

Vaisnavas, but has been depicted by some as the *ansavatara* (part-incarnation) of the latter. In *Jagannath Charitamruta*, a work of post-Panchasakha period, Jagannath has been described as the Supreme Lord or *Purna Brahma*, whereas Krishna, the son of Nanda, represents only a part of his glory.⁴³

Thus the synthetic cult of Jagannath is an epitome of divergent religious creeds and schools of philosophy that prevailed in India at different periods of her long cultural history. In the historic process of adjustments, Jagannath has assimilated strange contradictions in a manner that is most amazing in the history of religious thought. "There is no discarding any in this religion of man", wrote Pandit Nilakantha Das, "and all the gods and goddesses attacking and appealing have found a place in the compound of the temple. Jagannath has welcomed and embraced all, but been overwhelmed by none and has lost Himself in none"⁴⁴.

The temple of Jagannath, built on an elevated ground about twenty feet above the level of the surrounding area, presents an imposing sight and can be seen from miles away. The height of the main temple or *Vimana* above the road level is 214' 8". It is a fine specimen of the *Pancharatha* style of Orissan temple architecture. The construction of the present edifice is credited to Anantavarma Chodaganga Deva (1078—1147 A. D.) of the illustrious Ganga dynasty. The main shrine consists of four distinct buildings, viz., the *Vimana* or the Great Temple, *Jagmohan* or the Hall of Audience, *Natamandapa* or the Dancing Hall, and *Bhogamandapa* or the Refectory. The temple has two enclosures with large gateways on all the four sides. The dimensions of the outer wall known as *Mehghanada Prachira* are 665 ft. by 640 ft., and that of the inner enclosure known as *Kurma bedha* are 420 ft. by 315 ft.

The Temple
and the Icon

The images of Jagannath, Balabhadra, Suvadra, and the emblem *Sudarsan* are installed in the inner sanctuary of the temple on a raised platform called the *Ratnavedi* or the jewelled platform. The miniature images of Laksmi, Saraswati and Madhab are also placed on the *Ratnavedi* along with the main deities and worshipped. The platform, made of stone, is 16 ft. long, 13 ft. wide and 4 ft. high. Sufficient space has been left on its sides for the circumambulation of the devotees when at certain specified hours of the day they are allowed inside the inner sanctuary for a closer view of the deities. The images are made each

43. *Jagannath Charitamruta*, (Union Printing Works, Cuttack), 1913, Ch. XVIII, Lines 29-30, p. 169.

44. Pandit Nilakantha Das, *The Cult of Jagannath*, Orissa Review, Vol. XXVI, No. 12, p. 18.

of one solid block of *nim* wood (*Melia Azadirachta*). The height of Balabhadra is given as 85 *pavas* or a little above 7 ft., 'one *pava* being equal to one inch'.⁴⁵ The heights of Jagannath, Suvadra and Sudarsan are 84, 52 and 84 *pavas* respectively. Jagannath is painted black with brilliant round eyes and a crescent-shaped mouth. The colour of Balabhadra is white and that of Suvadra is yellow. The painting is not directly on the wood, but on silk which is pasted round the wood in several layers. The deities are painted every year during the fortnight preceding the car festival which period is called *Anasara*. The wood is renewed every 12--18 years when there are two months of *Asarah*. The rules and detailed specifications as laid down in *Niladrimohodaya*, Utkala Khanda of *Skanda Purana* and other religious texts are strictly followed at the time of the construction of the deities. The deities are adorned with different kinds of dresses in a day which forms a part of the daily ritual of the temple, and wear festive or ceremonial dresses on specified occasions in a year.

Ritual *

The rituals or *nitis* of the temple of Jagannath may be classified under three heads : (a) the daily *nitis* which are fixed and are observed everyday as of routine course; (b) the special *nitis* according to the speciality of certain days (Thursday, Amabasya, Ekadasi etc.), months, *naksyattras*, eclipses, or some mishaps in the temple, (c) the various festivals observed during the year, some outside the temple and some inside, come under the category of festive *nitis*. Besides these, there are some *nitis* which by tradition are kept secret. These *nitis* are performed by certain section of the temple functionaries according to the old customs and practices and usages of the temple. The procedure followed at the time of *Nabakalebar* of the deities and some rituals during *anasara* come under this category. As there are *nitis* for the main temple of Lord Jagannath, so also there are *nitis* for the subsidiary temples. All the details regarding the *nitis* and usages of the temple of Lord Jagannath find mention in the chronicles of the Temple called the *Madala Panji*, and other sacred texts like *Niladrimahodaya*, *Ksetramahatmya* etc.

The following is a brief account of the daily ritual of Jagannath.

The first *niti* begins in the early morning with the opening of the doors of the temple. The Bhitarchu Mahapatra, a temple servitor, accompanied by Palia Mekap, Pratihari, Akhanda Mekap and Muduli examines the seal put on the main door (Jaya Vijaya Dvara) by the

45. Dr. Kanhu Charan Mishra, Op. Cit., p. 112.

* The accounts given on Rituals, Festivals etc., are based on the Report of the Special officer under the Puri Shri Jagannath Temple (Administration) Act, 1952, and the Record-of-Rights compiled by him.