Jagannath trio continues

to draw nourishment from the elementary level of social relationship held paramount in Indian society and by extension, the Hindu social fold. Certain primary social values of the Adivasi culture are still maintained in our Jagannath culture. Hindu believers of the cult give credit to all diverse rituals which have been handed down from dominant propitiators and upkeepers. The Jagannath cult bears testimony to this brother-sister relationship. It is the Adivasi tradition rooted in the universal pan-Hindu tradition which has been merely re-emphasised in the Jagannath temple Puri. In the process, the mother of the Universe, Goddess Laxmi may be neglected and humiliated but the Jagannath culture based on Adivasi principle retains its greatness of brother sister-relationship which is simply unique in the present day society. At the same time the rights of the women cannot be undermined even by the Almighty is the message given by the Adhira Nayika when She made Her husband Jagannath and His elder brother-in-law Balabhadra quite pauper and food-hungry when She was admonished by Them for visiting the house of the untouchables as cited in Laxmipurana of Balarama Dasa. In one hand Goddess Laxmi compromises the superiority of brother-sister relationship during the Car Festival and on the other hand She establishes Her supremacy over Her husband when situation so arises. The word Shrimandira definitely denotes the celestial abode of Mother Laxmi.





The ancient Greeks knew, and we are learning, that physical culture is vitally important part of the education of a balanced man. It was in the age of the classical Greeks that the idea of balance in life was first extolled. By balance, they meant the harmonious development of the physical, mental and spiritual aspects of man through which the union of soul with God could be achieved. There is much evidence that Wrestling Gymnastics and Swimming were the most popular form of sports practice by ancient Greeks.

Like Greeks the medieval history has copious quantity of examples and references in the form of copper plated inscriptions, carving in the temple walls, and description of wars and

physical culture in literature. The temple of Lord *Jagannath* was and is always stressing the focus. The *Odia* culture also takes the prime position in the history of World. To protect, to safeguard, and to propagate the 'ism' needed a strong military background. Hence many military and physical culture institutions had developed keeping Lord *Jagannath* at their centre. Moreover, the Orissa empires of *Vaumya Kara*, *Ganga* and *Surya* Dynasty were also surrendered to Lord *Jagannath*, so military and political history also revolves around Lord *Jagannath*.

Regarding physical culture and *Jagannath* temple, *Padmashree Sadasiva Rathasarma* states:

## Physical Culture in Jagannath Consciousness

*Prof. Bimal Prasad Mohanty*



"It is learnt from Vedic era that those who had constructed the aforesaid temple before *Chodaganga Deb*, became tortoise and remained in the *Indradyumna* Pond. '*Akupara*' which means they had built their bodies became as stiff as tortoise. While King *Chodaganga Deb* constructed the present temple, he was residing at *Chudanga Sahi* in the north-eastern corner of the *Jagannath* temple and first established a physical culture institution known as '*Chudanga Kota*'.

Regarding physical culture institutions *Manorama Das* (1982) states:

'*Jagas*' and '*Akhadas*' are the regional significance of the state of *Lord Jagannath*.



There is no such institution in Odisha or outside, except Puri. The history of the origin of these institutions in Puri is still unknown yet we can derive certain inference and conclusion for the organization and function of these institutions.

In old times there were seven main *sahis* (community) in Puri. Those were (1) *Balisahi*, (2) *Harachandi Sahi*, (3) *Markandeswar Sahi*, (4) *Gaudabada Sahi*, (5) *Matimandap Sahi*, (6) *Dolamandap Sahi* and (7) *Kundheibenta Sahi*. In each *sahi* there was an *Akhada*. The *Akhada* of a particular *sahi* was the only institution. Wrestling and Body building occupied the chief position in the *Akhada*. Various *Jagas* were attached to every *Akhada*. At that time four chiefs assuming the title of '*Sahinaik*' were being selected and they work under the guidance of '*Naik Sardar*'. All these persons were appointed by the *Gajapati Maharaja* of Puri. *Sahinaik* was the chief administrator of the concerned *Akhada*. In each *Akhada*, under the guardianship of the *Sahinaik*, various social problems, law and order situation, bilateral issues were resolved and literary, cultural aspects of the *sahi* were promoted. The inhabitants of those *sahis* were ethically the servitors of *Lord Jagannath*. The institutions were variously related to *Lord Jagannath* temple as these were the institutions of Servitors. In various festivals of *Lord Jagannath* i.e. *Ramanabami*, *Chandan Jatra*, *Dussehra*, *Mahabisubha Sankranti*, etc. each *sahi* used to demonstrate various cultural and physical activities and made it more attractive.

There were hundreds of families live in a *sahi*. As it was not possible on the part of an *Akhada* to extend its facilities to all of them there were many *Jagas* (Gymnasia) made affiliated with the *Akhadas*. The multi numbered *Jagas* concerned along with all youths and its member. Though there was no member fee for enrolment,

the new member had to conduct a function of '*Sinduralagi*'. Under that system '*Lord Mahabir*' was polished with *Sindur* and the fellow members were fed with '*Prasad*'. The new member meets all the expenditure incurred in this regard. All individual could be a member of different *Jagas*.

Now there is no basic difference between the *Akhadas* or *Jagas* or their organization and function. *Akhada* is the principal institution or the main organization of *sahi* but the *Jagas* are subsidiary institutions inaction under *Akhada*. The word '*Jaga*' has come from the Persian word '*Jagat*' which means place. Due to influence of prolonged Muslim rules the word '*Jagah*' has been used commonly and this might have resulted in forming '*Jagaghar*'. Rich people had patronized the *jagas* to offer pieces of land for the purpose. Therefore, many *jagas* are named after the name of their patrons like *Bhatta Jaga*, *Rahas Mahanty Jaga*, *Adangatiadi Jaga*, *Badu Mohapatra Jaga* etc.

There is a proverb regarding the utility of the *Jagas*, "*Sanga, Bhanga, Pangat, Ranga, Janga, Sangeeta*", reflects every aspect of the *Jagas*.

*Jagas* and *Akhadas* were established around the temple of *Lord Jagannath* to safeguard the temple and also the kingdom of *Kalinga Kesari*. It is said that Puri King Maharaja *Dibyasingh Dev* was not only a great patron of physical culture but also a wrestler. Exhibition bouts were conducted inside the palace and various *Akhadas* and outstanding wrestlers were honored.

It may be noticed that a number of *jagas* assume the title '*Gada*' like *Champa Gada*, *Malli Gada*, *Jui Gada*, *Jai Gada*, *Kadamba Gada* etc. in their names. Those were the institutions teaching various self defensive arts. It



proves the defensive attitude of *Jagas*. According to many old men, in order to get rid of the Muslim invasion Puri had various *surangas* (tunnel) connected with the *Jagannath* temple. Proper archaeological survey has not been made in this regard.

Above all, *Jagaghar* is just like a physical culture institution in which there is a gymnasium and lavatory. In each *jagaghara*, *Khela Jaga* (wrestling arena) and various trees, including coconut and mango are for double purpose. From children to old all, especially young men of a *sahi* were attached to their nearest *jaga*. They come to the *jaga* early in the morning, where they brush their teeth, take bath in *jaga* pond, offer prayer to *God Mahavir* and other Gods and Goddesses and then go to the *Jagannath* temple for their livelihood. Again, in afternoon, the members of the *jaga* come back soon after returning from their duties after taking their lunch. Here they massage oil among themselves and practise wrestling, body building, stick fighting and various physical activities. At that time the *jagaghar* is the abode of health promotion. After evening it plays role of recreation centre. Music and drama are being staged and played here. Basically songs of *Sri Jayadev* are sung by *jagapilas* in group. The *jagaghar* provides ample scope to the youth for mutual friendship and fraternity. This type of institution is rare excepting the '*Jubabasa of the Adibasis*'. Imitating the youths, those boys who come to the *jaga* usually take their bath, do perform various physical activities are call '*jagapila*'.

Although, the rest of India came under the sovereignty of the Muslim rule, Odisha maintained her independence till 1568 A.D. It

sustained the aggression of the rampart soldiers for a large span of time, which shows the efficiency of the military skill of Odisha by then. This tradition of military skill is still not dead after independence. Gradually, it became a tradition and attached with the supreme deity of the Odisha and Odias' *Lord Jagannath* in the shape of *Jagaghars*. Outside *Puri*, *Paika* culture stood caste basis but in Puri it stood in the shape of *Jagaghar* without any discrimination of caste and creed. It is not a matter of lesser glory.

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In most of the Odia devotional songs, we find the poets expressing a common complaint: God's indifference to their agonies. But these songs of complaint are a paean to the glory of God where they commend their souls to Him and rejoice in the ecstasy of surrender. Complaint and ecstasy are apparently incompatible things. To complain is to feel unhappy; to entertain grouse; to resent, whereas ecstasy is a feeling of great happiness; a moment of ineffable rapture. If the source of this rapture is spiritual, then, the person in a mystical communion with God enters into the realms of transcendental consciousness and bliss. This consciousness is contingent not only on one's love of God, but also on an act of surrender or *samarpan*. Loosely seen, an act of surrender is

an acknowledgement of defeat. Usually, one surrenders under duress, for instance, when he feels powerless before his opponent. But at times, an act of surrender is also an expression of love. In the case of a devotee, the act of surrender to God is voluntary; it is an act of love; a deliberate consecration of the soul where to surrender is to be free. The joy of being a captive of God is an experience of liberation.

When we read Odia devotional songs in order to find out actually *what* is the agony the poets are talking about, we find probably none of them pinpointing anything. But they suffer. And they are distressed. A look at the following extracts, taken from *Sri Jagannath Bhajan*,

## Complaint and Surrender in Odia Devotional Songs

Dr. Bibhudutt Dash



*Janana O Chautisa* (OGP 2010), would make us understand the nature of their complaint. Sarala Das writes, “*Mu patita mo guhari sravane akshama, Ajamila tharu mu ki atai adhama?* (You don't listen to my prayers, Lord. Am I more depraved than Ajamila?), and in another, there is a note of surrender: “*Mu tuma pada kinkar he Niladrinath, tumbha binu ashra kehi nahi mu arakhita*” (I surrender, Lord. Save me, save me, I pray). In Balarama Das, the prayer is intense: “*Deenabandhab he, mo dukha na gala je, tumbhe Deenabandhu mote pasorile mo bandhu hoiba kie?*” (Lord, I am suffering still. Whom shall I tell if you forget me?), and “*E bhabasagaru tariba nimante pathara*



*bandhichhi bhela, tumbhe na rakhila bhasi mu jauchhi rakha rakha Chakadola*” (I depend on you, Lord. Save me, save me. Only You can). In Jagannath Das, it is more of an impassioned prayer than complaint: “Namaste Prabhu Jagannath, Anatha lokankar nath” (Hail to thee, Lord, the Saviour of the helpless), and “Tu Brahma Rudra Bishnu tuhi, to binu anya gati nahi (You are the Holy Trinity, O Lord. There is no other way without You). In Achyutananda Das, we find the anguish similar to Balaram Das’s: “Deenabandhu! Mo dukha na gala je, Tumbhe Deenabandhu mo bandhu nohile mo bandhu hoiba ke” (I suffer, Lord. If You don’t help me, who else will?).

In Salabega’s songs, there is intense prayer born of unmitigated anguish: “*Ahe neela saila praballa matta barana, Mo arata nalini banaku kara dalana*” (O Lord, trample my miseries as an elephant tramples a lotus pond), and again in another song, “*Deenabandhu ho tumbhe dakile na suna kahinki, Krupasindhu ho tumbhe dakile na suna kahinki ?* (Why don’t You listen, Lord? Why?). This is complaint, for sure, but it is also an expression of deep faith in God. In the songs of Upendra Bhanja, the tone blends complaint and prayer: “*Ramaramana he! Tume para dayasindhu, Deena thare kimpa hrude anukampa heunahi Deenabandhu*” (O, Ocean of mercy, don’t you feel like helping me), “*Kala sreemukha he! Nagala mora dukha*” (I still suffer, Lord), and “*Bhasuchhi e bhaba duster arnab madhye mu hoi nirakha*” (I am floating helplessly in the sea of troubles, Lord). In Sadananda Kabisurya Brahma, the song makes tacit warning to God of the possible loss of His good name if He allows a devotee to suffer: “*Dasa jebe nasa jiba kshitire akirti heba, Keerati chandrare lagijiba kalanka.*”

In Abhimanyu Samanta Singhar, the tone is one of wonder: “*Sehi Prabhu nuhaki tumbhe?*

*Dukhi janaile dukha na suna ebe*” (I wonder if You are that Lord who is known for His boundless mercy). In Banamali Das, the complaint is similar to the ones mentioned earlier, “*Deenabandhu Daitari, dukha na gala mohari,*” and in Kantakavi Laxmikant Mahapatra, the tone is filled with pathos: “*Sabuthiru banchita kari keun jasa bana udaiba he?*” (Can You ever be happy by agonizing me, Lord?), and similar is the tone with Kalicharan Pattanayak, “*Nahi karidele kathata saranta kahinki pitanti matha*” (It would be better if You refuse to help me, Lord).

These examples demonstrate deep pain and desperation in the speakers, but in none of them the tone is vitriolic or profane. In everyone we find complaint combined with love for God. The question pertains to why do the poets complain, after all, if their complaints essentially sing the glory of God. Thus the etiology of their complaints suggests that the complaints do not ensue from ordinary dissatisfaction with quotidian existence, but from an urgency to mingle with God. This is because a true devotee of God would not usually pray for obtaining mundane pleasures or successes. These songs of complaint are in contrast, impassioned prayers for soteriological bliss, the joy that comes from *moksha* or integration into the Brahman. Insofar as complaints are concerned, it may not be gainsaid that the speakers’ complaints may not have been at all generated by commonplace concerns of material longing, that is, it might be quite likely that a gap between their expectations - mundane and/or spiritual - and God’s silence is the cause of their complaints. Since a devotee believes that God would surely listen to all his prayers, including the prayers for the fulfillment of ordinary demands of life, he is eager to expect God’s positive responses. In the event of this not happening so, doubt creeps in as to whether God really listens to our prayers or, even, whether God really exists.



The complaints are, however, multifaceted and complex in nature. At times, they point at the propriety of the divine order, as we find, for example, in the English poet G.M. Hopkins's poem "Thou Art Indeed Just, Lord," where the title of the poem questions the justness of God. The speaker's complaint pertains to the question, "Why do sinners' ways prosper?," and considering the fact that he himself is not a sinner, why is he allowed to languish in miseries and disappointment. His question is directed toward God since he believes God is behind the prosperity of sinners as much as He is behind his own miseries. This allegation seems to be decidedly profane. Again, in John Milton's poem "On His Blindness," we find the speaker's doubt as to the divine order, but to "prevent that murmur." Patience soon replies that they also serve Him "who only stand and wait." Patience, here personified, refers to conscience. However, the limits of our patience are too short to be appreciated by God.

The defining distinction between the prayers of common individuals and that of the lovers of God, or devotees is that the latter's entreaties are primarily non-materialistic, whereas the prayers of others are usually for the satisfaction of mundane pleasures. The extracts cited from Odia devotional songs give us examples of entreaties that manifest impassioned supplications for the attainment of salvation, and not for the end of earthly pains and vicissitudes. It is revealing to see that these songs of complaint are also songs of surrender. The built-in combination of sadness, sentimentality, love and resignation characterize the prayers where the simultaneity of different feelings baffles the reader with subtle antinomies. The nature of their anguish does not, however, direct the songs toward morbidity or blasphemy or bitterness, but they orientate the speakers toward the attainment of divine grace, which, to

the common eye, might seem as irreverent accusations against God's indifference. If at all they are accusations, they are occasioned by a deep sense of *abhimana*, or a state of being hurt by someone to whom one loves very much. It is an act of making the other feel that you *are* hurt. It is an ultimate gesture of love. This is what a devotee does toward God and this is what we see in the extracts cited where the sublimation of anguish or rancour into heightened states of joy is made possible by impassioned supplication subsisting on surrender.

The defining feature of a devotee's surrender is love, and not a pathetic crouching before an adversary out of fear. If one surrenders to God out of fear, it is better if he does not surrender at all. God's sublime majesty infuses into a devotee a feeling of love, a sense of security. Any thought of dread or fright is inimical to their relationship. But fear of God is considered to be desirable since an absence of it might corrupt devotion. As Alfred Tennyson writes in *In Memoriam*, "We mock thee when we do not fear" (97).

A close look at the extracts manifests a subtle chemistry of interdependence characterizing human-divine relationship. To put it simply, God also needs His devotee. Their relationship is built on the solid foundation of mutual love. This might seem odd since it is difficult to understand why, after all, God would need the devotee. Is the devotee His existential necessity? The answer is probably 'yes'. A devotee's moment of surrender is the most beatific moment of union of *nara* and *Narayana*. What a devotee wishes to have is *darshan*. Distinguishing between *Puja* and *Darshan*, John Bowker writes, "The ceremonial acts of worship are called *Puja*, but the engagement with God is *Darshan*" (87). We remember that exciting moment when Arjuna



surrenders before Krishna, being awed by His *Viswarupa*.

Most devotional songs end with a note of surrender. The songs from which extracts are taken give examples of this surrender. “Sarla Das *magae he Prabhu mukati*,” “Balaram Das *anna na magae magae charana renu*,” “*Kahae Jagannath Das, Kamala charanaku asa*,” or as Banamali Das writes, “*Rakha ba narakha mote sarana to pada tale*,” and as Salabega writes, “*Se je arata trana, kalagajaku singha prayena, chala chala pasiba sarana*.” It is nothing intriguing as to why do the songs end so. There may be a couple of plausible, though solid, reasons: (1) the speakers’ admission of guilt that they have erred, and (2) their realization that God is the ultimate source of bliss. They realize that *only* He can redeem. An awareness of this makes them surrender. While we wonder at the aberrations of the speakers and at the obfuscation of their intellect that led them to interrogate the divine order, we also exult at their act of surrender.

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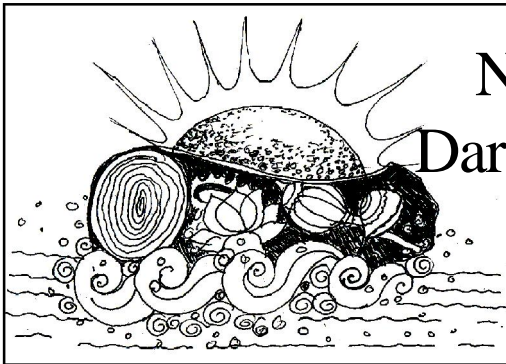




According to the *Skanda Purana*, Paramabrahma dispels all woes, and He Himself is the bestower of incessant bliss, He assumes a wooden form. Lord Brahma Himself has advised the Emperor Indradyumna – O’ Lion among Kings, never perceive Him as the wooden Image. Convince yourself that this Form has been sculpted by Parambrahma Himself. After paying his benediction to Lord Shree Jagannath he has implored: O’ Wishfulfilling one ! Thou art sportive. In order to let loose Thy sporting spree Thou have assumed this wooden form. All glory to Thee. Parambrahma Himself assuming this wooden Form is enthroned on the bejewelled throne (*Ratnasinghasana*) on the

followed by another lunar month of *Asadha* without being intervened with *samkranti* it is called as an intercalary or *malamasa* or *adhimasa* or *Purusottamamasa*. The occurrence of intercalary month depends upon the almanac position as per Hindu calendar.

The process of Nabakalebara comprises 12 steps. These are as such (1) Vanajaga Yatra (2) Identification of the divine logs (3) Construction of Sabarapalli (4) Traditional Vedic rituals and sacred fire sacrifice (5) Cutting and shaping of divine tree (6) Journey of the divine Log to Shreekshetra (7) Construction of Karusala, Nyasa Mandap, Adhibasa Mandap,



## Nabakalebara Rituals of Darubrahma Shree Jagannath

Dr. Bhaskar Mishra  
Susanta Kumar Dash

Nilagiri and gets involved in many sportive prank like that of human being. Bequeathing the old body for a new one is perhaps His supreme sport in the divine scheme of thing. In accordance with *Srimad Bhagabat Geeta* human being discards old clothes and puts on newer ones, likewise the soul also sheds off the old body for a new one.

Nabakalebara festival is an integral part of Jagannath consciousness. The word Nabakalebara means new body. This term has actually been derived from Sanskrit language. This ceremony usually takes place once in 8 to 19 years depending on the Hindu almanac. The deities change Their bodies in the intercalary *asadha* month. When one lunar month of *Asadha* ( month of Hindu calendar corresponding to June/July) is

log room etc. (8) Construction of New idols (9) Brahmotsav Leela (10) Golakh Leela (11) Burial of old deities (Patali) (12) Completion of wooden images (Saptavaran) and Navajauban (appearance of new deities before devotees).

About the rituals of Nabakalebara mentions have been made in unpublished palmleaf manuscripts i.e. (1) “*Pratistha Pradeep*” written by Narasingha Bajpayee and (2) *Indranilamani Purana*. However primary information about Nabakalebara has been given in the “*Madala Panji*”. It is learnt from the Madala Panji that renewal of wooden images (Nabakalebara) was done through Banayaga rituals during the dynasty of king Jajati. Further it is learnt from *Madala Panji*, *Chakadapothi*, *Chayani*, *chakada* etc.



that Nabakalebar took place during the reign of king Ramachandra Dev-I in the year 1575. Information collected from different books vouchsafe that Nabakalebara was held in the year 1714, 1730, 1749, 1768, 1790, 1809, 1828, 1836, 1855, 1874, 1893, 1912, 1931, 1950, 1969, 1977, 1996. The grand occasion of Nabakalebara Rath Yatra is going to be celebrated in the month of July, 2015 (18<sup>th</sup> July). Usually the Nabakalebara of Darubrahma Purusottama Shree Jagannath is being performed in the Purusottama month itself. This Purusottama month is also called an intercalary (Malamasa) month.

As per tradition, Nabakalebar rituals are of two types.

One is keeping the idols intact. No physical change in the wooden image is given effect. Minor repair, if necessary, of the idol is taken up and Saptabaran of the old deities is performed. The other type is collection of divine log, construction of idols, fire sacrifice, change of life substance, performing Saptabaran, performing secret rituals and bringing the wood image into final shape.

The first step of Nabakalebar is Banayaga Yatra. As mentioned in the centuries old scriptures on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of *Chaitra sukla paksha dasami* (10th day of bright fortnight of Chaitra) just after the *Madhyahna dhupa* (mid-day Puja) Pati Mohapatra Sevaka climbs the bejewelled platform and obtains four divine garlands (as token of Lord's permission) from the deities. Out of four divine garlands he hands over three to the concerned Badagrahi (Chief Custodian) Daita Sevakas (of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra) and retains one i.e. the garland of Lord Sudarsana with him as he is the Badagrahi of Lord Sudarsan. He with the said divine garland comes to the Anabasar Pindi situated in front of Kalahata Dwar. The

Bhittarchha Mohapatra, one of the important servitors of Temple, ties silk (Khandua) saree on the fore head of each Badagrahi Daita and Pati Mohapatra to whom the divine garland was given. Rest of the Daitas are being given silk sarees of 4/6 yard long. The other servitors viz. Deulakaran, Tadhaukaran, Behera Khuntia are given Khandua Sarees and similarly the Lenka, Biswakarma Maharana are given cotton Saree.

Banajaga Yatra consists of several groups of servitors such as Daitapati, Pati Mohapatra, Lenka, Biswakarma, Deulakaran, Tadhaukaran, Srotriya Brahmins etc. These servitors come in a sacred procession to the Sri Nahar (King's palace). The king's palace is situated on the Badadanda (grand road) in front of the Temple Office. Here Rajaguru on behalf of Gajapati Maharaj hands over consecrated betel nuts etc. to Biswavasud and Vidyapati. It is to be mentioned here that a Daitapati servitor is nominated as Biswavasud for the said purpose. This large group of servitors (Banajaga Yatri) on the same day go to Jagannath Ballav Math which is half a kilometer away from the Palace. They stay for a day and half in the Jagannath Ballav Math and proceed towards Deuli Math, Kakatapur on foot. They have to cover a distance of around 50 Km (Puri – Kakatapur) on bare foot. The Lenka Sevak holds the Sudarsana Chakra made of silver and leads the procession. Bullock carts loaded with Puja materials and other cooking materials accompany the Banajaga Party. The Deulakaran Sevak is usually kept in charge of the said material and bullock cart. After reaching Deuli Math, the Deulakaran Sevak writes a letter to the Trust Board of Maa Mangala Temple for seeking permission for necessary *majana* of the Deity. The servitors of Maa Mangal Temple and members of the Trust Board come to Deuli Math and cordially invite the Banajaga party to the temple. It is believed that after performing special *puja* and chanting



“Swapnabati Mantra” Goddess Mangala appears in the dream of Daitas and Pati Mohapatra and reveals the location of *daru* (holy neem tree). The servitors in the *banajaga* Party lead an austere way of life. From locating the holy *neem* tree to bringing the same (divine log) to Koilibaikuntha of Shree Mandir in newly constructed four-wheeled wooden carts is the duty and responsibility of the Daitapatis.

The identification of four holy Neem trees is done on the basis of certain specification ( Daru characteristics). The holy tree should have the symbols of conch, wheel, lotus, gada (mace) and there must not be nests of birds on the trees and the trees must be located in the vicinity of a river or watermass or a crematory ground. There may be a temple or a monastery or hermitage nearby. The holy tree should also be surrounded by *Sahada* and *Baruna* tree.

Although the Badagrahi Daitapati, Dalpati, Upa Dalapati, Bidyapati Biswabasu, Deulakaran, Tadhau Karan, Lenka Sevak play significant role in the different processes of *Bahirbanajaga*, the Srotريا Brahmins, Acharya, Rajguru and Deula Purohita also play equally important roles near the holy tree. They conduct secret rituals, *pujas* and perform sacred fire, *ankuraropan* etc.

As per tradition the holy log of Lord Sudarshan, Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath are transported serially to Koilibaikuntha through the Northern Gate of Shree Jagannath Temple.

It is not out of place to mention here that the image of Lord Madhav also gets constructed alongwith the principal images of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Sudarsana out of the holy neem wood collected by Banajaga Party. Besides this the side deities of three chariots along with the idols of horses, charioteers, parrots etc. are being carved out

from the *neem* wood that have been supplied by the Divisional Forest Officer ( DFO), Nayagarh and Khurda.

For the performance of Antahjaga, (inner sacrifice) some mandaps (platform) viz., Nirman Mandap, Yajna Mandap, Nrusingh Mandap, Nyasa Mandap, Snana Mandap, Ankuraropan Griha and for four number of Daru Gruhas (rooms where the holy logs are kept) are constructed by the Temple Administration.

Construction of wooden images of the deities at Koili Baikuntha commences after Snana Yatra (Jestha Purnima). Biswakarma Maharana servitors are engaged for the construction of five wooden images (Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra, Lord Sudarsana and Lord Madhava) under the close guidance of Daitapatis. During the construction of new wooden images the Biswakarma servitors wrap their feet with new white clothes. They eat only *mahaprasad* and lead an austere way of life during the said period. Before the start of construction of wooden images, four numbers of round shaped stone pedestals are kept ready on the Nirman mandap. After completion of the wooden images the deities (Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Sudarshan) are placed on the said stone pedestal.

The carving of deities are done within 11 days. Ten numbers of traditional carpenters are engaged for the said purpose. The work is done secretly. Except Daitapatis and Tadhau Karan servitors no one is allowed to access the spot where the carpenters are at work. As this is a secret work, the Nirman Mandap is covered with tarpaulin, new clothes and partition made up of palm leaf so that nobody can see the making of idols.

It has been described in “*The Skanda Puran*” that secrecy of construction of the deities must not be leaked out. Hence carving of idols is



done in an extremely secret manner. It is well designed that there should be continuous beating of gongs and percussion and singing of religious songs/*bhajans* so as to make the place quite auspicious and the sound of carving of idols will not be heard outside. The atmosphere near Koilibaikuntha gets soaked in religious fervour.

Construction of Nyasadaru, worship of Nrusingh etc. are done simultaneously along with the carving of idols. During Nabakalebar Nrusingh is Yajnadhipati. A Srotriya Brahmin who is proficient in Vedic and *karmakanda* rituals is nominated as Acharya. Deula Purohita and other Srotriya Brahmins perform sacred fire and Vedic rituals. No one except the specified Acharya, Brahmins, Biswakarmas, Daitas, Tadhaukaran, Deula Karan is allowed to access the said place. At the time of consecration of Nyasadaru and worship of Nrusingh *slokas* and *mantras* are uttered by Brahmins and Acharyas. Nrusingh-Mantraraj (Anustup Mantra), Pattal Nrusingha *mantra* and the Bija Mantra of principal deities are the main *mantras* uttered for offering Ahutis.

*Chandi Patha* in the temples of Goddesses such as Sitala, Alamchandi, Bhubaneswari, Dakhina Kali, *Rudrabhiseka* in the ancient Mahadev temples at Puri, *Vishnusahasra Nama* at Jagamohan are done simultaneously alongwith offering of *Ahuti* to Gods and Goddesses inside the Yajnasala.

After completion of sacred fire and consecration of Nyasadaru the newly carved out deities are placed on the Nirman Mandap under the guidance of Badagrahi Daita and Pati Mohapatra.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> day of dark fortnight of the month of Asadha in late night hours the life substance (Brahma) from the old idols are removed and transferred to the new idols. Only the Pati Mohapatra and the Badagrahi Daitas remain present at the time of transfer of life

substance. After transfer of life substance the Daitas first touch the new idols and offer gold and silver ornaments and cash to the deities as a token of *Brahma darshan pranami*.

The old deities are buried at a particular place in Koili Baikuntha. A pit (mahagartta) having certain size (20' x 15' x 12') is dug and a used silk saree of the deities is laid on the surface of the pit. The old deities are buried in the said pit. This is known as *patali*. The entire process is popularly known as *Golak Bishram* of Shree Jagannath Mahaprabhu. Thereafter Saptabaran rituals of the new idols are performed confidentially by the Daita and Pati Mohapatra. The Daitapatis observe obsequies as they are treated as family members of Lord Shree Jagannath. The period ranging from the day after Snana Purnima till the day before Nabajauban Darshan is called as *Maha Anabasar* (45 days). During this period many secret rituals are performed inside the *Anabasar griha* or sequestered place. On the forty seventh day that is on Ashadha Shukla Dutiya (second day of bright fortnight of Ashadha) Nabakalebara Rath Yatra takes place.

Nabakalabara of Mahaprabhu involves vast and complex processes. Nowhere in the world this type of sporting spree of Mahaprabhu is seen. Nabakalebara Rath Yatra is one of the country's most incredible spectacles as well as one of the most popular festivities.

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**D**evi Subhadra is popularly known as the sister of Lord Krishna and Balaram. In Purans somewhere She is shown as the daughter of Yosada, the wife of Nanda (Yosada Garbha Sambhuta), somewhere as the Daughter of Rohini, the mother of Lord Balaram and the other wife of Basudev (Rohini Garbha Sarnbhuta) and somewhere She is also shown as the daughter of Debaki, the mother of Lord Krishna and the wife of Yadav Basudev (Debaki Garbha Sambhuta). However the essence and the concept in all those versions are one and the same as everywhere She has been shown as the sister of Lord Balaram and Lord Krishna. Legends say that Yadavas celebrated a festival at Raibat Bana attended by prominent leaders like Balaram,

Ugrasena, Pradyumna, Udhab, Srikrishna. Satyaki and many others. Arjuna during his one year's pilgrimage after visiting various holy places, came at last to Pravas Tirtha in the planes of the western mountains. He met Yadav leader "Gada" there who described him the unique beauty of Subhadra. The description evoked in him the desire to get and marry Her for which purpose he assumed a form of Sanyasi (monk) and sitting under a tree thought about Lord Srikrishna Who understood the fact while lying on the bed with Satyabhama. Immediately he began to laugh. Asked for the reason for laughing thus Lord Krishna narrated about the thoughts of Arjuna to Satyabhama. He then went to Arjuna and questioned him about the reason of his pilgrimage.



## Devi Subhadra

*Balakrushna Dash*

Arjuna explained the circumstances of it. They then went to Raibata where Yadavas were celebrating the festival. There Arjuna saw Subhadra. The sight of Subhadra among others evoked uncontrollable love in Arjuna who asked Krishna secretly about the means for him to marry Subhadra. Krishna answered him, the only way out was to abduct Subhadra as abduction is also ordained for Kshatriyas. Arjuna immediately sent word about the matter through emissaries to Indraprastha. After the festival of Raibata was over, Subhadra returned to Dwarka. As for Arjuna, he sat on a rock in the forest thinking about Subhadra when Yadav heroes like Balaram, Sarana, Samba, Pradyumna, Gada and others



came that way by chance. They saluted Arjun who disguised in the form of a Sanyasi and others arranged for stay of the Sanyasi who pretended to spend Chaturmasya (4 months of rainy season) there. He was to be fed and nourished by Subhadra. Arjuna in the form of a Sanyasi was overwhelmed with joy. As days passed on thus, Arjuna geared more and more sick with love. Subhadra felt unbounded affection also in the young Sanyasi. She heard from him many stories about the valiant Pandavas and especially about Arjuna. When he disclosed Her that he, the fake Sanyasi was really Arjuna who is living there without the knowledge of his mother and brothers, Subhadra bent down Her head in shyness. Subhadra's marriage was decided to be held on the twelfth day from that date. Balaram, Udhava, Akrura, all of them short-tempered, were not informed about the decision. Krishna was taking the lead in making preparations for the wedding. In fact most of the Yadav -chiefs wanted Subhadra to be wedded to Duryodhana, disciple of Balaram and against their desire Subhadra and Arjuna together drove themselves away on a chariot through lines of people and this created a stir among the Yadav heroes. But Krishna pacified them all. Arjuna came to Indraprastha with Subhadra disguised as a Gopi. Latter on the wedding of Subhadra with Arjuna was duly celebrated. Many costly things by way of Subhadra's dowry were duly sent from Dwaraka to Indraprastha. (Puranic Encyclopedia).

Thus Subhadra has been assigned the lawful position of a wife to Arjuna the valiant Pandav of Mahabharat Yuga (i.e Dwapara Yuga).

However with the end of Dwapara Yuga Lord Balaram and Lord Krishna left the world for Their heavenly abode. As per Skanda Puran king Indradyumna of Malava came to know about

the Great God Neel Madhab, the other shape of Srikrishna in Kali Yuga from Vidyapati, one of his Brahmin Ministers who was sent to Udradesa (Odisha). Informed by Vidyapati when Indrayumna reached and searched for the Lord he could not able to get the trace of Him but heard a voice from the heaven to perform Yajona at the sea-shore to get the sacred tree having four branches known as "Daru Brahma", out of which, he would get Lord Neelamadhab in the shapes of Balabhadra, Subhadra, Jagannath and Sudarsan and to worship Them constructing a temple at Neelachala. As such we see Srikrishna as Lord Jagannath, Lord Balaram as Lord Balabhadra, sister Subhadra as Devi Subhadra and disc (Chakra) as Lord Sudarsan on the Ratna Singhasan.

In the views of prominent historians like H. Kulke, A. Estefan, G.C. Tripathy and many others Neelamadhab became Jagannath and was worshipped originally alone. Devi Subhadra was subsequent addition upon the resurgence of Shaktism. At some point of time the figure of Lord Balabhadra and Sudarsan were so added to satisfy Saivas and Sauras to the existing couple Lord Jagannath and Devi Subhadra .This could have taken place once the process Krishnalization was well advanced and the political importance of the cult after Chodagangadev, only under a special royal impact. (The cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition).

Therefore we see Devi Subhadra is seated in between Lord Jagannath and Balabhadra at Sriksheetra, Puri who have been taken as Balaram and Srikrishna of Dwapara Yuga and worshipped as such. Here Devi Subhadra is assigned the position of a loving sister of Balaram and Srikrishna of Dwapara by some of Vaishnavite devotees. This concept is also confirmed from the following Sanskrit version :-



“Niladrau Sankhamadhye Satadala Kamale Ratna  
Singhasan-stham,  
Sarbalankarjuktam Nabaghana Ruchiram  
Samsthitamchagrajena,  
Bhadraya Bamabhage Ratha Charan Jutam,  
Brahma Rudrendram Bandyam,  
Bedanam Saramisham Sujana Paribruttam,  
Brahmamaru Smarami.”

But many of the devotees take Her as the Parashakti, Sahalipta Shakti, Jogamaya, Kampilya Vasini, Ekanansa, Bhubaneswari, Mahalaxmi and many other forms of the Supreme power of the World. She is worshipped in Bhubaneswari Mantra (Hrirm) which denotes that She is virtually the lipta (Gyana) shakti of the Lord of the Universe Sri Jagannath who mingled with Him but shifted aside taking a separate shape.

Moreover nowhere in the world the sister remains always with his brothers as in the case of Devi Subhadra at Srikshetra, Puri. Wife and husband use to stay under one roof with that conception Devi Subhadra’s presence with Lord of the Universe connotes that She is the supreme Goddess (Power) of the world Who cannot bear separation of Parambrahma (Daru Brahrna) for a moment and therefore seated with Him on the Ratnabedi. This is confirmed from the following Sanskrit versions :-

“Nanalankar Ruchiram”  
Nana - Kalush Nashanam,  
Tayormadhye sthitam Bhadram  
Subhadram Kunkumarunam,  
Sarba Labanya Basatim  
Sarbadewa Namaskrutam.

Laxmi Laxmisha Hrudayam  
Pankajastha prithaksthitam,  
Barabja Dharini Devim  
Divya Nephathya- Bhusanam,  
Prapanna Kalpalatikam  
Sarba kalusha Nashinim”.

(Skanda Purana Ch-5 /Version ,60,61 & 62.)

Or

Subhadra Charubadana  
Barbjabhaya Dharini,  
Laxmi Pradurbhabeayam  
Sarba Chaitanya (Jnana) Rupinim”.

(Skanda Purana)

Thus we see Devi Subhadra on the Ratnabedi not as the loving sister of Lord Balaram and Krishna but as *para-shakti* (Supreme power) Jogamaya Mahalaxmi along with Jiva-Brahma Balabhadra and Parambrahma Sri Jagannath with disc Sudarsan. Therefore virtually Lord Jagannath and Balabhadra are not the same Krishna and Balaram of Dwapara Yuga; They are the *paramatma* (Param Brahma) and *jibatma* (Jiva Brahma) conjoined with *parashakti* or Lipta (Gyana) Shakti of the Brahma known as Devi - Subhadra.

Unique and enigmatic, are the images of Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarsan without any parallel in any Hindu shrine. They are not built according to the injunctions in the Silpa Sastras. In fact, there is no foundation in traditional scriptures for the construction of the images of Gods and Goddesses in wood and thus, the four fold images of Daru Brahma stand apart from all the other icons in the temples situated in the campus of the great temple. They are all of traditional type, by and large; human in form and built according to the scriptural descriptions and injunctions and yet this strange.” Chaturddha Murti or four-fold, Daru Brahma is the centre of the Jagannath Cult that has dominated Odishan life, art and culture and in the sense, it synthesizes all the major cults of India.

Jay Jagannath.

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The 12 signs of the Western Zodiac coincide exactly with the 12 signs of the Indian Zodiac, mentioned in the Rigveda. It is quite likely that the names of the 12 zodiac constellations were of Vedic origin. The zodiac is divided into 12 Rashies and sub-divided into 27 stars (Nakshatra). Every Rashi and Nakshatra has its own characteristics. Even God has zodiac signs (Cosmic Vistas- Biman Basu).

Astrology was the most cherished of Vedic sciences, called “the eye of the Veda”. Because it was the foundation for the timing of rituals around which Vedic culture was based.

There was a system of 27 lunar constellations and 12 solar signs. The Taittiriya Brahmana states that "the Nakshatras are the houses of the Gods." The Gods are identified with the constellations (Gods, Sages and Kings- David Frawley).

and treatment”- says Dr. Manoj Das, an eminent writer.

The Lord even discards His old body and appears in a new one. As a man discarding worn-out clothes takes other new ones, likewise the embodied soul, casting off worn-out bodies enters into others which are new (Bhagavadgita, 2-22).

Lord Jagannath, the Lord of the Universe, Who is dispenser of the destiny of the Universe, is interested in knowing almost every day, what the stars foretell about Him. The Rashis and Nakshatras of Lord Jagannath and His elder brother and younger sister are as follows:

Deity	Rashi	Nakshatra
Lord Balabhadra	Makara (Capricorn)	Sravana (Altair)
Lord Jagannath	Brusha (Taurus)	Rohini (Aldebaran)
Devi Subhadra	Bichha (Scorpio)	Jyestha (Antares)

## The Zodiac Signs of Lord Jagannath

Mahimohan Tripathy

The solar year is divided into 12 lunar months, based on the daily movement of the moon, through the 27 constellations. To account for the resulting discrepancies between the solar and lunar years, a leap month is added every few years. When the month of Ashadha happens to be an intercalary month (two months of Ashadha) the Navakalebara ceremony takes place in the Shri Jagannath Temple at Puri. The old images of the deities- Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshan and Neelamadhava are replaced by new images, observing elaborate rituals.

“Many of the paraphernalia and rituals amidst which Sri Jagannath dwells are human. He even suffers from fever, undergoes diet control

In the Puri Shri Jagannath Temple, there are 119 categories of Sevaks (servitors). The Sevaks perform *seva* (ritual services), including ‘Jyotisha Seva’ (Astrological service). At the time of ‘Abakasha’ in the morning, the Astrologer-servitor of the temple standing in the sanctum-sanctorum informs before the deities the ‘tithi’ and other astrological details of the day. Besides the temple Astrologer has other functions. On the day of the Rashi Nakshatra of any of the three deities, a special ritual is performed in the temple which includes “bandapana” (obeisance) to the deities.

Mahimohan Tripathy, M-A/12, Brit Colony, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-12.





The origin of Jagannath and his cult is always a matter of controversy. There are a large number of mythological stories and legends relating to the establishment of the temple of Lord Jagannath at Puri and the installation of the deities therein. But there are no definiteness, validity and reliability in these Puranic stories and poems. But from some legendary account, we may go back to the date of the King Indradyumna of Birata dynasty. He was directed by Jagannath in a dream to build a temple for Him on the Nilasundara mount or Nilagiri hill. He went on searching, but could not find Jagannath on the hill and the king worshipped Shivamarkandeswara because at that time Puri was already a centre of Tantric-Saivite worship. Markandeswara,



through certain phases. According to the Madala Panji, the Temple Chronicle, the original temple was rebuilt by Yayati Keshari in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century. A D. The history says that Chodaganga Deva,

## The First Historical Account of Navakalebara and Abhinav Indradyumna

*Dr. Janmejy Choudhury*

pleased with the Puja, directed him to meet tribal leader Jara. Indradyumna met Jarasabara and through their joint efforts found a piece of Daru or log of wood floating in the *Rohini Kunda*, which is said to be the remnant of unburnt body of Krishna. From this wood the sacred images of Jagannath, Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra were carved out and placed on the Ratna Simhasan in the Grand temple at Puri. As the structure is made of wood, after few years it gets spoiled and thus the old images are changed by new ones. Since then Navakalevara has been taking place at certain intervals of time and ceremony takes place

the founder of Ganga Dynasty reconstructed the existing temple in about 1135 AD, but the work was completed by Anangabhima Deva towards the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century AD. It is not definite when the Navakalevara ceremony was introduced for first time.

There are two types of Navakalevara. The first one is the construction of new icons in which the sacred Brahma- the inhering spirit is changed and other is 'Srianga Phita' which means renovation of the images. Navakalevara is the periodical renewal of the wooden images of



Sudarshana, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Jagannath. It is the most unique festival in the Hindu religion which involves the replacement of four worshippable images with the new ones and old images are buried underground. The icons are renewed at an interval of twelve years. (Though it is roughly calculated as twelve years, the twin Ashadhas have not so far fallen exactly in twelve years. Sometimes it falls in eight years, sometimes in eleven years, nineteen years and twenty seven years) Navakalevara has been celebrated in the years in which two Ashadhas fall. (Normally, Ashadha according to Hindu calendar falls approximately around June-July. But depending on the Hindu leap year calculation, an extra month is added, in order to adjust the short fall. Therefore, at times we get an extra month. When such a month comes, normally Lord Jagannath's Navakalevara is being celebrated). This is known as Adhimasa, Malamasa, Purushottamamasa or intercalary month. In this intercalary month, no auspicious rites and rituals are performed. But the wooden images are replaced by new images in the Navakalevara ceremony. This ceremony has been performed in the years 1593, 1608, 1625, 1646, 1665, 1684, 1698, 1714, 1730, 1749, 1768, 1790, 1809, 1828, 1855, 1863, 1874, 1893, 1912, 1931, 1950, 1969, 1977 and 1996.

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 Ashadha months conjoin in a year. Accordingly, the Navakalevara festivals were celebrated in the past which fell only at an interval of nineteen years. The ceremony Navakalevara, the periodical renewal of the wooden images of the Deities in the temple of Jagannath is a unique ceremony in many respects in the Hindu religious worship. The ceremony falls

after a gap of 7,12, or 19 years depending upon occurrence of Second Ashadha month.<sup>1</sup> How old is the festival ? The research has not yet been able to point out the probable date or period of the origin of this unique festival. Sri G.C. Tripathy, in his illuminating article 'Navakalevara' observes : 'if the above presumption is correct and historical facts as well as the literary evidence make it seem very probable, it would mean that though the rite of Navakalevara itself may well have existed at all times, envisaged to be performed as and when the necessity to renew the images was felt, its celebration at the regular intervals of 11 (or 19 years) has been introduced after the reinstallation of Jagannath figures in 1590 A.D.'<sup>2</sup> It is however improbable that the ceremony was performed at regular intervals during the period of 160 years (from 1590 A.D to the establishment of Maratha rule in Odisha) when the temple was subjected to brutal and atrocious attack invaders.<sup>3</sup> L.S.S.O.Malley in his Gazetteer Puri, writes that the ceremony was not performed in 1893, though Jodaah Ashadha month fell in that year.<sup>4</sup> 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 Navakalevara. Malley further writes that, "popular belief is that the festival depends upon the durability of the wood of which the images are made. It therefore appears that festival has become a part and parcel of Jagannath cult since 1590 AD., its continuity has been maintained unless the impediments were too high to overcome.

Odisha had passed through recurring periods of religious depression on account of brutal and ruthless raids on the temple and the Deities by the Hindu as well as Mohammedan



Governors of Mughals and then, successor Nawabs of Bengal. The festival of Navakalevara in those critical periods of her history had succeeded in keeping alive the devotion of their people towards their Lord and “had made them well prepared for any new sacrilege on the temple and in their devotional feelings towards Him”. If the cult has survived till today, it is on account of deepest reverence and unflinching faith of her people through Navakalevara and other periodic and regular religious festivals of the temple.

In the past, so many invasions from outside have caused great damages to the temple, its deities, its treasury, its arts and architecture. Due to these unfortunate incidents the images of the deities have been shifted and brought back for security and sanctity on several occasions. According to the historical evidence, in 1509 AD the invasion by *Ismail Gari*, the Commander of Bengal Sultan resulted in shifting of the images from the temple, which were kept hidden in Chadhei Guha hill inside Chilika and then brought back for reinstallation. Several times, the images were, either burnt or thrown to water by the invaders. The most unfortunate incident occurred when Kalapahada, caused irreparable loss to all aspects of this world famous shrine. It is said that Kalapahada was a Hindu Brahmin and married a Muslim girl as a result of which he was ostracized from the Hindu Society. Subsequently, he repented, but was not allowed to re-enter into the Hindu fold by the religious leaders. He was therefore disappointed and took a vow to destroy and denigrate the Hindu temples, deities and the religion itself. As the Commander of the Bengal Sultan he invaded Odisha in 1590 AD and demolished the temples and images of the deities. He also attacked the Grand Temple, Puri and out of bitterest vengeance took away the images of Jagannath and Balabhadra and burnt. According

to Madala Panji, while Kalpahada was burning the images, his own body started bursting to pieces. As the wise men observed - all this due to disdaining the Lord Jagannath. His son threw the half-burnt images to the river Ganga. At the nick of the time Bisar Mahanty who was desperately pursuing the Muslim army carrying the deities, could salvage the images, particularly the inner cores called Brahmas and concealed the same inside his drum. He brought the ‘Brahma’ to Kujanga Garh and kept them in the house of a Khandayat. It is aptly mentioned by Krupasindhu Mishra (Utkal Itihas, p.163) that Kujang Raja made the images of the deities and preserved Brahma inside. The history has also reported that the images of Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra were reinstalled by Sri Ramachandra Deva of Bhoi Dynasty in 1575. This is said to have been the first historical account of Navakalevara which was held in the month of Ashadha. Most probably since then it has been the tradition to celebrate Navakalevara in the particular year having two Ashadha. Sri Ramachandra Deva started the Car Festival after eight years and is given the national honour as “Abhinav Indradyumna” or the “Duti Indradyumna” or the second Indradyumna.<sup>5</sup>

The years of accession of Ramachandra Deva has been ascertained from evidence gathered from four inscriptions. These are Baripada Museum stone Inscriptions, two Srijang stone inscription and Kasiari inscriptions. All these inscriptions of the reign of Ramachandra Deva found in remote regions of Odisha like Mayurbhanja, Balasore and Midnapore have fixed the date of occasion as 1567-68 A.D. It is mentioned in the Madala Panji that there was confusion in the country from 1568 to 1580 AD. According to Stirling, there was twenty one years of anarchy and interregnum at the expiry of which the ministers and the influential men of the country “beginning to recovery from their depression and



assembled together to consult about the affairs of the nation.” R.D. Banerji also states that for twenty years i.e., from 1568 to 1592 there was anarchy in Odisha. But, as has been described above, Ramachandra Deva came to the throne in 1568 AD. All the four inscriptions are unanimous in calculating the reign of Ramachandra Deva from 1567-68 A.D.<sup>6</sup>

Ramachandra Deva I occupied the throne at a time when the Mughals were fighting with the Afghans for the conquest of Odisha. Odisha was annexed to the Mughal empire in the year 1576 AD, when Sultan Daud, son of Sulaiman Karrani, was defeated and killed in the battle of Rajmahal. But it took long to put down Afghan opposition in Odisha. Qutlu Khan Lohani, formerly a leading officer of Daud and now Afghan ruler of north Odisha, even occupied new places and drove away Mughal Faujadars. When this news reached the Mughal Court, Akbar decided to send one of his ablest generals to Odisha to settle the matter. His choice fell on Raja Mansingh, son of Raja Bhagwan Das of Ambar, who was known also as Mira Raja.<sup>7</sup> Mansingh now started to settle the matter with the Afghans. At this time Mansingh proposed to go on pilgrimage to Puri. Madala Panji states that Raja Mansingh went to Puri being accompanied both by Ramachandra Deva I of Khurda and Telenga Ramachandra Deva. It was a time when Chandan Yatra was celebrated. The priests of Jagannath asked Mansingh whom they should offer Khadiprasada. Mansingh looked towards them and asked to bring it to him. In the presence of goddess Bimalai Mansingh offered Khadiprasada to Ramachandra Deva-I of Khurda and recognized him as the king of Odisha.<sup>8</sup> Raja Ramachandra Deva I of Khurda was assigned the principality of Khurda with Purushottama Chatter or Puri and certain Mahals (which comprised seventy three forts) free of tributes as Zamindari tenure. He was conferred

the title of Maharaja and the Mussalman dignity of the commandership of 3500. It was also settled that he would pay revenue to the imperial treasury instead of paying it to the Afghans. He was also allowed to exercise sovereignty over and to collect tribute from one hundred twenty nine Killas or jurisdictions of the Khattris of Odisha, including all the present Cuttack tributary Mahals south of Mahanadi, and the estates of Ghumsar, Mohuri reaching as far as the borders of Khimedy in Ganjam.<sup>9</sup>

Shortly after Ramachandra Deva-I coming to power, he appointed Sri Vardhan Mahapatra, a great Smriti writer, as his Rajaguru. This must have undoubtedly brought him support of the influential Rajaguru family and thereby strengthened his hold in the land considerably.<sup>10</sup> He seems to have been devoted his attention to the maintenance of peace and order in the kingdom. On assumption of power, Ramachandra Deva lost no time to install the idols of Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra in the celebrated temple of Jagannath at Puri. It is stated that Ramachandra Deva saw in a dream of someone urging him to bring the holy relic or Brahma Sarira from Kujang. He then sent one of his officials; Bada Padmnanabha Pattanaik, to bring back the same. Then the idols were chiseled and later on consecrated in Khurda after the performance of necessary worship. These were subsequently installed on the jewel-throne of the Jagannath temple. This memorable event is said to have taken place on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1575 A.D.<sup>11</sup> He is stated also to have reinstated the sanctity of the rice offering of the Mahaprasada which had been stopped for about a decade. He himself was present on this occasion near the Jaya Vijaya gate of the temple. He then distributed the Mahaprasada to the leading persons of different sections of the Hindu society. For this noble work Ramachandra Deva was called Dutiya Indradyumna.<sup>12</sup> The title of Nabina Indradyumna



was also conferred on him.<sup>13</sup> In a Sanskrit drama attributed to him, Ramachandra Deva I takes pride in calling himself Abhinava Indradyumna.<sup>14</sup> Further, he has been eulogized as Nava Indradyumna by a renowned Sanskrit poet, Haladhara Mishra, who lived in his reign.<sup>15</sup> Ramachandra Deva I, according to the inscriptions, ruled up to 1607 A.D. During his reign Navakalevara was held two times- in 1575 and 1590.

The temple chronicle reports that Ramachandra Deva I reestablished the Jagannath cult during his 11<sup>th</sup> *anka*, i.e., during his 9<sup>th</sup> regnal year 1588/89 A.D. This version of Madala Panji includes also the interesting supplementary account that Ramachandra Deva had the images first renewed in his own capital Khurda during his 9<sup>th</sup> *anka*-1586/87 A.D. According to this account he transferred them only two years later to Puri and reestablished them in the Grand temple. During this ceremony he was honored as the “Second Indradyumna”, named after the legendary founder of the cult.<sup>16</sup>

Due to his historical and legendary achievements Ramachandra Deva and successors were acknowledged throughout Odisha as the new Gajapatis. This fact found its expression in the reckoning of the regnal *anka* years of the Khurda Rajas in Odisha, even outside the territory of Khurda proper.<sup>17</sup>

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1. The Second Ashadha is an extra month which is added to the lunar calendar after every 12 months and 16 days in order to make up the deficiency of a lunar month (29.9 days) as against a solar month of 30.44 days) i.e., of 0.9 days of every month.
2. Eschmann, Anncharlott, Kulke Hermann and Tripathy Gaya (ed), The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa. South Asia Interdisciplinary Regional Research Programme, Odisha Research Project, New Delhi 1978, P.230

3. Madala Panji (Prachi Edition) p.63
4. It was celebrated in 1853, in 1877 and in 1912. It was expected in 1893, but was not celebrated according to one account because of a popular tradition that the carpenter, a Brahmin priest and one of the Raja's household would die within the year's. Puri District Gazetteer, L.S.S.O.Malley p.115
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K.N. Mahapatra, Khurudha Itihasa (O). Cuttack, 2000, pp.11-13
6. Pattanaik, P.K. A Forgotten Chapter of Odishan History, Punthi Publication, Calcutta, 1979 p.14
7. Abu-L-Fazl, The Akbarnama (Trans by H. Beveridge), Vol. I, II, III, Saheed International (Regd) New Delhi, 1989
8. Mahanty, A.B. Madala Panji (Prachi Edition) pp.63-64
9. Stirling, A. Orissa: Chronology and History (ed)
10. Palm leaf Manuscript of 'Durgostav Chandrika', preserved in the Odisha State Museum
11. Pattanaik. Sudhakara, Chakada Pothi and Chaini Chakada (ed) (O) Cuttack, 2000, p.7
12. Madala Panji (Prachi Edition) p.63
13. Chakada Pothi op cit p.7
14. Manuscript of Srikrishna Vakta Vatsalya Charitam' (Sanskrit), Preserved in Odisha State Museum
15. Manuscript of Banstochhav Mahakabya (Sanskrit), Preserved in Odisha State Museum
16. This title is known from various contemporary sources, i.e., Abhinava Indradyumna avatara, in the work of Chand Kavi in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century (K.N.Mahapatra, 1958, p.239); “Abhinava-Indradyumna Gajapati Ramachandra Deva,” in “Sri Krishna-Bhaktavatsalya Natika” of Ramachandra Deva (Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscript in the Odisha State Museum, Vol.II, P.CXXVI, P.125 or Navina Indradyumna in CP, P.7
17. Madala Panji (Prachi Edition)

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The cultural history of Odisha cannot be drawn without thinking of Jagannath consciousness, thus we can say, Jagannath consciousness is the Odishan culture of the people of Odisha. The ancient Odishan culture during the Kalinga/Utkal era was influenced mainly by Buddhism just after Kalinga war and spread by Ashoka, the great. Then it was influenced to some extent by Jainism during the period of Kharavela and to sixth century we found the mixed culture Hinduism & Sahajiayan Buddhism. But after establishment of Shri Jagannath temple a total new culture was developed among the people of

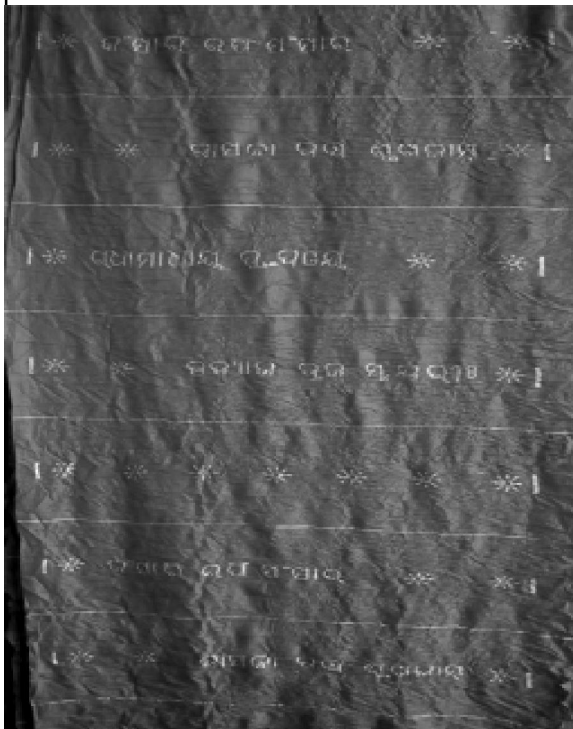


Odisha. Food habits, art and culture, music, dance and wearing style etc. were evolved with a separate identity and since then it is continuing through-out the ages passed. Again Jayadev, the

## Lord's Fabric

(Handloom Fabrics used in Shri Jagannath Temple, Puri)

*Surendra Kumar Patra*



NAME OF FABRICS - GITAGOBINDA KHANDUA	NO OF PEACES -
REED - 80	LENGTH - 36' 21" 12' 18"
PICK - 72/76	WIDTH - 36" 36" 54" 36"
WARP - 20/20(2PLY)	COLOUR - RED
WEFT - 20/20(3PLY)	

great poet of 12<sup>th</sup> century created a new era in literature, music, dance and weaving art of Odisha. Jagannath consciousness was greatly influenced by his creation i.e. Gitagobinda. Shri Jagannath temple gave us Mahari Nritya from which we see now Odissi dance, in the field of painting what we call Pata Chitra today is the outcome of Pata painting of Jagannath temple. The sumptuous Gitagobinda Khandua (a silk fabric woven with tie & dye technique or Ikat technique) which we call caligraphy fabric, having verses of Gitagobinda Kavya. It is also a gift of Jagannath temple to Odisha Ikat.

\*The earliest historical document referring to the Ikat weaving in Nuapatana area belongs to Ramachandra Dev-II who ruled over Puri, which



dates back to 1641 Sakabda, i.e. 1719 A.D. This document forms a part of Madala Panji or the daily diary of activities in the temple of Lord Jagannath written from time to time by Deula Karanas or temple clerks. Sadashiv Rathasharma of Puri, a devotee of Lord Jagannath and a scholar in his own right has supplied to us the following legend.

“Jayadev the great poet (12<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.) desired to offer his Gitagobinda to Lord Shri Jagannath. He could not think of any other medium except a fabric, which could be in contact with the Lord similar to other fabrics offered to him by the devotees. He decided to get the fabrics with lyrics of the Gitagobinda woven in them. He got them woven in Kenduli village which was his birthplace and offered them to the deities Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra. Later the King of Puri issued an order, placing the supply of these Gitagobinda fabrics to Nuapatana instead of Kenduli. Since it was not possible to get the entire Gitagobinda woven in such fabrics, only one *sloka* is woven in each piece. This *sloka* is the first *sloka* under third *sarga* which read as :

*“Kansarirapa Sansara-basanabandh-srunkhlam  
Radhamadhaya hrudaye taatyaja braja sundarih”*

However, this statement of Sadashiv Rathasharma could not be corroborated. Therefore the only historical document is the order of Ramachandra Dev-II, as mentioned above. The order directs that Bandha Gitagobinda set of clothes previously being woven by Kenduli weavers could not be done there and therefore the order was to be placed with the eight brother weavers of Nuapatana (Tigiria) and they were to be remunerated for their labour by Shreeksheeta by way of Bhogo-prasad and other gifts. The fabrics are called ‘Phetas’ in the temple of Lord Jagannath.

There is no weaver in Kenduli village at present. However, there are many weavers in the village Kakarudrapur, 3 kilometers from Kenduli, on the bank of the River Kushavadra. But they do not follow tie and dye technique. However the weavers belong to Gaudia Patara class, same as the weavers at Nuapatana (Tigiria) area, who weave tie and dye fabrics.\*

In fact the Tie and Dye fabrics of Nuapatana were workmanship of village artisans because the creation of every new day of life in the village was the myth inherited from father to son and son to son, mother to daughter and daughter to daughter. And we consider Gitagobinda Khandua was the finest one and most auspicious one as it was loved by Lord Shri Jagannath and has got royal patronage.

Gitagobinda Khandua is not the only fabric used in Jagannath temple. There are other cotton fabric used in daily rituals of the Lords i.e. Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarsan. It is known from the book, ‘Sri Jagannath Mandir and Jagannath Swatwalipi’ or ‘Shree Mandir Swatwalipi’ that special silk and cotton fabrics are used by the deities for daily rituals, festivals and special occasions. The fabrics are named as Tadap, Uttariya, Baralagi Pata, Patani, Sirakapada, Gitagobinda Khandua Patas, Boirani saree, Boirani Pheta, Kenduli or Pattani Saree, Gadi Pheta, Chemedi, Mulmul, Neta Phuta, Cheheli, Dakhini Saree, Kala Khadi, Trikhanda Patani, Phula pada chadar, Kavari Kachheni, Koda Pahada, Suta Gada, Suta chula Pheta, Suta Koda Pochha, Suta Koda Pachhoda, Khadi Pachhoda, Tuli, Chadar Gada, Sukla saja Gada, Baula Pata, Pata Dhadi Panchi, Suta Dhadi Panchi, Srimukh ota, Tana Kohosa, Rath Ghera, Chandan Guda, Bibha Panchi, Surya Boirani pheta, Chandra Sekhar Pheta etc.



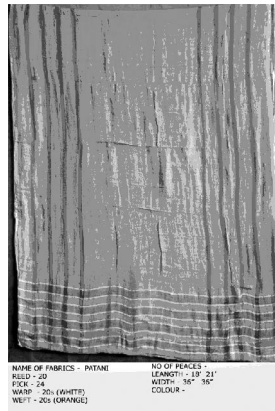
The above names show fabrics used for specific purpose and sometimes names have been derived from the source of collection like Boirani Pata, Dakhini Saree of Ganjam district.

### Some details about individual fabric :

**Pattani:** It is a cotton fabric having 21' length, 4.5 width, it is used in festive occasion. One set of Pattani consists of 10 pieces. It's colour is orange.

**Pattani Pata:** It is a Tussar fabric having 42' length and 27" width used at time of Anasar, Dola Purnima and Snana Purnima.

**Boirani:** It is a cotton fabric having 15' to 21' length and 27" width. Some times silk Boirani or Boirani Pata was also used. Perhaps due to its source of collection i.e. Boirani of Ganjam district, it's name is Boirani of Boirani Pata. One set of Boirani consists of 10 pieces of fabric.



**Suta Luga:** It is a white cotton fabric having 18' in length and 4.5' in width used in mid-day rituals and Chandan Lagi rituals.

**Gada :** It is a cotton fabric having 18' length and 27" width used at the time of Anasar rituals to cover the legs of deities. Apart from these cotton fabric having 24" length and 27" width used in Anasar rituals for Ghana Lagi *niti*.

**Suta Ghoda:** It is a cotton fabric having 36' length used in Odhana Sassthi rituals in the month of Margasira i.e. during the month of November.

**Suta Phuta:** It is a cotton fabric having 33" length and 28" width used on the head of the deities.

**Suta Chula Phuta :** It is a cotton fabric having 21' length and 9" width used in different head decorations of the deities. It is also known as Sira Kapada.

**Sreemukh Bala :** It is a cotton fabric having 12' length and 54" width. Red, Black, Blue/Green and White fabrics are used for different decorations of the deities. Red is used by Devi Subhadra, Blue/Green by Lord Balabhadra and White by Lord Jagannath. During some festive occasions Black is also used by Lord Jagannath.

**Chandan Buda :** 15" length and 54" width. It is a cotton fabric used in daily rituals called Chandan Lagi *niti*.

**Cheheli :** Silk fabric having 12' and 54" width used at the time of Anasar on head of the deities. The colours are Red, Yellow and Blue.

**Gadi Pheta :** It is a coarse cotton fabric, having 5' length and 30" width and it's colour is Orange.

**Mulmul:** It is very soft feel cotton fabric made with White warp and Blue weft having 5' in length and 30" in width. It's softness is because of its low reed and pick i.e. loose texture.

**Tadap :** It is a White cotton fabric used after morning Alati, called Mangala Alati. The dimension of these fabric as 24' length and 56" width- 3 pieces, 12' in length and 56" width - 1 piece, 3' in length 28" width - 4 pieces.

**Pochha:** It is used as napkin for the deities. Used in the morning after bath. It is cotton fabric having 12" in length and 12" in width. It's colour is White and also Orange colour.

**Ghoda:** Cotton velvet used during winter season for the deities.

**Chemedi :** It is a white or red cotton fabric having low reed pick having 12" in length and 12" in width.





**Chheda :** It is set of white cotton fabric having no border. The dimensions are 18' in length & 60" width -1piece, 24' in length & 60" width-1piece, 12' in length & 60" width-4 pieces

**Gitagobinda Khandua Pata :** It is a special silk fabric on which Gitagobinda lyrics are written on tie & dye technique. The specifications are as under :-

36" length, 3' width, - 2 pieces for Lord Jagannath and Balabhadra 21' length, 3' width called Gitagobinda paharana for Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra 18' length, 3' width – 3 pieces for Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra 15' length and 3' width – 4 pieces for Sridevi, Bhudevi, Sudarsan and Madhav 12' length and 4.5', 3 pieces for Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra. One set of Gitagobinda Khandua consists of total 15 pieces and used at night time for Badasinghar Besa.

**Baralagi Pata:** This is a silk fabric used by the deities in different days of the week as under :-

- Sunday - Red colour
- Monday - Black with white spot
- Tuesday - Red, Yellow and Blue stripes
- Wednesday - Green
- Thursday - Orange, Yellow
- Friday - White
- Saturday - Black/Deep Blue

One set of Baralagi Pata consists of 10 pieces of fabrics as under:-

24' length, 5' width one piece for Lord Jagannath  
21' length, 5' width for Lord Balabhadra

18' length, 5' width for Devi Subhadra

12' length and 5' width, 4 pieces for Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarsan.

About 4' length, 5' width – 3 pieces for Bhudevi, Sridevi and Madhav.

Regarding colours of the fabric there is no reference in temple records. What we feel the fabric colours for Lord Krishna and Balaram i.e. yellow and green are used in the day to day fabrics of Jagannath temple. Devi Subhadra is symbol of Shakti so red colour is used. Jagannath is Krishna so yellow colour is preferred and Lord Balabhadra is Lord Balaram, elder brother of Lord Krishna so blue or green colour is used.

The colours used in Baralagi Pata i.e. the fabric used in different days of the week are of different colours as described earlier. The colours symbolize the particular days of the week.

If we go back to the history, we find synthetic colour was invented in 1856. Before that only colours extracted from natural products were used for ornamentation of fabrics. Blue was extracted from Indigo. Orange was from Bixin and yellow from turmeric. These raw materials were abundantly available in Odisha. This may be one of the cause for blue, orange and yellow colour of the fabrics used in temple.

Daily after opening of the doors, Mangal Alati rituals takes place. During this rituals, it is seen Lords are wearing Gitagobinda Khandua from previous night. After Alati rituals, the fabrics and flower ornaments used by the deities in previous nights are taken out which is called *mailam* rituals. The Khuntia *sevak* of the temple stands with Khandua fabric in front of the deities and cotton Tadap and Uttariya are offered to Lords for wearing. For these type of rituals 4 pieces of Tadap, 2 pieces of Uttariya and 1 piece of Khandua are necessary. Then 2 pieces of *gamuchha* to Lord Balabhadra, 2 pieces for Lord Jagannath, 1 piece each for Devi Subhadra and Lord Sudarsan are used. These cotton fabrics are white, having orange border. These fabrics are generally arranged by temple administration. The fabric decoration, i.e. wearing rituals is carried



out by Palia Puspalak. Fabrics are collected from stores called Changada Ghar of Jagannath temple by Changada Mekap Sevak. The other Sevaks engaged for daily rituals particularly for decoration are Bhitarchha Mohapatra, Talicha Mohapatra, Puspalak, Changada Mekap, and Khuntia Sevak. After Vedic rituals Lords use silk fabric which is called Baralagi Pata. The details are described before. After morning offerings called Sakala Dhupa again *mailam seva* occurs and another set of silk fabric are used by Lords. Generally these fabrics are used till mid-day rituals and evening rituals i.e. Madhyahna Dhup and Sandhya Dhup Alati. Again *mailam* rituals takes place and new fabrics are used by Lords. After evening rituals called Sandhya Alati, the Lords use cotton *gamuchha* and with these fabrics the Chandan Lagi rituals occurs.

The most attractive rituals is called Badasinghar Besa where Gitagobinda Khandua is required. The details are described before.

Gitagobinda Khandua is collected from Nuapatana village under P.S. Tigiria, District-Cuttack. The weavers who produce this fabric observe purity during entire period of production i.e. they will not take non-vegetarian food and they will not engage themselves for these works during death rituals. The cotton fabrics are collected from the weavers of Cuttack, Khurdha, Puri, Nayagarh districts etc. There are some families in Nuapatana village those are producing Gitagobinda Khandua from generations to generations. Sudam Guin is one of them. But now a days it is being produced by some other weavers also. Now a days some weavers of Routpada village nearby Khurdha are producing cotton and silk fabrics for the purpose regularly. At present no fabric is being collected from Berhampur area which was a previous practice. It is stated by some Sevaks that Govinda Das of Mangalpur village in Puri District was supplying cotton fabric but now a days no fabric is coming from Mangalpur. Generally it is responsibility of temple

administration to collect the fabric for daily use by the Lords out of temple funds. But at present it is seen that most of the fabrics are offered by the devotees.

All the deities do not use Sirakapada or fabric used on head. Only Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra use Sirakapada during Badasinghar Besa. The colour of Sirakapada is white but the black border is used for Lord Balabhadra, white border for Lord Jagannath, and red border for Devi Subhadra. Apart from the above fabrics used daily by the deities, Ghodalagi rituals occurs during winter season i.e. Margasira Sukla Sassthi to Magha Sukla Panchami i.e. for two months. Ghodalagi Besa occurs with velvet cotton cloth. In addition to the above rituals some fabrics are used during special functions like Ratha Yatra, Bahuda Yatra, Holi etc.

It is stated by some Sevaks of the temple that 100 years back woolen hand woven fabrics were offered to the Lords during winter i.e. during Ghodalagi rituals. Fabrics were sourced from Kashmir but now it is totally stopped. Instead of woolen fabric cotton velvet & silken are used for the purpose.

Previously during Rath Yatra festival the fabrics used on chariots were collected from Kolkata based companies but these fabrics were not produced on handlooms. Now a days mill made fabrics are used for the purpose.

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2. Shri Jaganathanka Sanskritika Itihas by Shree Vaskar Mishra.

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Odisha is known as the land of Lord Jagannath. Its culture is eulogized as the culture of Lord Jagannath. Its religion is known as the religion of Lord Jagannath. All spiritual ideologies in Odisha are directly or indirectly related to the divine ideology of Lord Jagannath. This is known as Jagannath Maya. Sri Jagannath is the “Istadev” of the people of Odisha. In the general opinion of our people, while Odisha is known as the land of Lord Jagannath, Sri Jagannath is similarly known as presiding deity of all households of Utkal Pradesh. Sri Jagannath, as Purusottam is known and adored as the Lord of the entire universe. He has many

names and many forms. He is worshipped as the Rajarajeswar of the entire humanity. His glory of worship is related to all religions. Sri Jagannath cult is the essence of all cults and all sects of the world. The Lord is Nirakara. He is also Sakar. His image and mode of worship display the analogy of this spiritual contemplation. The Lord has hands. He is known and worshipped as Mahabahu. As written in scriptures, by extending His hands, He saves His Bhaktas from all sorrows and predicament. But His hands are not in the complete form. He has no palms. He has no fingers. In this sense, He is both Sakar and Nirakar Parambrahma. Similarly, He has eyes and ears.

## Banayaga Yatra and Maa Mangala in Reference to Nabakalebara Ritual

*Dinabandhu Pradhan*



But His eyes have no lids. They are round in shape and form. He is omniscient. He is perfectly aware of all that is happening in the universe at every moment. Sri Jagannath is thus portrayed in the spiritual sense as the God of an enigmatic spiritual ideology. One has to dive in to His philosophy to know the cardinal principles of this broad-based cult.



The place of the Lord is known as Sriksheeta. As the meaning of the word goes, “Sri” postulates that Puri is adored as a place of glory and extraordinary prosperity. The Lord is Sat, Chit and Anand. He is known as Darubrahma. He is worshipped as Darudebata. He is adored as Brahmapurtti, Nilamadhaba, Niladrinath and Dinabandhu. As enshrined in the Vedas, He is omniscient and omnipotent. He is venerated as the Lord of the Viswabrahmanda. Bhaktas call Him in the name of “Kalia Saanta” and “Patitapaban”.

Sri Jagannath is the manifestation of “Paramabrahma” and in this sense, He is a unique spiritual glorification in relation to the entire universe. This has lent Him the resplendence of a divine existence on earth as the overlord of the impoverished and the downtrodden in the human society irrespective of caste, creed and religion. Jagannath culture is thus an esoteric mixture of all cultures of the world. One may find in Him, the embodiment of a divine apostle of different religions of the world.

The Lord in His divine manifestation is worshipped with other gods seated on the divine throne of the Grand Temple like His brother Balaram, Sister Subhadra and His cosmic weapon, Sri Sudarsan along with His moving idol, Madhab and other deities. Lord Jagannath is known as Darubrahma in all scriptures of Hindu religion. The divine bodies of the images are made of Neem wood which is said to be highly sustaining over the ravages of time. In this sense, the images shorn of the Brahmapadarthas are said to be transitory. In nature, they have definite forms subject to decay like human beings on earth. At the time of observance of this ritual, the images are taken to Koilibaikuntha situated in the Grand Temple. The Daitas, a section of the servitors, observe the funeral rite and perform the obsequies

as we generally do in our society as per Hindu Nitis. The images of the old deities are thus replaced by the images of the new deities and the old deities are buried in a pit in Koilibaikuntha.

However, the “Brahmas” that are placed in the three principal deities are not transitory and they are not subject to decay like the images. So the “Brahma Padarthas” are very carefully transferred to the new bodies from the old deities and also carefully preserved, wrapped in silken clothes. This process is known as the process of new embodiment. This is called the ritual of Nabakalebara.

Nabakalebara is an important ritual of the Grand Temple. It is not celebrated every year in the Temple. It is celebrated only when there is an occasion of “Double Asadha month” in a year as per the Hindu almanac.

The ritual of Nabakalebara is linked to several other functions. One such function is known as “Banayaga Yatra”. It is conducted by a section of servitors of the Grand Temple known as Daitas. It is only the Daitas who have access to all the rituals of the Temple during the period of Car-festival and Nabakalebara ritual. These servitors are said to be the successors of Vidyapati who had first visited the Lord as an emissary of Maharaja Indradyumna. He had carried all information about the sacred place to Maharaja Indradyumna and advised him how to have Darshan of the Lord known at that time as Neelamadhab. Following his advice, Maharaja Indradyumna had the “darshan” of the Lord on a mountain range in Utkal Pradesh and constructed a Temple for the Lord, which with renovations from time to time has come to the present form of the Grand Temple, as we see.

Banayaga Yatra is the first stage of the Nabakalebar ritual. Maa Mangala of Kakatpur



is the goddess mainly related to the Banayaga Yatra. Kakatpur is at a distance of about 50 km from Puri Srikshetra.

Maa Mangala is said to be the “Adishakti” of the universe. She is adored as the working force of Lord Jagannatha. It is believed by the Hindus in this connection that at the direction of Maa Mangala, the Lord had created the universe. She had assumed different names at different times like Prakriti, Shakti, Kali, Chandi, Yogamaya, Mahamaya and so on. Maa Mangala is an inseparable part of the Lord in His cosmic form. She is beyond time. She is the Adishakti. She has no beginning and no end. She is all pervading being one with the Lord.

According to Devi Puran, She was worshipped by king Mangala, a king of Ekwaku Dynasty and so the goddess had come to be known later as “Mangala” over the period of time. Mangala Thakurani is worshipped in different names by the people in Odisha. She is the precursor and controller of all sacred “Karmas” of human beings on earth. She fulfills all desires. She is the avenger of all impediments in the forms of obstacles, hindrances and interruptions. She is steady and at the sometime ever-roaming and visits the places of devotees in different names like Sarba Mangala, Ghata Mangala, Manga Mangala, Bruky Mangala, Siddha Mangala and so on.

There is a beautiful story about the inception of Mangala Thakurani at Kakatpur in Odisha. Among other things, the story goes on to say that pleased with the devotional prayer of a girl namely Mamata of Utkal Pradesh, the goddess had come from Sinhala to our place sitting at the edge of a navigation boat in those times. Mangala Thakurani is immensely influenced by the profound devotion of her devotees. It is

believed that if devotees worship her observing fasting on Tuesdays, She is immensely influenced and pleased and fulfills all desires. In this sense, She is worshipped as Sankata Tarini.

In Brahma Purana there is a story about Maa Mangala. As per the narratives in this scripture, after the divine appearance of Brahma from the naval of Lord Narayan, the entire cosmic plane of the universe was steeped in deep silence. From deep silence, Maa Mangala had Her spiritual inception. It was She who later taught Brahma the manner in which the universe was to be created. Her name was then Adi Mangala. She had descended on earth on a Tuesday in the month of “chaitra”. She was considered as the all powerful supreme cosmic force of the Lord. It was She who taught Devi Durga how to kill Mahisasura. Again it was She Who had appeared before Devi Durga when Sri Ram was fighting a battle with Ravana and She had on Her own, revealed the way how to kill Ravana. She had also squatted on the string of Sri Ram’s bow and when Sri Ram flung his arrows to Ravana, they had pierced into the body of the latter ultimately killing the demon. She had revealed to the Chandi of Srilanka that in Kaliyuga, She would appear in Srikshetra as the Mayashakti of Lord Jagannath and would be worshipped separately as long as the Lord would be worshipped in the Grand Temple.

There is another spiritual belief which reveals that as per the divine supplication of Sri Ram, the goddess had appeared in Utkal Pradesh as Maa Mangala occupying the position of Maa Chandi among the eight Chandis of Puri. Although Maa Bimala is the presiding Chandi of Srikshetra, Maa Mangala is also worshipped as the Ajnakarini Shakti of Daru Brahma Jagannath. Without the blessings of Maa Mangala, the function of the new embodiment is not possible. The Daita servitors



proceed to Kakatpur, the place of Mangala Thakurani in the required number for observance of the customary Nitis after getting the go-ahead permission from the Gajapati Maharaja of Puri.

We have still another story to say that Maa Mangala is closely related to the cult of the Lord and His Nabakalebara ritual. The story narrates the fact that the king of Malaba namely Indradyumna proceeded to Puri as per the advice of his Minister, Vidyapati. The king had also been directed accordingly in a divine dream. In obedience, he proceeded to Puri and had a Yajna in front of Lord Nrusimha. While so, he got a message from his royal followers that a huge trunk having the divine marks of conch, disc, mace and lotus was floating in the sea waters near the seashore. After completing the Yajna, the king rushed to the spot. He inspected the Daru and beheld that there was a big ring of divine aura around the Daru but the Daru had been converted into an immovable hillock, not budging a little from its place despite the royal followers pulling the log to the shore. At that point of time, the king was called upon by a divine voice from the cosmic silence that he should pray to Maa Mangala for necessary help and he would be successful in his mission with Her divine intervention. The king did all that he was directed to do. He succeeded in his sacred mission and the images of the deities were installed on the Ratnasimhasan. Since that day, Maa Mangala has been associated with the Nabakalebara ritual of Lord Jagannath.

Maa Mangala is worshipped at Kakatpur as “Parama Baishnabi” in Her divine incarnation. Mahaprasad is offered to Her during “puja” in the morning oblation after Her sacred ablution. Many of the rituals of Lord Jagannath are observed in the Temple of Maa Mangala at Kakatpur during observance of Nabakalebara ritual.



As per the practice being followed in this regard, the preliminaries of Banayaga Yatra actually start from Chaitra Sukla Dashami. This is to say that the ritual actually starts 65 days before the Snana Utsava i.e before the divine ablution of the deities on Jyestha Purnami day on the Snana Mandap of the Grand Temple. This year, this ritual has commenced on March 29. Initially, a group of Daitas is formed on the eve of the aforesaid celebration. They begin their Journey via Jagannath Ballav Math, Puri in search of four suitable Neem trees from which the deities are to be carved. It may be stated that they begin their journey with the permission from the king of Puri. After proper observance of all the ritualistic formalities, they proceed to Maa Mangala’s Temple at Kakatpur about 50km from Puri and seek Her blessings there for location of the Neem trees. No other tree can be felled for this purpose.

At Kakatpur the servitors stay in Deuli Math belonging to the Ramanuja Vaishnabas and maintained by the Emar Math, Puri.

A special Puja is held in the Temple of Maa Mangala. Three members of the party i.e. the Acharya, the Pati Mahapatra and the Brahmin priest lay prostrate in the Temple of Mangala Thakurani waiting for the divine directions from the goddess. It is believed that the goddess tells them in dream the directions to the place where the trees could be located. It is further believed that if the goddess does not tell them anything about the trees, the servitors of the Lord hold special worships in the Temple for three days and it is said in this connection that on a day during this period, a flower is sure to fall from the Head of the goddess indicating the directions of the Darus, which after things become easier and the servitors’ set out in those directions. It is further said in this connection that the Darus are sure to be located within seven days.



Believe it or not, it is a fact that the bark of the tree meant for Sri Balabhadra is light brown in colour, having seven branches looking like the form of a canopy. Its top looks like the form of the hood of a cobra. The tree also has other divine marks like plough, pestle and the weapons of Sri Balabhadra,

The bark of the tree meant for Devi Subhadra looks yellow in colour, having five clear branches. It also bears the divine marks of a lotus flower with five petals.

The tree meant for Sri Jagannath is dark red in colour. The tree looks straight having four clear branches. It exists by the side of a river or a pond at a crossroad of three pathways surrounded by mountains with a cremation ground or a Siva temple nearby. The tree has no creepers. It has also no nest of birds. The most important feature is that it is a very clear and unabashed tree. It has also not been hit by any lightning or storm. The tree does have an ant hill at its foot. The tree has divine marks of Lord Vishnu like Sankha, Chakra, Gada and Padma.

And the tree meant for Sri Sudarsan looks reddish in colour having three branches and the mark of "Chakra" on its trunk.

These are the various features of the Darus. The trees are worshipped and then felled. They are transported to the Grand Temple through specific routes in special carts newly made for the purpose. The Darus are covered with clothes because; to see the Darus without covers is considered a great sin according to scriptures. When the Darus reach the Temple, Gajapati Maharaja is kept informed about their arrival. This is in brief the Banayaga Yatra which precedes the consecration of the new deities on the divine throne. Fifty carpenters are engaged to carve the new deities. This work is to be completed within

21 days after which the new deities are taken round the Temple. Thereafter the new and the old deities are placed facing each other and the Brahmapadarthas are then transferred from old idols to the new idols. This work is done secretly in the dead of the night by old servitors with their eyes blindfold and hands thickly covered. It is believed that this arrangement is done so that they cannot see or touch the Brahmapadarthas. During the period of transfer, there is darkness in the entire Temple. Even the whole of Puri town is enveloped in darkness.

All the old deities made of wood along with the peripheral deities used in the chariots are considered dead. They are taken to Koili Baikuntha and buried in separate pits. The Daitapatis who consider Jagannath as the head of their families, observe the funeral obsequies for 10 days. They get purified on the 12<sup>th</sup> day as is commonly done and offer a feast as we do in Hindu families.

The new deities are then covered with 'saptavarana' meaning seven substances, like sandal paste, musk, resin, silk etc and painted by the Temple Chitrakaras. The pupils of Their eyes are painted by the Brahmins during Netrotsav function. Then the deities are taken to the chariots for Rathayatra.

In a nutshell, this is the Nabakalebara ritual of the idols seated on the Ratnasimhasan of the Temple. Nabakalebara, at least once seen, atones all sins. This is the belief among the devotees of the Lord. There is also a scriptural sanction to this analogy of the belief.

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The word Nabakalebar is a Sanskrit word, that is Naba means new, Kalebar means body. From time immemorial through an ancient ritual, the idols of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Shudarshan are replaced by a new set of idols which is known as Nabakalebar. As per Hindu calendar, in a year which has two months of Asadha (known as Mala or Adhimasa), the auspicious ceremony of Nabakalebar is conducted. Usually, this comes in every twelve to nineteen years. Last ceremony was done in 1996. In 2015, the first Nabakalebara of 21st

century has been celebrated recently. The deities are made from a special type of Neem tree known as Daru Brahma which has to fulfill many conditions.

Apart from selection of trees, there are various rituals that are to be performed by the Sevayats and Brahmins. In this particular occasion, the role of Shrotriya Brahmins are very important. Starting from Banajaga Bidhi till concecration of Daru Bigraha including Yajna and Japa and other prescribed rituals are performed by involving the Brahmins.

## The Role of Brahmins in Nabakalebar

*Bhagaban Mahapatra*







The function of Nabakalebar begins in the month of Chaitra (March) on tenth day of bright fortnight. After completion of mid-day offering of deities, four numbers of flower garlands specifically made for this day are offered to deities. After worshipping the Lords, Pati Mahapatra who is to lead the Bana Jaga procession collects Ajna Mala from deities and offers to three Badagrahi Daitapatis and he himself takes Ajnamala of Lord Sudarshan. He accompanies with Daitapati, Deulakarana, Tadhaukaran, Beherakhuntia, Biswakarma Maharana and Lenka servitors. By this time all selected Shrotriya Brahmins along with the priest of the temple complete the prescribed rituals of Daru Sala, Yajna Sala, Nrusingha Mandap Sala. Ankuraropana Sala at Koilibaikuntha inside the temple and Snan Mandap. One Shrotriya Brahmin from among the selected Brahmins for the purpose is nominated as Pradhana Acharya. Thereafter all proceed to the palace of Gajapati Maharaja to get his permission known as Raja Agyan (Barana ritual) for Bana Yaga procession. All Brahmin Pandits, Acharyas and Banajaga party proceed to Kakatpur where temple of mother Mangala exists and Deuli Math where Banajaga party remains. During Banajaga period all Brahmins use to remain in a most austerity manner in their food and sleep till selected Darus are brought to Koilibaikuntha through northern gate of Sri Jagannath temple. Before commencement of search for Daru all Banajaga party members proceed in a grand procession from Deuli Math to Kakatpur temple where a special Puja (known as Majana) is offered to goddess Mangala. After offering of special Puja, all Brahmins start reciting Durga Saptasati (Chandi Path) in that temple for pleasure of goddess. This Chandi Patha continues till location of first Daru. Besides, at night before dinner all party members use to discuss on religious matter of Shastras and Puranas.

After location of Darus, all party members along with Acharyas and Brahmin Pandits go first to the place where Daru tree of Sudarsan is selected. After the site is cleaned, a purificatory ritual (Samskar Homa) is performed by the Acharya. Thereafter under the supervision of Deulakaran and as per instruction of Acharya, Ankuraropana sala and Yajnasala are constructed. Then Yajna starts. In this particular work, Brahmins have specific role at each Daru tree.

- *Pradhanacharya* : He is the chief among the Brahmins selected for the purpose. He performs Puja and other rituals at the time of cutting the tree.
- *Brahman* : He supervises actual and correct performances of ritual process.
- *Pustakacharya*: At the time of Yajna and Puja it is his duty to make all Acharyas remember the relevant portions from religious Shastras and books for smooth performance of the ritual.
- *Charu and Samidha Hota*: At the time of Yajna, they offer Charu and Samidha.
- *Mandalacharya*: For the purpose of Yajna, *mandalas* are drawn by him near the Daru tree.
- *Mantrajapakacharya*: At the time of Yajna near the tree they do *japa* of different prescribed *mantras*.

In addition, at four gates of Yajna Mandap four Shrotriya Brahmins, such as Rig (east), Yajur (west), Sama (south), Atharb (north) will seat and recite Vedic *mantras* and offer ghee to fire god. Before commencement of Yajna, Puja of Daru tree and bathing is to be completed and Agya Mala taken by the Daitapati of that BADA is taken and touched by him with that tree. Other purificatory work such as Samskar of that place,



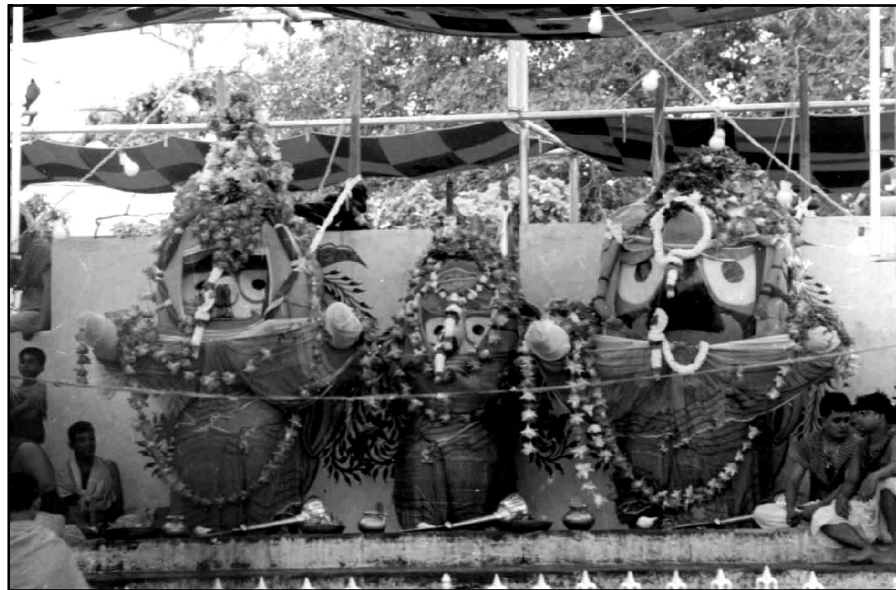
Snan of Daru tree, Ankuraropana, Sala Puja, Yajna Puja, Surya Puja, Agni Puja, Yajna and Bali etc. and other secret rituals are completed. Puja of gold, silver and iron axes are performed by the Acharya Brahmin. After completion of Yajna near Daru tree i.e. Purnahuti as per instruction of Acharya Brahmin, Bidyapati and Biswabasu take gold and silver axes and touch to the Daru tree. Then cutting of Daru tree is done by iron axes. This function takes 6 to 10 days at each Daru tree. After all Darus are collected, same are brought in a grand procession to Sri Jagannath temple through north gate and kept in Daru Sala at Koili Baikuntha, known as graveyard of Lord Jagannath. After Snan Purnima, carving of deities on Darus at Koili Baikunth are commenced in Nirman Mandap in a most secret manner. Before commencement of the above work, Antarjaga Homa and Ankuraropana rituals are completed by the selected Brahmins in the Koili Baikuntha area. This function continues for eleven days. During this time, 10,000 times oblations to fire in Patala Nrushingh Mantra and Nrushingha Raja Mantra are offered. On eleventh day, Gajapati himself comes to offer final oblation

(Purnahuti) to Yajna. During continuance of Yajna, selected Shrotriya Brahmins of Muktimandap of Sri Jagannath temple, Rajguru, Srimandir Purohit, and others are engaged to do *mantra japa*, Chandi Patha, Bishnusahasranama, Gopal Sahasranam etc in the temple of Alamchandi, Dakhinakali, Uttarayani, Mangala and Vimala.

Bhubaneswari and Aviseka in five Shiva temples of Puri town. In addition there are certain secret rituals and *puja* carried out by the Vedic Brahmins and Acharyas and a type of drum used during carving of the images known as Telengi Badya outside the Nirman Mandap in order to suppress the sound of cutting of Darus and carving of deities. There are more than 80 numbers of Shrotriya Brahmins engaged in the Nabakalebar rituals (Antarjaga) of Lord Jagannath. The temple administration bears all expenses of Brahmins on this occasion.

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**T**omorrow will be the last Tuesday of Chaitra month Sukla Sri Ramanabami, the day of Zhamuyatra. Mangala is over thoughtful till the late night. The devotees in large number would come. Yet She had only one thought in mind. She would straight go to Lord Jagannath and ask Him whether He would grant Her the right of choosing wood (Daru) for the deities of Nabakalebar. Keeping it in mind She set out for Srikshetra to have darshan of Lord Jagannath.

It was dawn of Sri Rama Nabami. All deities have returned after darshan of Lord Jagannath. Only mother Mangala was sitting in a sorrowful face. Jagannath asked, 'Mother ! why

are You in a fading and grievous mind'. Mangala said in a calm-loaded tone, 'I desire to get from You a demand. I shall tell You if you promise before me', Jagannath smiled and said, "Your son can offer anything You desire. What more truth do You expect ? Now I promise".

The mother, Mangala's facial appearance was changed. She said, I shall select Daru (wood) to be required for Your (new body) Nabakalebar. This right I shall get from you? At this Jagannath remained speechless and delirium, could not decide what to say. Jagannath lastly replied, 'Mother, I have already given that right to Biswabasu'. Mangala was broken down. She said in a low voice, 'In course of time the same

## Mangala of Kakatpur

*Madhusudan Patnaik*



concentration may be disturbed and damaged. The successors may be unsuccessful in finding out the right Daru. You will be defamed. You give that duty to me. They would seek Daru under my directions. Thus the rights of both may be preserved". This was very justified. In an agreeable voice Jagannath fulfilled mother's request. Her joy knew no bounds, since She has obtained a great success. The dawn was about to pass. The sky clearly indicated the



approach of the day. Mangala was in a hurry to enter into Her temple at Kakatpur. The next day would be Zhamu, the greatest function of 'Ma'. While Mangala was rushing hurriedly to Her temple, Her golden ring bracelet was missed from Her hand on the way.

Mangala entered into Her temple and was seated on the throne. The senior devotee opened the door in the morning. He examined. Everything was normal and right, but the bangle of Mangala was not there. A thorough search was made in and out. The mother went to the King. He engaged sepoy.

It was found in the agricultural land of a farmer who got it while ploughing the field. He went back home without ploughing the land and told it to the villagers. The sepoy took the farmer to the king who imprisoned him thinking him to be a thief. The poor farmer prayed to Lord Jagannath for none of his crime.

In the last part of the night, Jagannath told the king that the farmer was not at fault. Yesterday at dawn Mangala was granted the right to Daru selection. The Daitas who were the successors of Biswabasu would make Daru selection under Ma's directions. In this context when it was late

at night and Mangala was in a hurry to enter into Her throne, on the way the bangles fell from Her hand and missed. So you should release the farmer and his land would be tax free and the maahal (area) would be Ratnachudi Maahal.

The King did this. The same Ratnachudi Maahal of Mangala is still in existence. The stone on which Mangala was seated after Her darshan of Jagannath, is lying on the south of Jagamohan in the Mangala Temple. The stone becomes thin and thinner day by day.

To commemorate this, the Daitapati and others, on the 10th day of Chaitra Fullmoon start from Puri with flower garlands of Jagannath (Agyanmala) to Kakatpur to worship Mangala with full concentration to receive indication as to which direction they would move to get Daru on the occasion of Nabakalebar.

*Sarba Mangal Mangalye Sive Sarbartha Sadhake  
Saranye Traimbake Gouri Narayani Namastute*

Madhusudan Patnaik, Kaibalya, Duttatota, Puri.





**P**urushottama - Jagannath, the Lord of the Universe, the supreme god has been worshipped in various names / forms, from time to time with different mode of doctrine and rituals. The literary and epigraphic sources throw considerable light on the origin of this cult.

The religious life of Odisha has been dominated by the Cult of Purushottama - Jagannath. The Jagannath is regarded as Daru Brahma. Among the many rituals of the god, Nabakalebara is one of the important ceremonies, which involves a total replacement of the deities through the new ones. The supreme god of the Puri is originally a tribal deity. The different rituals

period, when god Vishnu was conceived as a member of the solar family.

In Odisha the earliest epigraphic evidences of Vaishnavism is traced in copper plate records of Mathara dynasty who ruled over Kalinga about 4th/5th century A.D. shortly after the Samudragupta military expedition to south. The Mathara established independent rule over Kalinga, during their rule Vaishnavism advanced into Kalinga where it enjoyed royal patronage. The Ningondi grant of Prabhanjanavarman mentioned that he was the devout worshipper at the feet of Bhagavat Narayanasvami. Similarly in the Andhavaram grant of Anantasaktivarman, who is described as the Lord of Kalinga and a devout

## Nabakalebara and the Evolution of Purushottama Cult : An Epigraphical Study

*Dr. Bharati Pal*

of the Nabakalebara ceremony are the finest examples of the superimposition of the Brahmanism Hinduism on a cult which was purely tribal origin. The use of Nrusimha Mantra in every rite of the ceremony it looks very probable that Jagannath has been identified with Nrusimha.

The Daitas who take charge of the deities during the period of *anavasara* also arrange the car festival and play an important role in the ceremony of Nabakalebara. They are believed to be the descendants of the Sabara Viswavas, who worshipped Jagannath in Nilamadhava form.

Vaishnavism, like Saivism is a very old cult and its origin goes back to the Rig Vedic

worshipper at the feet of god Narayana whose chest was embraced *kamala nilaya* Lakshmi. Again Chandavarman and Nandaprabhanjanavarman was also followers of Vaishnavism.

The family by expanding the kingdom and assuming the glorious title of Kalingadhipati or the lord of Kalinga and Sakala Kalingadhipati and the lord of entire Kalinga their kingdom extended up to the river Mahanadi and Vaishnavism penetrated into Ganjam. But by the 6th century A.D the dynasty was collapsed and it disappeared from the scene of the history. During the period of 7th century A.D Kalinga was inclined towards Saivism under the Sailodbhavas and the rulers



were devout worshipper of Siva who called themselves as Paramamahesvara.

The next stage of development of Vaishnavism penetrated towards central Odisha from the west through the Nalas. During the Gupta rule Vaishnavism had established itself in the Raipur area of Madhya Pradesh. Towards the end of 5th century A.D Rajim and Sirpur became the center of Vaishnava cult, its further advance from the bordering regions of Odisha. The Nalas of the Pushkari, ruled over a territory comprising the parts of Koraput and Kalahandi districts of Odisha, as well as former Bastar region of MP about 5th/6th century A.D. The epigraphic records of Podagada and Rajim stone inscription prove that Vaishnavism revolved round the supreme god Vishnu and its diverse manifestation at different places of Nala kingdom. The first verse in the Podagada inscription contains the glorification of Hari in his aspects, as the essence of victory.

Then the epigraphs further state that the foundation of a *padamula* or foot print of Vishnu for worship and donation of certain holding along with abundant *bhuri - dakshina* made to be done. The next verse records that, he who conforms to the good path followed by king for long finds refuge in God Vasudeva”.

The Rajim stone inscription described that Vilasatunga of the Nala family constructed a temple dedicated to Vishnu under the name as Rajivalochana (Iotus-eyed). Again the inscription mentioned about the dwarf (Vamana) incarnation or Avatara of Vishnu. From these records it is evident that the Nalas were devout champion of Vaishnavism.

After the Nalas another powerful dynasty leaning towards Vaishnavism who made their sway in South Kosala were the Sarabhapuriyas. They ruled in about 6th-7th century A.D and

assumed the title Parama Bhagavata and their royal seal bears the figure of Gaja- Lakshmi. The rulers issued the gold coins having the image of Garuda flanked by a discus on its right hand and conch on the left hand. The Sarabhapuriyas extended their kingdom into the present Sambalpur, Bolangir, Sonepur and Kalahandi districts of Odisha.

After the Sarabhapuriyas, the Panduvamsis also promoted Vaishnavism in Dakshina Kosala. Tivaradeva of this dynasty assumed the title of Paramavaishnava and Harshagupta and his queen Vasata built the famous brick temple known as the Lakshmana temple in Sirpur. The inscription in the temple begins with a salutation to Purushottama and continues to invoke Purushottama as Nrusimha. The first three verses are elevated to the praise of Narasimha incarnation of Vishnu, the Lord Jagannath who was widely known as Purushottama up to the end of 13th century seems to have close connection with Narasimha at a certain stage of its history. Even today Narasimha plays an important role in the Nabakalebara rituals of the lords. Nrusimha can be traced back to Sirpur in the upper Mahanadi valley of the ancient capital of South Kosala.

The Panduvamsis being driven away from the political centre of South Kosala by the Kalachuris were forced to retreat into largely tribal areas of the Bolangir and Sambalpur districts of western Odisha, the dynasty changed its name and became famous as Somavamsis.

During the period from 8th to 10th century A.D a very strong and powerful force known as Bhaumakaras ruled over Odisha. Their territory extended Dandabhukti Mandala in the north to Ganjam in the south. The earlier rulers were ardent Buddhists and assumed the Buddhist titles i.e. Paramatathagata, Paramopasaka and



Paramasaugata etc. Their period witnessed the evolution of Mahayana to Vajrayana. Under these circumstances the expanding force of Vaishnavism was greatly reduced. But from the end of the 9th century A.D the situation changed and the latter Bhaumakaras were eclectic in their faith, some members of the family embraced Vaishnavism which were evident from their copper plate charters. Tribhuvanamahadevi in the Dhenkanal copper plate is styled as Paramavaishnavi.

The Bhanjas, who were ruled as a feudatory under the Bhaumas, were great patron of Vaishnavism. We find a number of rulers of this dynasty professing Vaishnava cult. Rulers like Satrubhanja and Ranabhanja called themselves as Paramavaishnava. Besides these rulers, Nettekhanja in the Jurada grant described himself as Paramavaishnava and the charter begins an invocation to god Narayana who is stated to be the family deity or *kula devata* of Bhanjas.

After the Bhaumas the Somavamsis conquered Utkala and expanded their kingdom in Kalinga, Utkala, Kangada and Dakshina Kosala. The Madalapanji credits Yayati-I with construction of an earlier temple of Purushottama in Puri. But inscriptions remain silent about the construction of the Jagannath temple of Puri Yayati-I like his predecessors, was a devotee of Siva. The ancient Saiva Kshetra of Bhubaneswar became the main religious centre during their rule.

Towards the last quarter of the 11th century, the Somavamsi kingdom began to decline and Utkala was finally conquered by the Gangas. The Gangas like their predecessors were great devotees of Saivism, but since the time of Anantavarman Chodagangadeva they changed their faith towards Vaishnavism. During the first 31 years of his reign he styled himself as paramamahesvara but in the Korni copper plate grant which dated 1112 A.D he changed his attitude by

calling himself as Paramamahesvara, Paramavaishnava and Paramabrahmanya. Many scholars have spoken of conversion of Chodaganga from Saivism to Vaishnavism under the impact of Ramanuja, the great Vaishnava saint. He had a tremendous influence on Chodaganga and during his time the Vaishnava movement spread rapidly in Odisha and it was Chodaganga built the great temple of Puri for Lord Purushottama which is gleaned from numerous epigraphic records.

The Jagannath temple of Puri was the most important centre of Vaishnavism in India. Generation after generation devotees visited the holy Purushottama Kshetra to offer worship. Purushottama-Jagannatha has influenced the life of the Odia people from the very early period to the present days.

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12. O.H.R.J-Vol.VI-P-IV-P.299

Dr. Bharati Pal, Odisha State Museum, Bhubaneswar.



It is an important question to ask as to how pilgrims coming to Puri in lakhs, especially at Car Festival time, were dealt with when there was no Department of Tourism in Odisha. The Department of Tourism was started only in 1973. The Odisha Tourism Development Corporation was started even later, in 1979. To propagate the philosophy of Lord Jagannath, the worshippers of Jagannath Temple used to send their assistants known as Gumastas to the address of pilgrims in all parts of India. These Gumastas would invite the devotees to come to Puri to have *darshan* of Lord Jagannath.

When the Gumastas went to these various places, they took with them the photo of Lord Jagannath and dry Mahaprasad to be distributed

among the pilgrims. In olden days there was not even bus or train service to Puri, what to speak of a Tourism Department of Odisha. So pilgrims used to come to Jagannath Dham on foot, covering hundreds of kilometres to have *darshan* of the deities. When they reached Puri, the Tirtha Guru would give them free lodging, food and sometimes even loans for the return journey to their homes. It was the role of these Tirtha Gurus to introduce people of various parts of India to Jagannath culture.

These Tirtha Guru worshippers were honest, spiritual and wise guides for the pilgrims. Any member of any Nijoga, or community of worshippers, could be a guide to pilgrims. They showed good behaviour and great hospitality to

## The Role of Tirtha Gurus with Pilgrims to Jagannath Dham

*Somanath Khuntia*



pilgrims who came to Puri in their family name. They considered such pilgrims as their own personal family members. When they themselves went to distant areas, the pilgrims there treated them also as head of their own family. They were given rice, dal, vegetables and ghee to cook meals for themselves (as they never took meals outside). The leftover food was then taken by the pilgrim family members as Prasad from the Tirtha Guru, who was also called THAKUR, the walking Lord Jagannath.

Some of the most famous Tirtha Gurus of the past were Kali Yuga Bamadeva pratihari, Chandan Hajuri Chakhi Khuntia, Harihar Guru,





Ramachandra Gochhikar and Singhari Shyamasundara Kar. Their lives were illustrious examples of selfless service to the pilgrims coming to Jagannath Dham. For example, Harihar Guru of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1851-1924) is remembered today with the greatest reverence and respect by rich and poor alike. He was called a PRAKRUTA PANDA, a genuine worshipper in the temple of Lord Jagannath, and whose whole life was a practical illustration of this teaching.

For example, Harihar Guru, who was from Pratihari Nijog, used to take bath in Narendra Tank daily in the early morning. One morning he heard a man shouting in a loud desperate voice, "Where is my Panda? Where is Harihar Guru?" He sent his Gumasta to find out who the man was but the man returned and said that it looked like the man was suffering from leprosy. He was covered with bandages. The man kept shouting the name of Harihar Guru repeatedly. When the Gumasta refused to go to the man, Harihar Guru himself went and embraced him, forgetting about any disease. He told the horrified throng of bystanders, "Whenever my name is called, whatever the disease, I will go and embrace that man as my guest and serve him as my God !"

At that, the man dropped his leper's dress. He actually had no leprosy but came in such disguise to avoid robbers on the way! He was really a rich man from a distant village and he felt at Harihar Guru's feet, pouring gold coins on them. Harihar Guru immediately distributed them to all around. His only happiness was in helping others.

The only formal education Harihar Guru had was Chatasli school training by a local priest as a small boy. There he was taught to read and write the holy texts according to old traditions. His only work was temple *seva*. Eventhough he was not a

rich man, in a small way he gave to all. He founded many Vedic schools to teach Sanskrit to poor Brahmin boys so they could become priests. His family has created many more schools, especially music schools for *bhajan* training. Harihar Guru used to arrange Ram Lila and Mahabharat opera in front of his residence and he encouraged wrestlers in Jagagharas of Puri to preserve the traditional culture. He was a friend of Utkalamani Gopabandhu Das, who was also called the "Gandhi of Odisha." Harihar Guru's greatest advice was this; "In this Kali Yuga, help ever, young or old, rich or poor, anyone in need." So till today he is fondly called Mahadani Harihar, the Great Giver, by people of Odisha.

Harihar Guru was always poor, financially. Even if he had no money, he would take a loan from wealthy persons and help someone in great need. Once it happened that a person who gave him the loan compelled him to repay at once. He was rebuked and insulted by this man. A pilgrim was hearing this quarrel and asked Harihar Guru, "Punditji, what is this all about ?" Harihar Guru told him with a soft smile. "Well, I have taken a loan from this man to help someone in need and I am not able to repay it." That pilgrim out of deepest respect for his Tirtha Guru immediately took off his wooden sandals that were covered with gold and gave them to the other man, He said, "Go and sell these !" Such was the relationship between the Tirtha Guru and his devotee of Lord Jagannath.

When Harihar Guru died, his sons and grandsons became very thoughtful because there was no money in the house. After a few years, however, many pilgrims began to come, hearing of the greatness of their father. They donated money and today they are still coming mainly from the state of Uttar Pradesh. A Guru Dharmasala



has been built where they can stay while having *darshan* of the Lord. Today the descendants of Harihar Guru still take care of all of their needs.

In his youth, Chakhi Khuntia was well-known for his physical and spiritual strength. One day after Rath Yatra Festival, the king of Puri saw the young man and asked why he looked so sad. Chakhi Khuntia replied that there was no firewood in his house for cooking. Jokingly, the king told him to take two wheels of the Lord's own chariot to use. To the king's utter amazement, the boy lifted up two big wheels and rolled them home! Chakhi Khuntia was very big man. To see his bed or food *thali*, one is amazed. Both are four times normal size !

Yet his real greatness came later, due to his great inner spiritual strength. In 1817 the ruler of the kingdom of Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh came to Puri with his daughter Lakshmibai. The father introduced his son with these words, "if I am dead and you face any difficulty, my son will come to help you". True to his father's command, the son did just that.

In 1845 the British rulers of India passed an order that all property would be annexed to the British Empire if there was no adult heir. At that time Lakshmibai's husband had died and she had only an infant son. In desperation she wrote to Chakhi Khuntia who was then her Tirtha Guru to please come to help her.

Before going there, Chakhi Khuntia went to the temple and prayed for Lord Jagannath's blessing, singing a *bhajan* which he himself composed. In the song he asked the Lord to take down the flag from Nilachakra and rain His mercy on him. At that moment a flag from the top of the temple fell at his feet ! He tied it to his head and left on horseback alone to Jhansi.



Chakhi Khuntia thus became one of the first freedom fighters of modern India. All fought together against the British invaders. The queen herself was killed and Chakhi Khuntia went into hiding in Nepal. After nine or ten years he returned to Puri. His wife, believing he had died, was wearing the dress of a widow. The British had confiscated his property and he was arrested and had to report daily to the authorities. Later his property was returned to him and pilgrims began to come in his name to Jagannath temple.

Although their field of activity was totally different, Harihar Guru and Chakhi Khuntia are looked upon with the same weight by the people of Odisha. Chakhi Khuntia was a great warrior saint of the 1800's. There are two statues of him, one on a main road of Bhubaneswar and one on a main road of Puri. Every year on the anniversary of his death, a grand function is held, for he is one of the primary cultural heroes who have shaped the minds of Odishan youth today.

Born in 1830, he was called Chandan Hazuri because his father prayed to Lord Jagannath at Chandan Lagi time in the temple that a son be born to carry on his *seva*. He was nicknamed "Chakhi" because of his habit of first tasting the Bhoga to be offered to the Lord before his mother could stop him. Chakhi means "to taste to see whether it is good or not."

As a true *sevaka* of the Lord, Chakhi Khuntia served the people in distress. On his death-bed his last words were "Jai Jagannath". Now the descendants of Chakhi Khuntia continue to serve pilgrims. The Hajuri Estate runs a Dharmasala near the North Gate of Jagannath Temple. Pilgrims who come in the name of Chakhi Khuntia may stay there free of charge. They receive free food and take Mahaprasad back to their homes to distribute to other devotees there. To honour the legendary feats of Chakhi Khuntia,



the Government of Odisha has also started a hospital for children at Chakrtirtha Road called Chandan Hazuri Children's Hospital.

Even if people say that Mahatma Gandhi did not come inside Jagannath temple, Ramachandra Gochhikar was his Tirth guru. He once showed the signature of Gandhi to media persons from his signature register. Gandhi's wife and secretary went inside the temple but Gandhi refused to go inside because at that time persons of untouchable caste were not allowed inside.

Singhari Shyamasundar Kar was not only a famous singer of Odisha in recent years but also a worshipper and Tirtha Guru of Jagannath Temple. He served the pilgrims coming from the area around Simla. Leaving his wife and son, he devoted his life to devotional song and helping pilgrims. When he was in Puri, he took his pilgrims to Jagannath Temple himself and took care of all of their needs.

He was the first person from Odisha to sing in Lal Kila, the Red Fort in Delhi. He was chosen to sing on the very day India celebrated her Independence, on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947. He sang the famous Hindi song "Bandey Mataram," which says "I pray to you, India, my motherland."

Today there are over 500 Tirtha Guru Families associated with Jagannath Temple, Puri. The relationship between the Tirtha Guru and his pilgrims is exemplary in spite of the fact that now this traditional system is in a state of decay. Some problems such as transportation have been solved as there are now many buses and trains coming every day from all over India. But today the number of pilgrims has dramatically increased,

even on an ordinary day. Gumastas still go to the Puri train station daily to receive pilgrims. They ask pilgrims who their Tirtha Guru is and if they can help the pilgrims in any way.

This kind of welcome gesture to guests coming to Puri was very much appreciated by the revered Pandit Nilakantha Das, Who was an eminent scholar and one of the five close friends of Gopabadhu Das, who was known as the "the Gandhi of Odisha." No one cares for you if you go to big cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata or Chennai. You are left to find your own way from the railway station. But in Jagannath Dham, someone is always waiting to receive you. Today at festival times due to the huge number of people added problems have come, such as food shortage, water shortage, lodging problems and of course with huge numbers of devotees come also huge numbers of thieves. The Tirtha Gurus and their Gumastas are here to protect and safeguard the devotees. If the glory and greatness of this holy place of Jagannath Dham is to be retained, it is hoped that the Tirtha Gurus will continue their selfless service to the pilgrims who seek the Lord's refuge here.

It can be said beyond any doubt that the relationship between Lord Jagannath's pilgrims and their Tirtha Gurus can never be forgotten! Even if the pilgrims meet their Tirtha Guru without going to the temple, they feel privileged as their Tirtha Guru is looked upon as THAKUR, the walking Lord Jagannath Himself. Let this system continue!

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Somanath Khuntia, Manikarnika Sahi, Hazuri Lane, Puri-752001.





Since time immemorial, Kendrapara has been most sacred soil for Hindus. Year in and out, over countries, streams of pilgrims flowed into this land. Tulasi Kshetra, the Adobe of Tulasi is the ancient name for Kendrapara. It has come to the present stage by the inner current of religious consciousness of the then 'Tosala' state. It changed its name in stages as Gupta Kshetra, Brahma Kshetra, Kendrapalli, Kandarnagar, Kandharapadhi at various point of time. At present it is known as Kendrapara, the centre of a great cultural heritage.

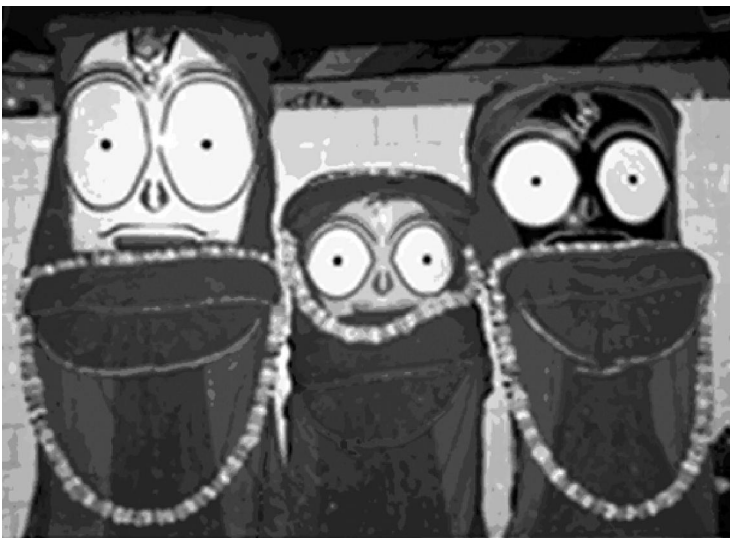
#### LOCATION:

Kendrapara, the oldest Sub-division and the Municipality of Odisha is situated between 20° 18'N and 20° .49'E latitude and 86° .25' E to

87° .1'E longitude. Kendrapara town stands as the epic centre of this vast alluvial plain at 20° .30'E latitude and 86° .25'E longitude as area stretches from the Bay of Bengal in the east to Asia mountain range in the west, the river Vaitarani in the North and the Mahanadi valley in the south. The average annual rainfall varies from 59" .47' to 150 cm. Enriched by numerous rivers, rivulets and forests Kendrapara occupies a unique place for pride of its own. It is now widely believed that before 2000 years, the entire area was submerged in the Bay of Bengal. Due to change of the course of river Mahanadi a horse shoe lake came into existence and later transformed into alluvial plain. Washed in the south by the rivers like Mahanadi and its distributaries and in the north by the Brahmani river system, the economic status of the

## The Splendid Synthesis of Siddha Baladev

*Dr. Basudev Das*



entire plain has been enriched due to bumper production of food grains. Sri Siddha Baladev is the Presiding Deity of Kendrapara, Tulasikshetra. This Deity represents the agricultural pastoral activities of the two great communities that inhabit the vicinity. Lord Baladev, the symbol of agriculture and war, was worshipped by one milk-man Siddha Das, who comes of a native village Kuhudi. The legend says that worship of Lord Baladev was the culmination of the



religious war between the Aryans and the aboriginals. Lord Baladev the elder brother of Lord Krishna was the popular Lord of Aryans. It was quite obvious that cultural war ensued between the then ruler of the area, 'Kandharasura's great sage of the Buddhistic 'Arhata'. He was the representative of the 'Adivasi' Kandha and 'Uria' Kandha culture. In the cultural trustee the Aryans gained control over Baladev worship where the present Juma Masjid and the post office of Kendrapara stand. In order to keep Lord Baladev away from the anger of the aggressors, the Deity was worshipped for several years near to 'Sakhibata' by the side of the river Luna, a distributory of the Mahanadi.

#### **OLD TEMPLE OF THE DEITY :**

At first the deity Baladev was venerated in 'Chaturasramandapa' with Tulasi during the reign of Maharani Kalyani. Then the temple was erected by Jajati Keshari in 10th Century who had dug a large tank, known as 'Mavoi' Puskarini, which still exists near present District Hospital. Historians say that a big temple was built by the king Ananga Bhima Dev III for Lord Baladev for spreading Jagannath cult in the 13th century A.D. The magnificent Rekhadeula of the 13th century was destroyed first by Kalapahad. Then the newly built temple was destroyed completely in 1661 A.D. The cause of destruction of the temple was that Baladev was not paying Jijja Kara to the Centre. Most probably this religious tradition in this vast alluvial area began in the 3rd or 4th century acquiring agricultural essence and roots. Circumstances brought Lord Baladev as the leader or pioneer of agriculture and war. That's why symbolically a plough and saunanda 'Musala' adorn his hand.

#### **PRESENT TEMPLE:**

The present temple at Ichhapur was built in 1670 A.D. by the combined efforts of the feudal

rulers of Kujanga and Chhedera namely Gopali Narendra Sandha and Srinivas Narendra respectively. It was then only BATADEULA and at a later stage, the present Tri Deula (main temple). Bedha and Gundicha temple were constructed by Marhattas through the endeavours of Saint Gopi Das during 1770-73 A.D.

#### **DESCRIPTION OF DEITY:**

Lord Baladev 'was worshipped with Revati and Tulasi. Yellow coloured Tulasi indicates sense and style. Atibadi Jagannath Das had lived for some years in his Oriya Matha and brought change to the deity and the mode of worship. This was the centre of 'Jnanamishra Bhakti', then but after Sri Chaitanya's frequent visit every year Prema Bhakti was added to it. Then the Sadabhuj Gauranga was installed in the temple as a mark of Prema Bhakti alias Gaudiya Bhakti. Besides that, as it may Baladev and Tulasi turned to Baladevjew and Subhadra and statue of Lord Jagannath was added to it in accordance with the tradition of Puri Srikshetra. The deity Baladev was embellished and worshipped first by Indradyumna. According to the Skanda Purana, king Indradyumna came from Avanti and met Udraraja at night after which he started for a visit to Nilamadhava worshipping. Baladev here in 'Dhatu Kandara Aranya'; Eyes of bigger size bear testimony of its time older in comparison of Lord Jagannath. Prior to Nilamadhava, one Mudgal Madhaba was worshipped in the "Dhatu Kandara" forest to the north of 'Chitrotpala' (Mahanadi). It indicates that Baladev who was adored by Milkman community has older antiquity.

#### **SRI CHAITANYA IN KENDRAPARA:**

Sri Chaitanya visited Kendrapara with his followers. They stayed in Chhedera, at present known as Baranga, for five days and took 'nabanna' (new rice) in the month of 'Margasira'



(November) then was transported to Bengal. When Sri Chaitanya came to Orissa particularly to Puri, Srikshetra and stayed for eighteen years, at that time he used to come to pay homage to Lord Baladev and to spread his 'Sankirtana Rasa' or spiritual hymn and returned with his disciples to Nilachala Dham just before the 'Snana Purnima'. He was very much pleased in holy Tulasikshetra for its name and paid obeisance to Tulasi plants everywhere. This name is popular.

### **SANTHA GOPIDAS :**

Santha Gopi Das who had constructed the main temple, Deula Bedha and Gundicha Mandira of Baldevjee. He came to this place in 1728 AD as a pilgrim with 'Yamayata' from North. He came across Baladev in a jungle, in a very simple and poor temple. Then he spread no pains for worship of the deity in a dignified manner. Then Santha Gopi Das met Raghujee Bhonsale after Marahattas captured Cuttack in 1751. Raghujee granted twelve "Petal Bahel" to Santha Gopi Das in 1790 AD in favour of Lachhmanjee and Raghunathjee of Kusiapal. Actually villages were not granted for Baladevjee but to Raghunathjee of Ichhapur Matha and Lachhmanjee, for which he could mobilize him to grant some villages for the management of the deity. In fact Gopi Das was the architect of the entire temple complex and solely responsible for advancement of the Kshetra and its popularity growing gradually and steadily. From 1728 AD till 1942 AD 'Mahantei' system of administration ran smoothly.

### **MANAGEMENT:**

During the reign of Marhatta, according to the directive of British Govt. in 1810 AD, the property of Endowment merged in Revenue Board but the 'Mahanta' of the Matha remained as caretaker (Marfatdar) of that property and

deities from 1730 to 1942 AD. In succession about nine 'Mahants' remained in charge of the temple and worship of the deity in 1863 'Pancha Committee' that consists of five members, managed the temple and looked after its rituals. The first Pancha "committee headed by Radhashyam Narendra (1796-1877) managed the various rituals of the deity smoothly. The temple did not remain as only a religious holy place but became a living institution affecting different aspects of social life. Its influence spread far and wide and could form an indelible impact on mass mind and bound these together.

### **HOLINESS:**

In spite of the fact that Buddhism had a strong base in this part of the land, yet Vaishnavism also had a considerable grip over the people. Thus tantric Buddhism and new Saivite traits got assimilated into this Kshetra, which is evident everywhere in Orissa. Those Brahmins settled in Odisha might have started worshipping the deity about two or three hundred years ago. Before the arrival of the Brahmins, all the deities were being worshipped by aboriginal or Abheera, Aheera or herdsmen. Thus the cultural stream of the place acquired complexity and diversity. Tulasi Kshetra is believed to be as important as Puri Srikshetra because of religious conviction that pilgrimage to Lord Jagannath is not complete if it is not followed by a visit to Lord Baladevjee. Lord Baladev is the excuser and Saviour of Jagannath. He grants pardon to those who come to this place after a visit to Jagannath. So Siddha Baladev is admired as Badathakura or elder brother.

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**D**uring the period of Mughal and Muslim regimes, the Hindu deities and temples were not secure. It is described in Madalapanji that during the period from 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> Century, in order to save the deities of Jagannath temple they were transferred many times from place to place. It was known from the history that at least 10 times Lord Jagannath had to leave Srimandir and was hidden elsewhere. Raktabahu attacked the Srimandir for the first time and so the deities were taken to Sonapur and hidden under the soil with a sign of “Dian Bar”. Again in the year 1568 after the occupation of Odisha by the Afgans Kala Pahad’s attack on

Hindu Temples was a severe chapter. During the reign of Prataprudra (1509) the first attack was made by the Muslims. In the year 1607, because of the attack on the temple, the deities were taken and hidden in Kapileswar in Puri. In 1660, Kesu Das, the Mughal Subedar attacked Puri and set fire the Chariots. Again in 1615, Kalyanmal, son of Todar Mal attacked Puri and so the Lords were hidden to Gurubadai in Chilka. In the year 1617, Makram Khan attacked again on the Srimandir and so the deities were again kept in Gurubadai of Chilka lake. During the attack of Subedar Ahman Baig in 1917- the deities were hidden in Manitri fort. In the year 1622, on the attacks of

## Nabakalebar : Muslim Invasion and Saran Srikshetra Marada

*Dr. P.C. Mohanty*



Subedar Ahman Baig the deities were kept in Manitri and again shifted to Sakhigopal in 1624 attacks. In the year 1647, Khurda was reigned by Gajapati Purushottam Dev II, during the time Subedar Mudabak Khan attacked Srimandir. In the year 1698, at the direction of Aurangjeb, Akram Khan attacked Srimandir and during the reign of Divyasingh Dev, Akram Khan created havoc for Hindus and



Hindu Temples. The last attack on Srimandir was made in the year 1733. As a result the deities were shifted and hidden in many places like Chilka, Banpur, Nayagada and Athagada Marada in the district of Ganjam. This attack was performed by Taki Khan. As revealed in Madala Panji the deities were not transferred anywhere and worshipped peacefully in the Jagannath Temple thereafter.

The present article focusses on the last resort of Lord Jagannath, Subhadra and Balabhadra. The Marda Temple of Athagada, in the district of Ganjam was situated at about 7 Kms from Polasara in the South east of Kodala under the kingdom of Athagada Patna which means the kingdom of eight forts situated at about 60 kms from Berhampur town of South Odisha. During the reign of Rama Chandra Dev-II, Naib Nazim Mahammad Taki Khan attacked Khurda and accepting a defeat Ramachandra Dev was shifted to Athagada along with his family. Due to the recurring attacks by the Muslims he ordered the Sebayats to hide the supreme idols. Accordingly, the idols were first kept in Harisvar Dev Temple of Nairi village and subsequently shifted to Niladri fort of Banpur and then taken to Athagada fort. By this time, Jagannath Harichandan Jagadev was the King of Athagada Zamindari. For the safety and security of the deities he built a temple on warfooting in Marda forest area. The construction of the Temple was finished within two months and the deities were given shelter in the said Jagannath Temple. History says that the entry of Lords in to the temple was on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1733. Due to security reason, the temple was constructed on the valley of Hatibadi mountain in the deep forest area. The Temple architects of nearby Mathura village worked day and night for 46 days and the temple was ready for the entry of Lords.

The temple was built on sandstone. The main temple comprising a Vimana and Jagamohan was built on a wide platform measuring 57' to 45'. The images of Vaman, Nrisingha and Baraha adorn the outer surface of the temple. The images of Garuda, Amlak, the Khapuri and Neelachakra were on the top of the temple. A Ratnasinghasan (throne) was there inside the temple where the deities sit. For the rituals of the deities, on the northern side of Singhadwara a well was dug. Near the well a small idol of Lord Hanuman, near the southern gate a Shiva image worshipped. Outside the temple a moat was dug to save the temple from outer attacks. In resemblance with the Srimandir, the images of Lokanath and Bimala were also worshipped in Marda Temple. The temple built is a simple one without having any art of workmanship. This is because of the shortest period of construction. Here are three gates. The East gate is wider one which is guarded by two lions in two sides. The dimension of the Jagamohan is 6.10 m x 7.20m. Under the Devi image, there is Garuda. The main temple is built in a square plan in the Pidha (Layer) style. It is built on a plain surface and is of 10.8m in length and 13m in width along with a Varandah of 90cm height. The main entrance is beautifully carved and has two doorkeepers at both the sides. The innermost compartment of the temple carries a Singhasan, the sitting place of three deities. There are three round shaped stone pieces (chakapathar) which are used to be the seats of deities. The deities were worshipped about a period of 2 years and 4 months long safely at this Maradamandir. During the period, the Shrimandir of Puri lost its importance due to absence of deities. The rites, rituals and festivals were stopped and so the Pilgrims were used to stop visiting Srikshetra. This affected a lot in the revenue earning of the administration. The account showed 9 lakhs rupees less collection of Pilgrim Tax per





annum which allowed the muslim administrators to give a second thinking for the peaceful maintenance of the Srimandir. So, the Muslim rulers of the then time ordered Kuli Khan to get back Lord Jagannath to Puri temple. Accordingly, the deities were taken back from Mardamandir on the 13<sup>th</sup> year of Ramachandra Dev 5<sup>th</sup> day in the year 1730 leaving the temple empty. From that day onwards, Marda Jagannath Mandir which was constructed to give shelter and security to our supreme deities remained in an unimportant way – remembering the past joyful times of Sarana Srikshetra, only worshipping the seats of Lords.

The history says in the epics of Madala Panji that Ramachandra Dev of Khurda was attacked by Taki Khan in 1731. After Taki Khan occupied Sishupalagada and Rathipur, he sent his army against Ramachandra Dev at Gangapada. Taki Khan betrayed Ramachandra Dev's peace initiation and captured the Khorda Fort. Ramachandra Dev had no alternative so he left Khorda with his family to Athagada as a refugee. Raghunath Harichandan was the chief of the then Athagada welcomed Ramachandra Dev of Khurda and constructed an underground palace in the Marda forest for the king and to make it more safe and secured sew mustared seeds on the roof of the palace which was built of clay. It looked like a usual forest and so the spies from Taki Khan were not able to trace the whereabouts of Ramachandra Dev. After giving shelter to the Khorda king, he again sent his well-trained armed troop of Paikas under the command of Senapati Baliar Singh and defeated the Muslims at Khorda in a ferocious battle and enthroned Ramachandra Dev as the king again. The Nabakalebar was done for the deities. This refers to the sacrifices made courageously in allowing the Raja Ramachandra Dev and the supreme deities both in shelter in Athagada and dethroning the Muslim rule in time. These activities of Athagada king Harichandan

brought for him the title of "The Jagadev". Again at the time of distress, Athagada Marada came to the rescue of Lords and Gajapati. Hence the Temple there was named as "Sarana Srikshetra". In 1778 Rajaram Pandit was given the charge of Subedar for Odisha by Marhatta. After the death of Rajaram Pandit, Sadasiva Rao took the charge of Subedar for Odisha. He had all soft corners towards Lord Jagannath and Gajapati. Summoned by Sadasiv Rao, Dibyasingh Dev came back and took charge of Khurda in 1792.

The days of agony and distress were gone with the irony rules of different ages. The peace was prevailing in Shrimandir and Khorda kingdom. From that day onwards the king of Athagada held the position of 'Saran Panjara Mana Udharan'. In grateful commemoration of this Gajapati Divyasingha Dev introduced a tradition of lighting Mahadeep of Ekadashi Tithi in Srimandir in the name of king of Athagada. Moreover, the king of Athagada was also known as the second Thakur Raja. He also donated a vast landed area to establish Athagada Sahi near the temple at Puri. One Pillar of Mukti Mandap was also named as the Athagada Pillar for the Athagada Sasana Brahmins. A special right was granted to the king of Athagada for Karaseva at the Lords, etc. All these rights were codified in a copper plate by the Gajapati for restoring the pomp and prestige not only of the Gajapati kings but also of the Lords.

After all, a pathetic gesture can be given to this great place of events of history which is still without Gods. The Government and the Shrimandir Temple office should take steps for the upkeep of this site and of the age old temple along with the maintenance of the every rites and rituals or otherwise the glory of Saran Srikshetra and Saran Panjar Bana Udharan shall be destroyed for ever within no time.

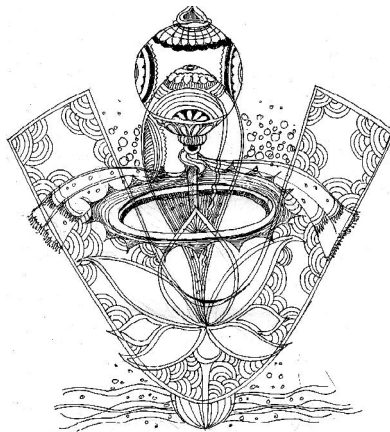


During 1733, Jagannath Harichandan Jagadev was the king of Athagada. He was of seventeen years age. During his reign of sixteen years two great events took place. One was the taking shelter of Raja Ramachandra Dev in the estate of Athagada and the other was the secret transfer of Lord Jagannath from Puri to a temple at Marada in Athagada estate. Both the great events happened because Md. Taki Khan, the Nawab of Bengal attacked Ramachandra Dev, the last Gajapati Raja of Odisha staying at Khorda. Ram Chandra Dev was defeated but could not be arrested. He along with his queen and other courtiers secretly left the Khorda fort in the night and walked for days and arrived in the dense forest near Ramagada in Athagada Estate. He continued to stay there. After Nawab Taki Khan and his general Rakta alias Kalapahada plundered the Khorda Fort, planned next to attack the Jagannath Temple at Puri with the hope that there is a lot of treasure in the temple. This news was leaked and the Pandas and Sebayats of Lord Jagannath were alarmed. The head priest was told in a dream by Lord Jagannath to carry the deities to Athagada. Accordingly in the night the priests carried the images of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and other deities on their

head and left the temple of Puri. This is witnessed by Bhakta Salbeg when he sang the pathetic song ... “Kenegheni Jauchha Jagannathanku..Ame Darshana Karibu Kahaku..... The Panda Sevayats walked for several days and arrived at the dense forest in Ramagada then Ramachandra Dev in exile came and paid his respect to Lord Jagannath. The king of Athagada Jagannath Harichandan on clearing the forest constructed the Jagannath temple for the deities of Puri temple within a period of 45 days only at Marada. He also made enough provisions for the daily rituals of the Lord and car festivals at Marada. Ramachandra Dev as per the tradition worshipped the wooden deities in the stipulated chariots with Chherapahanra”. After the demise of Raja Jagannath Harichandan, his eldest son Madhusudan became the king in 1749. He constructed an underground fort for Ramachandra Dev towards the northern side of his Pantiamo Matha where Gajapati took shelter.

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**T**he Navakalevar ceremony of Lord Sri Jagannath may be conceived in the light of immense Bhakti and Jnanam. Let us first take up the aspect of Bhakti and later we shall take up the shelter of Aitreya Upanishad to understand the concept of Navakalevar.

The Navakalevar Utsav is the collective yearning of intense Bhakti that their Lord should manifest in the same physical form with a sole purpose to protect Dharma which has been deteriorating decade by decade. This auspicious occasion falls in this year, 2015. (18th July' 15) when two Ashada months occur in the same calendar year.

The unique aspect of Navakalevar is that Lord Sri Jagannath along with Sri Balabhadra and Sri Subhadra appear in the same respective physical form which devotees have been worshipping time immemorial. The devotees do not digest *swarup bheda*. The following instances in Bhagavad Gita and Bhagavatam amply support this view.

In the chapter XIth of Bhagavad Gita (Yoga of the vision of cosmic form), SriKrishna, on the request of Arjuna granted Viswarup Darshan of many fold forms in their hundreds and thousands different shapes (sloka 5, chapter XI). But Arjuna could not behold the Viswarupam of

## Navakalevar : An Amalgamation of Bhakti and Jnanam

*Prof. A.V.P.R.Rao*



SriKrishna. He became frightened and nervous. So Arjuna requested SriKrishna to reappear in his familiar form.

*"Adrasta - purvam hrsitos'mi dristva  
bhayena ca pravya thitam manome/  
tad eva me darsya devarupam  
prasida devesa jagan - nivesa"*

(45th sloka, Chapter XI)

(Seeing this form, unseen before, I am overjoyed, but my mind is also perturbed with fear. Reveal the other familiar form of thine and be gracious unto me, thou God of all Gods and indwelling spirit of the worlds).



Arjuna further requests -

*“Kiritinam gadinam chakra - hastam  
icchami tvam drastum aham tathaiva  
tenaiva - baho bhava visva – murte”*

(46th sloka, Chapter XI)

Arjuna further requested Sri Krishna to grant him the most familiar form of four armed *swarupam*, holding Mace and Disc in hand which He is used to.

Thus Arjuna having faith and devotion on Sri Krishna was not comfortable to see Him in any other form other than the usual form which he is accustomed to.

In Dwapara Yuga, Gopikas are always used to enjoy the company of Sri Krishna only as a child *navaneetha chor* and adolescent *chittachor*, playing flute, but not as Ishwara / God.

Yashoda refused to accept Sri Krishna as God incarnation. She always treated Him as her child only. On one occasion Yashoda lost her senses when she had seen the whole *jagat* with different *lokas* in the scenario of Virat *purusha* in the wide opened mouth of Sri Krishna in his childhood. This incident occurred when Yashoda had asked Sri Krishna to wide open his mouth to verify whether he had devoured lumps of earth as alleged by Gopikas. Yashoda, instead, had seen the whole *jagat* which is the act of Almighty. She immediately fainted. She always wanted to see Sri Krishna as a child, but not in different form.

We know that Bhagavan declares -

*“Paritranaaya sadhunam vinasaya ca  
dushkritam Dharma samsthapanarthaya  
Sambhavami yuge yuge”.*



The Self / Ishwara manifests HimSelf in flesh in different forms in the name of incarnation to destroy the wicked and save dharma / righteousness. The purpose is the same whether it is incarnation in different forms as in Dasavataras or in the same form which devotees have been adoring and worshipping till recently as it is in Navakalevar.

Now we shall discuss Aitreya Upanishad which throws light how and why Self / Ishwara enters the gross body. This will enable us to understand the concept of Navakalevar of Lord Sri Jagannath.

Aitreya Upanishad in its sloka one (part I and chapter I) states that.

*“Om ! Atma va idmak evagra’ a sit  
Nanyat kincana misht  
Sa ikshat lokatru suja iti.”*

In the beginning this was Self and Self alone. There was nothing else what so ever that winked. It thought “Let me create (the worlds). He created the universe without the help of any other substance, other than HimSelf, just like a spider weaves the cobweb with the substance, produced by itself. Thus he is “Upadhi Karanam” and also “Nimitha Karanam”. (step by step creation by Him is not described here due to want of space)

He created thus the deities of senses, viz, fire, air, sun, moon etc and induced hunger in them. They want abode to satisfy their hunger.

God has created different animals like cow and horse with their sense organs as abode to these deities. The deities could not satiate their hunger. So God had created man for them-



*“Tabhyah purushmanayata sukrutam bateti  
purusah vava sakrutam  
Tah abravidhyathayatanam pravisateti”*

(Sl3. Chapter II, Part 1)

(God created man for them. The deities are satisfied because God created man by Himself through His own Maya. Hence man is called “sukurta”.)

Then the deities of senses entered into man—fire into the mouth in the form of speech, air into nostrils in the form of smell, Sun into eyes in the form of sight, Direction into ears in the form of hearing, Touch into skin, Moon into mind, Semen into genetic organs and death into navel in the form of Apana (vital force that presses down). Thus after Deities entered into different sense organs of the man and get satisfied, then Ishwara /Self thought :

*“Sah iksata katham nvidam madrute  
Syaditi sah iksata katarena prapadya iti  
Sah yadi vaca abhivyahrtam  
Yadi pranenabhi pranitam,  
Yadi cakshusa drustam  
Yadi srutena srutam  
Yadi tvaca sprustam  
Yadi manasa dhyatam yadhya panenabhy panitam  
Yadi sisnena visrustamath koahmiti”*

(Sloka 11, Chapter III, Part 1)

Then Ishwara thought “If all sense and their deities do their respective duties like utterances by the organ of speech, smell by nose, seeing by the eye, hearing by the ear, feeling by the sense of touch, thinking by the mind etc., then who am I?

He further thought “It is like a city in which the activities just as praises and offerings that are made by the citizens become useless when there is no king to receive them. Similarly the

activities of the body and its sense organs like praises through speech in honour of Me (Lord/ Self) become useless if Lord is not there. I (the Lord) shall become cognizable as conscious reality. The king, after entering the city observes the omissions and commissions of their subjects. It’s very much true. Pillars, walls, ceiling etc that enter into the construction of vast and beautiful palace, exist for the sake of somebody else who is in no way concerned with the palace. Similar is the relationship between body and Myself’. So thought Ishwara / Self. Thus deciding to enter into the body, He thought “It is not proper for me to enter through the foot as it is the entry of Prana (the vital force) which is my servant. So I should enter through the head”.

*“Sah etameva simn vidaryataya dvara prapadyat  
Saisa vidrtirnam dvastadettrae nandanam  
Tasya traya avasthastrayah svapna  
Ayam - avasathoaya mavasa thoayamavsath iti”*

(Sloka 12, Chapter-III; Part-1)

Thinking thus, He entered the body through the slit on the head, which is known as ‘Vidriti’. It is also known as “Nandanam” (product of joy). Thus the Lord enters the body like an individual Atma (Jeevatma) like a king enters the city. Now let us come to Navakalevar Utsav of Lord Sri Jagannath.

While the priests in sanctum sanctorum of Sri Jagannath temple chant Vedic hymns amidst the sounds of beating drums in Navakalevar Utsav with deep faith and conviction. He, the Lord Jagannath enters the newly carpentered wooden idols in the same way with the same logic as conceptualized in Aitreya Upanishad to become cognizable as conscious reality who knows His devotees and their activities like a king in the city. So also Lord Sri Balabhadra and Sri Subhadra enter into their respective idols.



This is localised concept of Ishwara / Self where it takes *upadhi* as individual bodies. We can also understand Ishwara/Self in a delocalised concept, occupying every inch of the space without doership and enjoyership in terms of universal conscious. Consciousness is Self revealing which is dependent on only itself, but not on any other factor. It is that through which unheard is heard, unthought becomes thought and unknown becomes known. There are three abodes to Him (conscious) viz; one, the (right) eye which is the seat of waking, second, the mind, the seat of dreaming state and the third, the heart, the seat of deep sleep.

This is the Jnanam which reveals secrets of Self/Ishwara. The Jnanam goes on revealing and revealing as long as there is still *dwaitam* (duality), sticking to your *atma* in traces.

What is there to be revealed further if you become one with Him? Lack of absolute Jnanam is ignorance / avidya. It is like darkness. Darkness is due to lack of light. But is there anything, called darkness? In reality what exists is only light, but not darkness. Similarly there is only *jnanam*. So each and every one is *jnani* only. But there is lack of *jnanam* in us because there is *bhrama* (delusion) due to Maya which creates “moha” and “bandhanam” (bondage). It is just like a spider which itself remains prisoner in the cobweb that

is created with the substance, secreted by itself. The threads of web get dissolved if the spider wants itself to be free. So also man too.

Can you understand Lord Sri Jagannath and His Navakalevar by merely discussing time and again innumerable volumes of sacred truth? Understanding is not enough, but becoming one with Him is all important.

You can become one with Him by putting full stop to your volatile mind. Mind is just like vast sea with continuous waves. Have you ever seen sea without waves for a second ? How long you will sit on the seashore - birth after birth - waiting and waiting to see that all waves in the sea vanish and becomes calm?

But you can calm down the *vritis* of mind - of course not by command - but by *jnanam* of Self Ishwara only. Know Thyself by coming nearer and nearer to yourself very closely by stopping the *vritis* of mind after proper and sustained enquiry, “who am I”, which is what is the substance of Upanishads.

Whoelse is more nearer to Thee than Thyself ? The famous spiritual saying runs -

“As I searched for God, I found Myself only and as I searched for Myself, I found God only”.

*Jai Jagannath.*





**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 worshipped 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

## Nabakalebara Rituals: A Spiritual Analysis

*Asit Mohanty*



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

‘Kalebara’ or body has been described as ‘agamapayi’ 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 worshipped 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 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 '*kartta*' or ultimate doer is only the '*sakshi purusha*' or witness. He is also '*akartta*'; He never does anything but everything 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 round 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*' for 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 Dasami, 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 Sudarshan 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 'Agyamala' are offered to respective trees. The 'Agyamala' of each idol is offered to the tree from which the same idol is to be constructed. It means the 'Agyamala' 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 vriksha' 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 Jagannath Ballav 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 Jagannath Ballav Math 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*, 'astra puja' or worship of cutting tools to be used for cutting the 'daru' is performed. 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 'astra mantra'. Sri Sudarshan happens to be the deity of 'astra 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 Sudarshan *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 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 worshipped 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 'Agnyamala' 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 a couplet from third *sarga* (chapter) of the Gitagovind of Sri Jayadev of medieval *bhakti* era. It is "Kansarirapi sansara 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 an 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 an 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 Adwaita 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, jackfruit 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 realises 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 'matsyabali' 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 originally its base, those who know it real masters of Vedas. 'Kathopanishad' also proclaims 'Urddhwamuloabakshkha 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 vriksha'. 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 Indradyumna 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 rituals 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 Rathayatra festival of Sri Jagannath. Pati and Daita servitors are the only participants and witnesses of this Rathayatra. They beat the cymbals, hold the chhatra, chamara 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 Rathayatra. 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 divide 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 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 Rathayatra 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 worshipped in the Sri Jagannath temple. It makes introspect into the concept Omnipresence of Almighty.

### **Sri Yagnanusimha 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 Brahma, these ‘*daru*’ idols had miraculously appeared as Sri Nrusimha before King Indradyumna and lord Brahma. 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 Brahma, 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 Brahma 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* is used in traditional ‘*Pata Chitra*’ paintings of Odisha called ‘*Yagnanusimha*’ 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 everything 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 worshipped on the 'ratnasimhasana' of Sri Mandir. On the 'ratnasimhasana' 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 deities. 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 SriNrusimha 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 'SriGopijanballava' 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 SriNrusimha 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 be taken into account. It says “*Aasino duram brajati shayano yati sarvatah, kastam madamadandebam madanyo gnyaturmarhati*”. 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 ‘*mrityormrutyu namamyaham*’ meaning “I bow down before annihilator of death.”

### Conclusion

Analysis of rituals of ‘Nabakalebara’ indicates that although worshipped as four or ‘*chaturddhamurtti*’, They are really one. Although They are worshipped 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 non-living 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 ourselves 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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**D**uring Anabasar days every year and Moha Anabasar days, the Daita Sebayata, Anabasar Sudha Suar Sebayats and Dutta Mohapatra Sebayats along with Pati Mohapatra Sebayat play most important roles and render important services to deities. The origin of these Sevaks goes back to antiquity, the fixation of date and year can not be accurate. The Indian ancient history gives an account of non-Aryan and non-Dravidian tribe namely Astric tribe, the first settlers in eastern region of India. The Daitas are descendants from Biswabasu tribe whose private Deity was Nilamadhab. Then came

Then came King Indradyumna story who after having a glance of Nilamadhaba heard divine voice from sky about floating of Darus i.e. logs of wood in sea. The Darus were brought and God came as a carpenter who constructed the present forms of Deities. The worship of Daru goes back to antiquity and its year and date are difficult to fix, although description are recorded in later years in Skanda Purana. Further more Daru worship goes back to Vedic age. The Rig and Atharva Vedas in high hymn narrate the story of Darus floating on sea. The conclusion is that Daru worship is as old as Vedas. Later Hindus and Vedic philosophy recognized Darus as

## “Nabakalebara : Transition of Brahma to Newly Constructed Holy Body”

*Banamali Suar*

a Brahmin known Bidyapati in search of Nilamadhab Deity under order of Indradyumna, the King of Abanti. He met with Lalita, the daughter of King Biswabasu near a tank which is now called Kakatirtha, the holy tank. Both got married and out of their wedlock, the Sudha Suars were born and named in that title and Pati Mohapatra Sevak is the descendant of Bidyapati. These facts are narrated in Odishan history of a particular historian, in Bamadev Samhita, Sarala Das Mohapatra, Skanda Puran, in Deula Tora epic, in Jagannath Puran etc. All the narrations give one conclusion about the above origin. As this synopsis is in brief, the details of those documents are not analyzed.

*paramatma* and *Param Brahma* i.e. Supreme Soul and Supreme Being.

Hindu concept of Atma (Soul) or Brahma is part of Supreme Soul or supreme Brahma. This Supreme Soul is the master of universe known as Sri Jagannath. He is also Purusottam. The only supreme power that generates as a creator, operates as operator and as destroyer destroys. This Vedic philosophy has been vividly explained by Sri Krushna to His close associate Arjuna. This narration is in Sri Bhagbat Gita. Siba is destroyer, Sakti is operator and Bisnu is creator.

Sri Jagannath Mohaprabhu is described as Purusottam. This concept of oneness is



explained by Bhishma to his grandson Yudhisthira. This theory has been well established in Sri Bisnu Sahasra nama hymn. In Sri Bhagabat Gita in fil 6 to 18 stanzas of Chapter-xv the concept of Purusottam is further explained. Sri Purusottam, the Supreme Being is superior to all mortal perishable objects i.e. Khyara Purusa and different from imperishable “Jivatma” which is immortal Akhyara Purusa. But Purusottam is superior and different from both concepts.

Further the stanzas fifteen and sixteen clearly proclaim that the Supreme Brahma i.e. Almighty is beyond human imagination. Arjun sees numerous arms, bellies, eyes having infinite forms extended to all sides. All heavenly bodies, Gods, all beings, Brahma, Shiva, Rishis and all serpents are in that unending infinite form. All moons, sun, fire like mouth exist in this Universal form. His hands, feet, ears, eyes, heads and faces are all-pervading. This is explained in thirteenth stanza in thirteen chapter. Still the Almighty Jagannath as a human being has become a part and parcel of society and social life exhibiting various divine plays. The whole universe lies in Him. He is in Universe and His presence is felt everywhere.

In Tretaya, Sri Ram was ideal Purusottam. In Dwapara age, Sri Krushna was Jugabatar Purusottam. In present Kalijuga, Sri Purusottam Jagannath is considered as Supreme Being. Brahma enters into new Daru and old Darus are put in a ditch in Koili Baikuntha garden to get Golak Samadhi. In second chapter of Sri Bhagabata Gita in stanzas twenty one and twenty two, it is explained that soul or Brahma is imperishable, eternal, free from all types of decay and destruction by fire, water, air and from all other devices and that Brahma and Soul finds new bodies and give up old one.



### Short Historical Accounts of Nabakalebar :

This year two thousand fifteen, Nabakalebar of Deities are being observed. According to astrological calculations, when extra intercalary month of Asadha is associated with regular Asadha Nabakalebar festival is observed. In regular Asadha, Anabasar is observed for fifteen days. But Moha Anabasar of Nabakalebar festival is observed for forty five days. For new chariots, some concerned Sevaks such as Bhoi and other Temple Sevaks with due permission obtained from Deities in forms of permission garland (Angyamala) was sent to the District of Nayagarh on 29.12.14 and there, the goddess is worshiped and cutting of trees for chariots began. On 24.01.15 on the auspicious day of Basanta Panchami, logs for Rath were purified by Raj Purohita.

But for Nabakalebara of Deities, the usual traditional auspicious day following day of Sri Rama Nabami Day is the scheduled day. This falls on 29.03.15. Pati Mohapatra Sebak brings four garlands from four deities, Sri Sudarsan, Sri Balabhadra, Goddess Subhadra and Sri Jagannath. He keeps the garland of Sri Sudarsan himself and other three garlands are given to three main Daitas of three deities. These garlands are treated to be holy order of deities to go in holy procession for cutting Daru i.e. Neem Trees. Thereafter Bhitaraatha Mohapatra ties tussar sarees (clothes) on heads of all Daitas and they also get Tussar Khandua sarees as these are traditional rituals. This function was performed near Kalahat door of inner sanctorum of deities in the Temple. Deulakaran and Tadhaukaran Sevaks also get such sarees and they accompany with Daitas for Banayatra (Jungle holy journey), Lenka Sebayat also got Boirani saree who holds a silver wheel, and four Biswakarmas (traditional Carpenters).



This function is observed near Jay Bijay door. At that time silver trumpet made out of three pieces of silver pipes is blown and Tom Tom drum (Telling drum) is also played in a charming sound and another Sebayat holds royal decorated umbrella and procession starts through Jagamohan, Satapahacha to Baisi Pahaha via Ananda Bazar and procession goes to eastern gate Singhadwar (lion's gate). From lion's gate the procession goes to king's palace where Rajguru welcomes the procession and the king gives betel nut, and sundried rice to Biswabasu Sebayat and then the procession goes to Jagannath Ballabh Matha (Monastery) where the procession party takes rest and the silver wheel (Sudarsan Chakra) which is weapon of deity is also placed on decorative cot. All arrangements are made by Temple Administration. All these traditional rites and rituals were also observed on 29.3.2015.

Next day, morning the holy procession started towards Mangala Deity in Kakatpur and procession party reaching there, takes rest in Deuli Math (monastery) and information is sent to head priest of the deity and thereafter on behalf of the Goddess Mangala, another holy grand procession with various trumpets and beating of drums comes to Deuli Math to invite Daitas i.e. Banayatra party. In the Temple of Goddess Mangala, The deity takes bath with 108 pots of holy water, wears new sarees sent by Sri Jagannath Mahaprabhu and Mahaprasad is offered and Lord's garland is offered to the Deity and then the Banayatra party returns back to Deuli Math and they all offer prayer to the deity to show the direction and location of Darus. This year, the same rituals were observed. After location of Daru, Jagnya is performed according to Vedic rites and ritual. Then the Neem tree is also worshipped and cutting ceremony starts. First Daru for Sri Sudarsan, next for Sri Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sri Jagannath

in order. The Daitas are divided into three groups one for Sri Balabhadra, another for Deity Subhadra and the other for Sri Jagannath.

The various symptoms or signs are required to select Darus viz. the Neem tree must be old, there must be a tank or river nearby, a cremation ground, a hermitage, three branches, an ant hill nearby, there must not be bird's nest, there must be a living a cobra nearby, there must not be any parasites on tree etc. There must be Bilwa, or Tamarind Trees and on the tree, the signs of Chakra, Sankha (conch), Gada (mace) Lotus or ploughs are located then only the rituals will be followed. Pati Mohapatra, Biswabasu Sebayat touch the tree with golden and silver axes. Biswakarma start cutting trees in order of preference with newly made and purified iron axe. None is allowed to see cutting of the trees, as per the puranic views.

*“Swarupam ba Arupam ba Napasyat  
Chhedanam Abadhi”.*

The Darus in preference are carried on newly made wooden cart (Sagadi) with heavy four wheels. Then Darus are tied and covered with Pata and tusser sarees and royal flags are also hoisted high. The return yatra starts with a grand procession organized by devotees and Darus are carried into Temple to Koili Baikuntha garden through northern gate of Temple called Meghanada compound wall. Darus are kept in resting rooms. Bringing of all Darus must be complete before Snana Purnima i.e. full moon day of Jyestha month and this year all these rituals were performed before Snana Purnima, full moon day of Jyestha which fell on 2.6.2015. Moha Anabasara of forty five days, started from 2.6.2015 and the newly made bodies after change and transplanted of Brahma will appear before the devotees on 17.07.2015 and next day observed will be Nabakalebar Rathayatra.



During these forty five days of Moha Anabasar the writer and his agnetic members make, arrangement of offering sweet water, prepare holy ointments (medicines) for construction of holy bodies of deities and prepare another paste for deities before colouring.

The Darus are kept secretly in newly made rooms. After full moon day i.e. Snana Purnima, for four days, Jagyan Vedi Nyasa room Mandapas for Daru Puja, Purna Kumbhas are constructed inside Koili Baikuntha garden. The deity Nrusingha is brought to Daru room, Biswabasu invites 54 Vedic Brahmins and Biswakarmas. Jagnya was performed with Vedic hymns and cow ghee offered to holy fire for 2100 times daily for eleven days. Towards last phase, Darus with Nrusingha are made seated in a small chariot and the chariot is dragged by Daitas in the inner Bedha for seven rounds. Then Darus are taken to Koili Baikuntha and Nrusingha is brought back to its Temple and Darus are taken inside Anabasar room wherein Brahmas from all old bodies are brought out and placed in newly made Deities. Asan with new tussar Patta, cloths, new Tulsi and white flowers, sandal paste are offered to Brahma and those are placed in newly constructed holy body of Darus, old Darus are buried in a ditch and covered with earth in Koili Baikuntha along with Darus, the three chariot drivers(Sarathi), twelve horses, thirty six side deities, six parrots are also buried in ditch.

This change of sacred Brahma is done as per astrological calculation on the auspicious time already scheduled. Neem tree is used as Daru as it is a medicinal herb and it removes and cures many diseases and the ointments which are covered and pasted also are medicines. The sandal paste, Tulsi plants and leafs are also medicines and specially the living secret Brahma radiates and it attracts devotees to Thy feet. The

immersion ceremony of the Lords is mysterious experience. The Daitas, and our family members observe obsequies on Tenth day of burial function and wear new clothes and dresses. Nowhere in any religious world such culture exists. In Vedic philosophy, Sri Jagannath Purusottam is eternal Being. He is the beginning, Middle and end as explained in Sri Bhagabat Gita and He who hears without ear, sees without eyes, work without hand and makes Him present everywhere without feet.

On festive days, He uses gold and other ornaments studded with valuable blue gems, sapphires, rubies, stone, pearls, diamond etc. He when comes out during car festival walks like a warrior. At night when goes to sleep, takes betel and hears song. These activities are just like a human being. He is a mysterious Deity. In that very night of change of Brahma all side subordinate deities cry even weeping sounds are audible. At the time of change of Brahma, the Temple doors are closed and none is allowed to stay in. Mystery is the Lord and Mystery is His conduct and activities. He is the source of inspiration and spirit of unity, integrity, equality and fraternity. Let Nabakalebar Jatra of Sri Jagannath Purusottam lead the humanity from unreal to real, from darkness to light and from mortality to immortality. The cult of Sri Jagannath in Srikshetra Puri in Odisha, is associated with a culture. The icon of deities is as mysterious as curious and rarest of rare in iconography and the selection of four colours such as white, yellow, red and black and the union of colours and painting is also rarest of rare. His round shaped eyes indicate eatearnal vigilance throughout day and night.

***“Sarba Rahasyam Purusottamsya, Deba Na Jananti Kuta Manusyaha”.***

Banamali Suar, Advocate, At-Dolamandap Sahi, Po/Dist-Puri-752001.



Odisha, the land of art and architecture, has not only excelled in art, architecture, Music and dance but also has carved a niche in spiritual culture of the world. Odisha has become famous worldwide in her heart-touching elegant creativity in art and architectural beauty in Konark, Rajarani and innumerable temples in Patta-paintings, Odissi dance and Odissi Music. In the world of spiritual culture, the Jagannath cult has also got worldwide recognition in fostering equality, fraternity, brotherhood, religious tolerance irrespective of caste, creed and region.

Shree Jagannath, the Lord of universe and His colourful car festival attract lakhs of pilgrims

during car-festival which is celebrated annually on second day of bright fortnight of Asadha (June-July). This is considered as the biggest colourful festival in the world. It consists eight phases of festivities such as (1) Snana Jatra (2) Anasara (3) Netra Utsaba (4) Naba Jaubana Darshan (5) Pahandi, the ceremonial processes of the images (6) Chhera Panhara – which means, sweeping of floor of the cars by the golden broom by king of Puri (7) Sojourn of the Deities in Gundicha Ghar for 9 days (8) Lastly the Bahuda or the return Car festival.

When three chariots such as Nandighosh of Lord Jagannath, Taladhwaaja, the chariot of

## Jagannath Cult and its Impact on Odishan Music and Dance

*Indu Bhusan Kar*



Lord Balabhadra and Deba Dalana – the chariot of Devi Subhadra roll on “*Bada danda*” with colourful dresses, innumerable devotees irrespect of caste, creed and religion are enthralled in gaiety with devotional emotion. W.W. Hunter one of the well known historians of Odisha has described this colourful scene of Car-festival of Puri in his book titled “A



History of Orissa”. He described this wonderful scene as follows –

“Music strikes up before and behind drums beat, cymbals clash, the priests harangue from the cars, or shout a sort fescinnine medley enlivened with broad allusions and course gestures which are received with roars of laughter by the crowd, and so the dense mass struggles forward by convulsive jerks tugging and sweating, shouting and jumping, singing and praying and swearing”. Besides the colourful car festivals there are nearly two sub-festivals being observed, throughout the year at Puri-Srikshetra. But only 12 other festivals, such as Jhulan Jatra, Janmastami, Kumar Purnima, Basant Panchami, Sibaratri, Sriram Nabami and Chandana Jatra etc. are celebrated. In all these festivals Sri Jagannath is dressed with different Veshas (dresses), such as Chandan Vesha, Ganesh Vesha, Naba Jaubana Vesha, Radha Damodar Vesha, Gaja Uddharan Vesha. In the book titled “Niladree Mahodaya”, name and description of various Veshas of Jagannath has been enumerated. All these major festivals center around Shree Jagannath to the aspiration of Hindu, Buddhist, Jaina and Vaishnavite devotees. The rituals of all religious sects have been accommodated in these celebration of festivals. This shows the syncretism of the cult of Jagannath. In this context, it is pertinent to know the salient features of Jagannath cult.

### **SALIENT FEATURES OF JAGANNATH CULT :**

Shree Jagannath from time immemorial was being worshiped by Sabar Tribe as “Daru Devata”. There is a belief that their Devata Kitung (in their language) lives in the tree. Their God Who is residing in tree is called “Jaganti”. In the mythology of Sabara culture, Kitunga manifests in ten incarnations. One of these ten incarnations

is Jagannath. Affectionately these tribals – Sabars, call Jaganti as ‘Jagaboi’ which means “Jaga Devati”. In Odishan villages, Odia devotees, respect Jagannath and call Him as Jaga Thakura.

Dr. Beni Madhab Padhi, a distinguished scholar & writer, has also discussed tribal origin of Jagannath cult in his widely acclaimed book titled in Odia “Daru Devata”. The legend of Viswbasu, worshipping Daru Devata in a jungle at **Nila Sundar hill** named Blue hill confirms that the worship of Sri Jagannath was of tribal origin. Sarala Das, the great poet of Odia “Mahabharat” has elaborately described the legend of origin of Jagannath cult in “Musali Parva” of his Mahabharat. Surendra Mohanty, a well known novelist of Odisha has optly summed up and said – “In the Musali Parva, Sarala Dasa has attempted a synthesis of autochthonous tribal genesis of cult of Krushna and also the Jagannath Buddha. The narration of the Musali Parva is of great help in constructing the chronological evolution of the cult of Jagannath.” [Lord Sri Jagannath, Page-16]

In course of time, many saints and religious leaders like Ramanuja, Sri Sankaracharya, Sri Chaitanya and Nanak, Sikh Guru visited Puri and accepted Sri Jagannath, as Lord of Universe. They found their religious aspirations fulfilled in the cult of Jagannath. The most notable factor of cult of Jagannath is that not only Brahminical rituals, but also Buddhist, Jain, Saivite and Vaishnavite rituals have been accommodated in Pujas and festivals of Sri Jagannath. Thus, there is great assimilation of essential rituals of all major religious sects of Hindu Dharma.

That is why the cult of Jagannath is called syncretic in nature. Men are equal irrespective of caste, creed and sect. All devotees are brothers. There is great reverence for all religions and the





religious tolerance is an important features of the cult of Jagannath. Unity in diversity is an ideal philosophy in India. The same is true in the cult of Jagannath.

At “Ananda Bazaar”, inside the Puri temple, it is heartening to see all men, women and children of different castes of society share Mahaprasad as members of one community. Sri Jagannath is considered as **Gana-Devata** (God of people irrespective of caste, creed & religion.) He is regarded as “Patita Pavan” (**the savior of downtrodden**). The cult of Jagannath pervades in all walks of life of Odishan people. This cult of Jagannath has enriched the cultural heritage of Odisha – such as art, literature, music, drama and dance.

In religion practice, Sri Jagannath is worshipped like a living human being. He gets up early, takes bath, takes food, have snacks; suffers from sickness, hears music, sees dance and have fun and quarrels with Laxmi. This is unique in the system of Jagannath *seva*, *pujas*, activities.

### **Impact of Jagannath cult on Odishan Music and dance**

If we look back to cultural history of Odisha, we find that musical tradition is more than 2000 years old. Dating back from the rule of Emperor, Kharavela of 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. the Odias have developed their creative genius in music and excelled in it. The Odissi music of Chhanda, Chautisa, Janana, Bhajan has its classicism and originality.

The documentary evidence of Odishan ancient musical tradition has been discovered in the **Hati Gumpha inscription** of Udayagiri and Khandagiri hills situated in the western side of the temple city, Bhubaneswar. In this Hatigumpha

inscription (called elephant cave is one of the 117 caves constructed by Emperor Kharavela, who was a great patron of Gandharva Kala (Music and dance). This inscription has been carved in *prakrit* language in the Brahmi lipi. The fifth line of Hatigumpha inscription mentions “Expert in Gandharva Veda Kharavela arranged for entertainment of his subjects the musical instruments and items such as DAPA (combat, Nata), dance, Gita (Music, Vadita) (Orchestra) MSABA, Festival SAMAJA (Play or drama or Jatra). Dhiren Das, a quoted scholar in performing art of Odisha has opined in his book, titled “Jatra” that Rani Gumpha cave was an Arena Theatre. Thus, this ancient musical tradition flourished gradually with royal patronage of subsequent rulers of Kalinga. During Gupta and Bhaumakar dynasty spanning from 681 AD to 717 AD, many talented Gurus, wrote – “Boudgaon Doha” in *Prakrit* mixed with the then Odia colloquial language. In ancient temples, many scenes of musical instruments such as Veena, Flute, Mardala, Dambaru, Kahali and Mrudanga indicate that these musical instruments were prevalent and popular among Odia people. The ancient Odishan musical and dance tradition continue to be fostered and flourished centering around Sri Jagannath’s Puja service. Music, dance with musical instruments, became the integral part of *puja*, service of Lord Jagannath. Acharya Jayadev a celebrated poet and scholar in Sanskrit language wrote famous Geeti Kabya titled “Geeta Gobinda” in Sanskrit language during the rule of Ananga Bhima Chodaganga Deb (1175-1202). Poet Jayadeb of 12<sup>th</sup> Century was also an ardent devotee of Jagannath. His “Geeta Gobinda” was sung in the Jagannath temple. The rulers of Ganga dynasty, favoured, that “Geeta Gobinda” should be integral part of *puja* ceremony of Lord Jagannath as they were Vaishnavite, though earlier, some of them were Shaivites.



Ananga Bhima Deb III, during whose rule the constructions of temple were completed in his 6<sup>th</sup> regnal year in 1216, proclaimed himself as son of Purusottam or Jagannath. He declared Lord Jagannath as Emperor of Utkal or Rastra Devata and he is His Routa or representative.

According to the Madala Panji (Temple chronicles) Kabi Narasingha Dev (1282-1307 AD), the successor of Langula Narasingha Dev, the illustrious builder of the Konark Temple introduced singing “Geeta Gobinda” in the temple [vide P 36 of the Madala Panji – Prachi edition].

In the field of dance, “Mahari Dance” was introduced in the temple. Mahari dance is said to be oldest form of modern Odissi Dance. In course of time, Debadasi Nrutya by dancing girls (Devadasis) was introduced and it became the part ceremonies of Lord Jagannath. At the time of Badasinghar ritual “Deba Dasis sing” Geeta Gobinda and also dance, when Lord Jagannath goes to bed for sleep. Therefore it can be said that Jagannath temple gave a great platform for enrichment of Odishan music and dance.

Sarala Das, the epic poet of Mahabharat during the rule of Kapilendra Deb, (1452-1479 A.D.) has written about many legends of Lord Jagannath and enlightened Odias with many *ragas* of Odissi music. Innumerable devotional songs, Bhajans, Jananas, were composed by Odia poets for Lord Jagannath.

Eminent medieval poets like Jagannath Das, Balaram Das, Achyutananda, Jasobanta, Dinakrushna Das, Madhavi Das composed Bhajans in praise of Lord Jagannath. Upendra

Bhanja, Gopal Krishna, Banamali Das, Kabisurya Baladev Rath also enriched musical tradition basing on cult of Jagannath. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Salbeg a Mahmedan by birth, became ardent devotee of Sri Jagannath. He wrote heart – touching Bhajanas (devotional song) on Lord Jagannath. His famous song “**Ahey Nila Saila Prabala Matta barana – Mo Arata Nalini Banaku Kara Dalana**” is very popular among the devotees. It is a land-mark in tradition of devotional songs composed for Sri Jagannath, the Lord of Universe. Gopal Krushna Pattanaik of Parlakhemundi has shown his excellent musical talent on multitude aspects of cult of Jagannath. Similarly, Abhimanyu Samanta Singhar, Chandan Hazuri, Rajakabi Jadunath Mahapatra have been influenced by cult of Jagannath and composed soulful Bhajans. Therefore it can be concluded that the syncretism of the cult of Jagannath has not only enriched Odia spiritual life but also fostered Odishan music and dance tradition and mesmerised the mass with awe and wonder.

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## A PRAYER

*Sugyan Gourab*



O Generator!  
Don't exempt me-  
from punishments of my faults.  
But teach me-  
not to make mistakes.  
Teach me-  
to do the right  
being in the right track.

O Operator!  
Punish me mercilessly-  
as a father punishes his child.  
Punish me-  
making realize  
not to repeat mistakes  
as a blind loses his  
stick only once in life.

O Destroyer!  
Don't help me-  
when I fall.  
But teach me-  
to raise myself of my own.

O Lord!  
Don't help me-  
when the world hurts me.  
But teach me-  
to escape of my own  
and convert all  
the wrongs into the rights.

O Almighty!  
Don't help me-  
when enemies are all around

and play tricks.  
But bless me-  
with wit to transit all plans.

O Omnipotent!  
Don't help me-  
during hard times.  
But teach me-  
to be calm as You.  
Teach me-  
to speak sweet and judge  
the right from the wrong.

O Omnipresent!  
Don't help me-during the odd times.  
But teach me-  
to do the evens  
using me head, heart, hand.

O Omniscient!  
Don't help me.  
But teach me-  
to punish all evils  
transforming the wrong acts  
in the right ways.

O Boss!  
Teach me,  
Teach me always-  
to be in the right path  
converting all the weaknesses  
into my saintly strength  
empowering me to transform tomorrow...

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## NO-THING

*Durgaprasad Acharya*



It has not yet been unraveled  
Although scores of inspired minds  
Have intuited -  
Made desperate groping,  
Some in frenzied devotion - dipped  
Trances  
And others in dreary intellect's  
Crevices.

Yet, and yet  
It is there, tantalizingly there  
Shrouded, wrapped - concealed  
Under layers and layers  
of tapestried constructs.

The taken out and the put inside  
Can never be a thing  
Of any known or conceivable  
Dimensions.

"A piece of the rarest 'salagram"  
They say.  
'No, No a tiny body part of  
The one and the only Enlightened Person  
Ever taken birth in this Earth'  
A few claim.

Speculations fly thick  
It may be a sacred sign embossed in diamond

It may be a ritualistic drawing representing  
an esoteric conundrum.

Thus schools differ, scholars differ  
And the mesmerizing show is enacted  
Every twelve or nineteen years.

The happy mimicry is staged  
With elaborate rites -  
With orgiastic abandon -  
To cleanse the mayic patina,  
shadowing the vision of the caged Bird.

The Great show showcases the eternal cycle.

And it will never be known -  
For it is that which is unknowable,  
Neither this, nor that.  
What is shrouded and  
Wrapped and concealed  
Is but omnipotent  
Emptiness.

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Mahavidyalaya, Balipatna, Khurda.