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**PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW AND EVOLUTIONARY EVIDENCES OF LORD
JAGANNATH**

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ABSTRACT

The **Jagannath Temple** in Puri is a famous Hindu temple dedicated to Jagannath and located in the coastal town of Puri in the state of Odisha, India. The name *Jagannath* (Lord of the Universe) is a combination of the Sanskrit words *Jagat* (Universe) and *Nath* (Lord of). And also, the word "Jagannatha" is evolved from "*Jagati*" (as an elevated platform or "Ratnabedi" on which the wooden form of Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra are worshiped on or the temple or its precincts inside the "Narendra Pokhari") and "Natha" (Oriya: ନାଥ) (means "*Lord*"). The temple is an important pilgrimage destination for many Hindu traditions, particularly worshippers of Krishna and Vishnu, and part of the *Char Dham* pilgrimages that a Hindu is expected to make in one's lifetime. The temple was built in the 11th century atop its ruins by the progenitor of the Eastern Ganga dynasty, King Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva. The temple is famous for its annual Rath Yatra, or chariot festival, in which the three main temple deities are hauled on huge and elaborately decorated temple cars. Since medieval times, it is also associated with intense religious fervour. The temple is sacred to the Vaishnava traditions and saint Ramananda who was closely associated with the temple. It is also of particular significance to the followers of the Gaudiya Vaishnavism whose founder, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, was attracted to the deity, Jagannath, and lived in Puri for many years.

KEYWORDS: Philosophy, Evolution, Evidence, Lord Jagannath, Puri

INTRODUCTION

नीलाचलनिवासाय नित्याय परमात्मने
बलभद्रसुभद्राभ्यां जगन्नाथाय ते नमः
गदानन्दकन्दाय प्रणतार्तहराय च
नीलाचलनिवासाय जगन्नाथाय ते नमः

Oh Lord Jagannath you are great, you are the king of Gods. You are within the hearts of billions of people since you give power, enthuse, motivator, caring and overall father of fathers.

Puri being a coastal district of Orissa is famous for its Historic antiquities, Religious sanctuaries, Architectural Grandeur, Seascape beauty, moderate climate. It holds a wealth of attraction for the visitors. It boasts of a continuous history from the 3rd Century B.C. to the present day and its unique monuments like those of Lord Jagannath at

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Puri, the Sun God at Konark are the famous in the world. It has the Chilika Lake, one of the largest brackish water lakes in India that holds a picturesque Sea-Scape beauty. It offers an ideal resort for birds who migrate from different parts of the continent. By virtue of Geographical location, the climate of Puri is equable throughout the year. Puri the abode of Vishnu as Jagannath which contributed the word "Juggernaut" to the English language represents its integrated individuality as its cultural heritage, a unique blend of claims of time and eternity with a power answerable only to wisdom. Puri's compendious heritage has been representing that spark of immortality that the Oriyas and the Indians have own against the powers of negation, through a spirit of universality, adaptability, and an astute mixture of the present which no other culture can aspire to explain as its self justification. The name of the Lord as Purusottama (perfection personified) or as Jagannath (Lord of Universe) represents a universality in true with the familiar fraternity of mankind (Vasudheiva Kutumbakam). Adi Shankaracharya visited Puri, set up the Gobardhan matha (monastery) as the exception from his other three mathas as a vaishnavite, defined Jagannath as the Supreme one. It is thus not only one of the four dhams (Holy Places) for Hindus but the most pious and sacred place. Temples and sanctuaries, beaches and glorious lakes, colourful, vibrant and the numerous festivals for every reason and for every season that can take on a "Jagannath-like momentum". Puri has then all and much more for all. Excellently connected by air, rail, and road, Puri invites you to its hospitable environs and promises an experience one will never forget. When others talk of taking one down memory lane, Puri will take one back to ones ancient linkages. When others talk of romancing

with the stones, her ancient architects and sculptors will shows one what it really means.

NEED OF RESEARCH

The Chairot festival of Lord Jagannath of Puri is one of the most awaited festivals of Odisha and see mass congregation of people in the sleepy town of Puri for the divine visualization of the Lord Jagannath. The practice which for a eons have been effected out in Puri turns it into a cauldron of human sea with over 10-15 lakh visitor on one single day. The Lord who leaves his temple to vist His aunt's place once a year is carried to a chariot which is then drawn to the neighboring Mausī maa temple. This practice provides an opportunity to people to have a vision of the Lord in full glory and without any hindrance. This practice in itself is significant in many ways. In the Hindu philosophy, the Upanishads use the metaphor of a chariot to explain the importance of the human body and intellect. While the human body is believed to be chariot the spirit is compared to Lord Jagannath. The spirit dawns the body chariot for a short duration. While in the body, all efforts should be made to realize the self. Apart from philosophical significance, the practice has religious historical importance too. The chariot had an immense significance in the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Arjuna as a passenger was seated at the back of the chariot driven by the charioteer Lord Krishna. The same practice is repeated here. Many believe that the custom of placing the idols on the grand chariots and pulling them has a Buddhist origin. Fa Hien, the Chinese historian, who visited India in the fifth century AD, had written about the chariot of the Buddha being pulled along the public roads. Among other, the chariot constructed for Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra for the rath yatra is unique and

quite significant in many ways. The construction of chariots is an ancient practice which in itself is as unique as the festival of the Rath yatra. Per traditions the chariots of Lord Jagannath are created every year at “Rathakhala” at the Bada Danda (Grand Road) in Puri. Since the last few years, the responsibility of the construction of the three chariots in Puri has been taken over by the state government, which earlier was the sole prerogative of the Gajapati of Puri. The construction of the chariots has always been a natural process and has been done in the same way throughout but with time certain changes have taken place. If one analyses the nitty-gritty of the construction of the chariots, one will readily understand that it is not an easy task. Round the clock work of many people are needed to give shape to the chariot of the lord. Earlier, the workers engaged in the construction of the chariots used to begin their work on the days of “Dola Purnima” and it used to end on the day when the chariots were dismantled. However these days the construction of the chariots is done on the day of “Akshay tritya”. Many changes have taken place down the line in the nature and tradition of the work of the chariot-makers, servitors and the architects associated with construction. Earlier there were seven main architects who were responsible for the construction of the chariots and they were known as the “Saptarathkar” (Seven carpenters/architects). They created seven sections (“nijog”) under them and each of them used to play a distinct role. They were:

1. Gunakar - The architects responsible for everything related to construction like measurement
2. Mukhyarathakar - The main carpenter who constructed the vital portion of the chariots
3. Lohakar - Black smiths who used to prepare and arrange all equipments

and weapons like irons, nails, clamps needed for the chariots

4. Chekkar - The workers who arranged the wood and provided it during the construction
5. Rupakar - Sculptors who made the statues of the deities and decorated the chariots
6. Chitrakar - The painter who painted the chariots and other designs on the chariots
7. Sutikars - The tailors who made dresses and decorated the chariots.

But with time, the “Saptakar” have been replaced with 36 servitors who are concerned with the construction of the chariots. Apart from these 36 servitors the total number of servitors who perform various services on the chariots has gone up to 64. These include the work and services of person responsible for arranging the wood, cutting the wood, carting it off to Puri, arranging the rope for the chariot, the gongs and many other services. Today the services of the Chief architect, sculptor, painter and tailor are the most important. The research on Lord Jagannath is endless. There are enormous publications and in depth research already done on different aspects of the philosophies, but still many problems are still to be dealt with.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of study on Lord Jagannath has no boundary. The philosophical theme has got no limits. The major advantage of the study is to find more depth of knowledge which spells bounds the field of research. Since Lord Jagannath symbolizes the Human God, he is also abided by the same principle of rebirth and regeneration. Once in twelve years the celebration of Nabakalebara asserts that like human being God also take rebirth by leaving apart his old wooden body and the Navibrahma is transferred from old to new body. Some says the soul of Lord Jagannath

is nothing else but the tooth of Lord Buddha. From the overall analysis it has been clear that the cult of Lord Jagannath is quite distinctive and idiosyncratic in its character and for this reason it has been treated as the best religion of the world. From traditionalistic principles to modernistic views all are embedded within the cult to give it a unique position among the world religions. Starting from socialist philosophy to universal brotherhood, nationalistic ideals to patriotism, devotion, dedication and perseverance, all have been merged within the vast ocean of religious conviction and consciousness.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Jagannath (or Jagannatha) meaning "Lord of the Universe", is a deity worshipped primarily by Hindu people, mainly in the Indian states of Orissa, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar, Tripura and by Hindus in Bangladesh. Jagannath is considered a form of Vishnu or his avatar Krishna by the Hindus. Jagannath is worshipped as part of a triad on the "Ratnavedi" (jewelled platform) along with his brother Balabhadra and sister Subhadra by his devotees. The icon of Jagannath is a carved and decorated wooden stump with large round eyes and with stumps as hands, with the conspicuous absence of any legs. The worship procedures, practices, sacraments and rituals of Jagannath do not conform with those of classical Hinduism. The principal image of the deity is at the temple city of Puri in the Indian state of Orissa. It is made of wood, which is an exception to common Hindu iconographic deities of metal or stone. The origin and evolution of Jagannath worship, as well as iconography, is unclear and has been subject to intense academic debate. Jagannath lacks a clear Vedic reference and is also not a member of the traditional Dashavatara concept or the classical Hindu pantheon, though in certain Oriya literary

creations, Jagannath has been treated as the Ninth avatar, by substituting Buddha. Jagannath considered as a form of the Hindu God Vishnu, is non-sectarian and has not been associated with any particular denomination of Hinduism in entirety, though there are several common aspects with Vaishnavism, Saivism, Shaktism, Smartism, as well as with Buddhism and Jainism. The oldest and most famous Jagannath deity is established in Puri, in Orissa. The temple of Jagannath in Puri is regarded as one of the Char Dham (sacred Hindu pilgrimage places) in India. The most famous festival related to Jagannath is the Ratha yatra, where Jagannath, along with the other two associated deities, comes out of the Garbhagriha of the chief temple (Bada Deula). They are transported to the Gundicha Temple (located at a distance of nearly 3 kilometres (1.9 miles), in three massive wooden chariots drawn by devotees. Coinciding with the Rath Yatra festival at Puri, similar processions are organized at several places in the world where Jagannath temples have been built.

CONCLUSION

Today, while many Indians are staying away from their tradition and are attracted to the blind imitation of the "Western ways", becoming massively and fanatically converted to Christianity, atheism and communism, or simply to gross materialism and agnosticism, among foreigners at global level Vedic concepts such as yoga and meditation, karma, prana, and reincarnation have become extremely popular, selling millions of books, courses and seminars all over the world. Millions of non-Indians from all cultural and ethnic backgrounds are sincerely taking up the study and practices of the traditional "golden heritage" of India, including classical Indian dance, Sanskrit, Ayurvedic medicine, Vastu, Indian astrology, and even the ritual performance

of japa, bhajan, vrata, puja, homa, and samskaras. They have no hesitation in declaring that they value Hindu ideals and methods much more than those in which they were born and raised, and they often preach them actively with the zeal and dedication of the newly converted - of one who has actively made a deliberate choice rather than passively and fatalistically shouldering the cultural expectations imposed on him by birth, family and society. These Hindu converts of foreign origin faithfully wear tulasi or rudraksha malas as a sign of their devotion, invest much of their resources and time to travel in pilgrimage to the holy places in India and often show more respect and devotion towards tirthas and mandiras than Indians do. They carefully study shastra such as Bhagavad Gita, Bhagavata Purana, Upanishads and other sacred texts, and they recite and quote them regularly. They fast on Ekadasis, Purnimas, Mondays, and on the sacred days not only in celebration of their ista-devata but also for the other avataras or different aspects of the Divine. Many of these people are so serious about sadhana that they seek initiation from traditional Gurus and take a lifelong vow to strictly observe the prescribed practices, including abstention from all non-vegetarian foods, from alcohol and intoxicating substances, from illicit sex, and from materialistic pursuits of all kinds. Often, such choices put them at serious odds with their families and friends, employers, neighbours or government authorities, and when it is the time to choose, they are ready to drop all material connections and face serious difficulties in order to continue following the Vedic version.

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