

Nabakalebara
2015

A Visual Grandeur



Government of Odisha



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Editor-in-Chief

R. Balakrishnan,
Development Commissioner-cum-ACS (Finance)

Editorial Board:

Gagan Kumar Dhal,
Principal Secretary, Tourism
Suresh Chandra Mahapatra,
Chief Administrator, Shree Jagannath Temple Administration
Manoranjan Panigrahi,
Commissioner-cum-Secretary, I&PR and Culture

Text, Photo Compilation & Layout

Dr. Nitin B. Jawale,
Director, Odisha Tourism

Design & Print:

Jyoti Ranjan Swain
Third Eye Communications
Bhubaneswar



Festival of the New Millennium



Impressions

Nabakalebara

Welcome to an enriching visual experience

Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri is a bastion of Vaishnavite Culture. The temple was built in 12th Century by *Ananga Varman Chodagangadev* of the Eastern Ganga dynasty. The temple is famous for the annual *Ratha Yatra*. The temple signifies a magnificent example of amalgamation of tribal (*Sabara*) and Brahminical religious influences, culminating in the syncretic Jagannath culture, which is a hallmark of Odisha







The legend of Lord Jagannath

It is believed that Shree Jagannath was worshipped as *Nila Madhaba* by the Sabara King *Biswabasu* and upon the knowledge of his glory, King *Indradyumna* sent his minister *Vidyapati* in search of *Nila Madhaba*. *Vidyapati* secured the hand of *Lalita*, the daughter of *Biswabasu* in marriage and with his wisdom succeeded in locating the site where *Nila Madhaba* was worshiped. But to his dismay *Nila Madhaba* could not be found.

According to mythology it was prophesied that the divine *Daru* of *Nila Madhaba* would come afloat by the sea and would be worshipped as Shree Jagannath.



About Nabakalebara

Nabakalebara is an important event in the Jagannath culture. Literally it translates into 'New body'. Since the idols of the *Chaturdha murtis* i.e, Shree Jagannath, Shree Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Chakraraj Sudarshan are made up of wood, it has to be replaced periodically. *Nabakalebara* is the ceremonial recreation of the wooden idols of the *Chaturdha murtis*. The period for such replacement is determined on the basis of Hindu calendar. The year having two *Ashadhas* (Doshadha) in the year is taken as the year for *Nabakalebara*. This occurs at an interval of 8 to 19 years.

The process of *Nabakalebara* or recreation of the idols is highly ritualistic and lasts for about four months. The process involves identification of the divine *Darus* (wood, of *Neem* tree), based on certain key identification markers, ceremonial *puja*, *Daru snana* (bathing), *Yajna* (religious offering) at the identified *Daru site*, its felling and transportation to Shree Mandir, Puri by *Sagadi* (wooden carts).

New idols are carved out of these *Darus* and the *Brahma* (divine essence of life force) is transferred into these new idols in the process of *Brahma Paribartana*.

Daitapatis, a clan of hereditary servitors of the deities play a major role in this entire exercise of *Nabakalebara*.



The *Daitapatis* are a clan of hereditary servitors of Shree Jagannath, who play a major role in the rituals of the Jagannath pantheon. They are responsible for making and protection of the idols of the *Chaturdha Murtis* at Shree Jagannath Mandir, Puri and have very important role in the process of *Nabakalebara*. They have exclusive privileges in matters of certain rituals. The process of *Nabakalebara* involves some secret *nitis* (rituals), which are an exclusive domain of the *Daitapatis*.



Gua Tekā Niti (*Gua* meaning areca nut), is a ceremony in which the Gajapati Maharaja of Puri initiates the process of *Nabakalebara* handing over a silver plate with a piece of gold, a coconut, some grains of rice, sacred thread and areca nut to the *Rajguru*, who hands it over to the *Biswabasu*.



Sudarshan Chakra is a religious insignia of Shree Jagannath. It is made up of silver. The *Sudarshan Chakra* is being worshipped here placed on the *Patani*. The *Lenka* is the bearer of the *Sudarshan Chakra* and he leads the *Banajaga* team, with the *Sudarshan Chakra* during the *Banajaga Yatra*

Daitapatis wrap their heads with a multicoloured striped apparel known as the *Gitagobinda Khandua pat*.



The *Biswakarma* (Temple carpenters) with their blue coloured head gear during the *Banajaga Yatra*





The *Daitapatis* offer prayers at their respective houses before leaving for the long and arduous journey for locating the appropriate divine wood logs (*Darus*). This journey is known as the *Banajaga Yatra*. The first place where they assemble, before the start of the *Banajaga Yatra*, is the *Jagannath Ballabh Math*.



Ajnyamala is the garland of the deities. The *Pati Mahapatra* takes the *Ajnyamala* (garlands) from the sanctum and hands it over to the three *Bada Grahi Daitas* i.e, *Bada Bada* (Balabhadra), *Majhi Bada* (Subhadra), *Mahaprabhu Bada* (Jagannath) and keeps the *Sudarshan Bada Ajnyamala* with himself.



Ajnyamala of Chakraraj Sudarshan



Ajnyamala of Shree Balabhadra



Ajnyamala of Devi Subhadra



Ajnyamala of Shree Jagannath



The *Banajaga Parba* of the *Nabakalebara* is the phase of the long journey in search of the divine *Darus* which marks the beginning of the auspicious event starting from *Chaitra Sukla Dasami* i.e the 10th day of the *Shuklapaksha* (fortnight of the waxing moon) of the month of *Chaitra*, which turns out to be 65 days before the *Snana Purnima* festival (bathing festival) of the deities.

The *Banjaga Yatra* of *Nabakalebara* 2015 commenced on 29th March. After completion of mid-day rituals at the Shree Mandir, the *Shrotriya Brahmins* perform the *Daru Ghar Anukul Niti* in *Koili Baikuntha*. After receiving the *Ajnyamala*, four *Badagrahis*, all other members of *Banajaga Yatra* except the *Brahmins* gather at the *Anabasar Pindi* during the scheduled time for the *Saree Bandha Niti* ritual which is conducted by *Bhitarachha Mahapatra*.

The *Banajaga* team (party) consists of member of the *Pati Mahapatra* family, *Daitapatis*, *Lenka*, *Maharanas*, *Deulakarana*, *Tadhaukaranas* and *Shrotriya Brahmins*.



Banajaga Yatra, the journey for locating the divine *Darus*. Traditionally adorned bullock carts carry various ritual materials

The *Banajaga Yatris* leaving *Jagannath Ballabha Math* on the midnight of 30.03.2015 marking the beginning of the journey (*Banajaga Yatra*) in search of the divine *Darus*.



The member of the *Lenka* family is the bearer of the *Sudarshan Chakra*. He is seen carries the *Sudarshan Chakra* and leads the *Banajagis*.





Bishramsthalis (Resting places) are erected at different places on the route of the *Banajaga Yatra*. They are meant for the temporary resting places for the *Banajagis*.

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Deuli Math is a small monastery located in *Kakatpur* on the banks of the *Prachi* river. It is a *Ramanujiya* Vaishnavite site and maintained by *Puri Emara Math*. The *Banajagis* stay at the *Deuli Math* for few days. It is believed that *Maa Mangala* was earlier worshipped in this place and hence the *Banajagis* decide to halt here.

The *Banajagis* assemble at *Deuli Math* and conduct prayers. Here the *Banajagis* deliberate upon the search for the divine *Darus*.



The *Deula Karana* accompanying the *Banajagis* sends a *Chitau* (letter) to the *Maa Mangala* Temple authorities informing them of the arrival of the *Banajaga* team and requesting them to make the necessary preparations for receiving the *Banajagis* at the temple and the rituals to be conducted there.





Maa Mangala Temple at Kakatpur, Puri



A devotee blowing the bison horn trumpet at *Maa Mangala* Temple after the arrival of the *Banajagis*



At the *Maa Mangala* Temple, four *Sarees* of different colour, garland of Shree Jagannath, *Mahaprasad* and white flag are offered to the goddess. The goddess is given ceremonial bath by 108 pitchers of water which is known as '*Marjana Snana*' by the *Maa Mangala* Temple priests in the presence of the *Daitapatis*.

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Shrotriya Brahmins recite the *Chandipatha* and the *Daitaptis* recite the *Swapnabati Mantra*. The *Swapnabati Mantra* is believed to help the *Daitapatis* seek the blessings of *Maa Mangala*, who in their dreams gives them hints for the location of the divine *Darus*.



Locating the divine *Darus*





The *Daru* (divine wood log) that is to be selected for the new idols is always of the *Neem* tree (*Azadirachta indica*). However no ordinary *Neem* tree can be used to make the deities. For the identification of the *Darus* some conditions and key signs are taken into account.

The *Daru* of Chakraraj Sudarshan should have three branches. The bark of the *Neem* tree should be reddish. The tree should have sign of *Chakra* (Wheel) with a small depression in the middle.

The *Daru* of Shree Balabhadra should have seven branches. The bark of the tree should be of light brown or white colour. It should have a sign of plough and pestle on it. There should be a heritage site and a graveyard near that *Neem* tree.

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

The *Daru* of Shree Jagannath should have four main branches. The bark of the tree should be dark in color. The tree should have sign of *Shankha* (Conch Shell) and *Chakra* on it. There should be a cremation ground nearby the tree. There should be an anthill near the tree and snake hole at the roots of the tree. The tree should be situated near a river or pond. There should not be nests of birds on the tree. The tree should be surrounded by other trees preferably *Varuna*, *Sahada*, *Belva*.

There should be a temple of *Lord Shiva* in the neighbourhood of the tree. There should be some heritage site nearby and the tree should be free from *Nirmulilata* (parasitic plants) and creepers.

There are many other secret indicators and markers said to be known only to the *Daitapati* clan, which are put to use during the process of identification of the divine *Darus*.



The *Daru* for the idol of *Chakraraj Sudarshan* was located at Gadakantunia near Balakati in Bhubaneswar sub division of Khurda district.



Daru of Chakraraj Sudarshan



Shankha



Chakra



Swastik



Gada



Bhoomi Shodhan (cleaning) and *Pujan* by Brahmins at the site of Sudarshan Daru to purify the surroundings and invoke divine blessings



After *Bhoomi Shodhan* and *Pujan*, the *Daitapatis* give a ritualistic bath to the divine wood log, in a process known as *Daru Snana*.



A Mandap is erected at the site of the Daru for conducting Yajna. The Sudarshan Daru is seen in the background.



Daitapatis offering prayers to the Daru.



The *Daru Snana* (ritualistic bathing) is followed by *Yajna* (ceremonial offering) for the *Daru*. The *Yajna* is performed by the *Shrotriya Brahmins*. The *Yajna* concludes with the *Purnahuti* for the *Daru*.

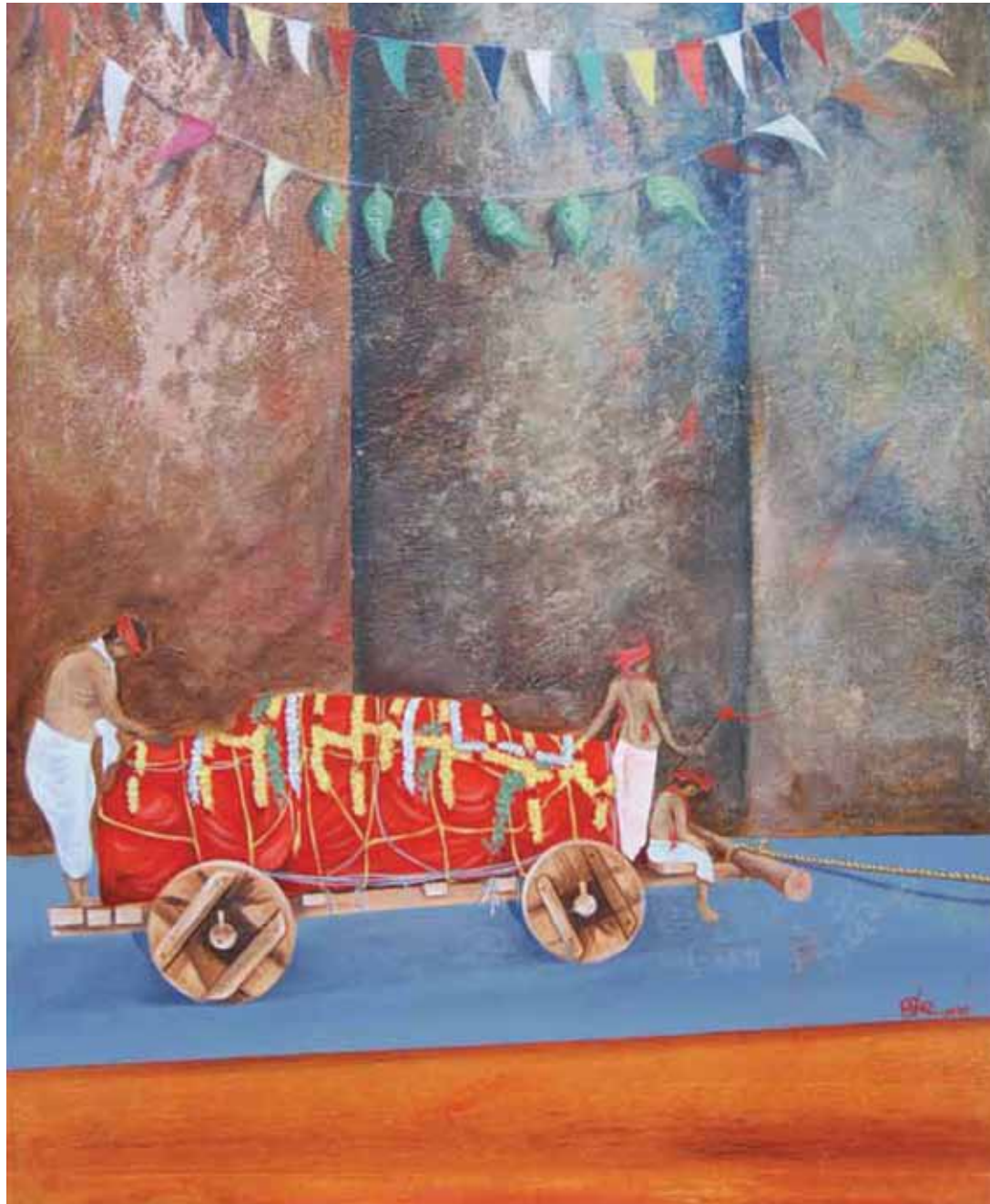


Three types of axes made up of gold, silver and iron respectively and are required for ceremonial use. These three axes are symbolically touched to the *Daru*. The golden axe is used by the *Vidyapati*, who is a member of the *Pati Mahapatra* family. The silver is used by the *Biswabasu*, who belongs to the *Daitapati* clan and finally the temple *Biswakarmas* use the iron axe.



After this ceremonial touching, the process of felling the *Daru* begins, which is closely guided by the *Daitapatis* and executed by the Temple *Maharanas*. The process of felling of the *Daru* is called as *Daru Chhedana*.





A *Sagadi* (wooden cart) is made by the temple *Maharanas* to ferry the felled *Daru* from its location to Shree Mandir in Puri. The *Daru* after being ceremonially felled and wrapped is loaded on the *Sagadi* and is pulled by the devotees all the way to Puri.

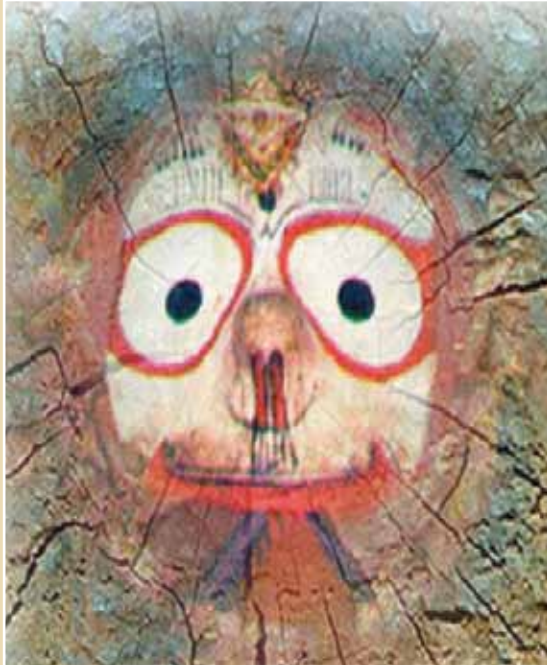


Daru of *Chakraraj Sudarshan* being ferried on a *Sagadi* on Bhubaneswar Puri road





Shree Sudarshan *Daru* being taken inside Shree Mandir, Puri from *Uttar Dwara* (North Gate)



The *Daru* for the idol of Shree Balabhadra was located at Jhankada Maa Sarala Temple in Kanakpur village of Jagatsinghpur District. The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration made formal announcement to that effect on 17.04.2015.



Daru of Shree Balabhadra near Maa Sarala Temple, Jagatsinghpur



Marker sign on the *Daru*
Shree Balabhadra



Bhoomi Shodhan and Pujan of the site of the Shree Balabhadra Daru

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Snana of the Shree Balabhadra Daru



Shrotriya Brahmins
performing *Surya Puja* and *Yajna*
for the
Shree Balabhadra *Daru*



Ankuraropana involves the
germination of grains of Paddy, Wheat
Sesame, Barley, Black beans, Green
beans, Mustard in pots in the northern
side of the *Yajna Sthala*.



Chhedana (felling) of
Shree Balabhadra *Daru*

The process of *Daru Chhedana* is a highly skilled work. It is closely supervised by the *Daitapatis* and under their direction the temple *Maharanas* execute the *Chhedana*. Utmost care is taken in this process so as get the right proportion of the divine wood log for subsequent carving of new idols of the deities.



Sagadi (wooden cart) for ferrying
the *Daru* of Shree Balabhadra to
Shree Mandir, Puri.





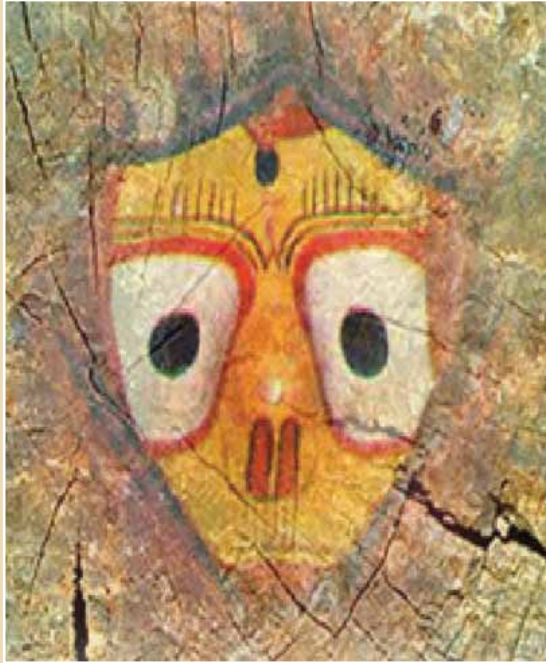
The land of Odisha is a bastion of Shree Jagannath culture and the devotion of the people to its beloved deities is unparalleled. Devotees are ready to take all the pains to get a glimpse of the *Daru* of the Deities. The devotees are seen here welcoming the Balabhadara *Daru* on its way to Shree Mandir Puri, by laying new apparel on the road. The *Sagadi* carrying the *Daru* of passes over it.

Jubilant devotees
welcoming Shree
Balabhadara *Daru* with
dance and festivities.





Shree Balabhadara *Daru* being taken inside Shree Mandir, Puri



The Devi Subhadra *Daru* was located at Adhangagada Shasan in Biridi Block in Jagatsinghpur District. A formal announcement was made by Shree Jagannath Temple Administration on 24.04.15.



Daru of Devi Subhadra at Adhangagada, Jagatsinghpur



Daru of Devi Subhadra



Mark of face of divine mother
on the *Daru*



Yellow colour of the bark is evident here.
This is an important marker for selection of
the *Daru* of Devi Subhadra



Preparation for the
ritualistic bath (*Snana*)
of Devi Subhadra *Daru*

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Snana performed for the
Daru of Devi Subhadra

Sandhya Alati



Purnahuti





Felling of Devi Subhadra Daru by Maharanas

The *Daru* of Devi Subhadra being ferried on the *Sagadi* to Shree Mandir, Puri. The entourage attracts thousands of devotees who flock enroute to have a glimpse of the divine *Daru*.





Devi Subhadra *Daru* being taken inside Shree Mandir Puri from the in *Uttar Dwar* (Northern Gate)



The *Daru* for the idol of Shree Jagannath was located at village Kharipadia in Raghunathpur Block of Jagatsinghpur District. A formal announcement to that effect was made by Shree Jagannath Temple Administration on 29.04.15.



Location of the *Daru* of Shree Jagannath at Kharipadia village of Jagatsingpur district

Key marker signs on the *Daru* of Shree Jagannath.
These and some other secret signs are used by the
Banajagis to identify the *Daru* of the deities.





Bhoomi Shodhan and Pujan being performed at the site of the Shree Jagannath Daru

Preparation and the
ritualistic bathing
(*Snana*) for the *Daru* of
Shree Jagannath





Shrotriya Brahmins performing Yajna at the site of Shree Jagannath Daru

Member of the *Lenka* family carrying the Sudarshan *Chakra* which is fixed at the site of the daru before the *Yajna*. This is known as *Chakrasthapana*.





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Yajna and Ankuraropana



Felling of Shree Jagannath *Daru*



Temple *Maharanas* making *Sagadi* (wooden cart) for Shree Jagannath *Daru*



Sagadi for Shree Jagannath Daru

Devotees flock along the way in the procession for ferrying the *Daru* of Shree Jagannath







Daitapatis carrying the Daru of Shree Jagannath on the Sagadi



Devotees gather in huge numbers on *Badadanda Puri* to receive the *Daru* of Shree Jagannath



Shree Jagannath *Daru* being taken inside Shree Mandir through Uttar Dwar (Northern Gate) at Puri



Soon after the completion of the *Banajaga Yatra*, the second phase of *Nabakalebara* begins known as the *Antah Banajaga*. This is the time when the construction of idols or the *Vigrah* takes place along with the *Brahma Paribartana* or the transferring of life essence known as *Brahma*. The process of carrying *Vigraha* and *Brahma Paribartana* is not only highly ritualistic but also very secretive. The *Daitapatis* have some exclusive privileges in this matter. They are responsible for the *Vigraha*, *Brahma Paribartana* and the burial of the old deities, known as the *Patalikarana*.

Shree Mandir is the only temple which has a ceremonial burial ground for the deities in *Koili Baikuntha* within the temple premises.



Ratha Bhois carrying the Parshwa Debatas (deities accompanying the Chaturdha Murti on the Rathas) for the ceremonial burial, which is known as Patalikarana.



Devotees chanting the *Akhanda Japa* outside, while the rituals of *Brahma Paribartana* are initiated inside the Shree Mandir.



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Devotees praying during
Brahma Paribartana.

After the process of *Brahma Paribartana* is complete, the *Daitapatis* go for ceremonial bath at *Markanda* tank near Shree Mandir complex.





Daitapatis taking ceremonial bath in *Markanda* tank.



The *Daitapatis* believe that Shree Jagannath is the head of their family and therefore after the symbolic death of the previous deity the *Daitapatis* perform *Shradhha* (funeral rites) and undergo the ceremonial tonsuring as a part of the *Dasakarma*.



Daiataptis praying after the ceremonial tonsuring in Dasakarma.



Daiataptis wear yellow coloured garments after the *Dasakarma* and go to the Shree Mandir to offer prayers.



The *Rath Yatra* after *Nabakalebara* is a significant event. Millions of devotees throng to *Badadanda* at *Shreekshestra* Puri to witness the deities in new form. To see the Lord thus, on this rare occasion is considered very auspicious. The deities signify *Parambrahma*.



On the tenth day of bright fortnight of the month of *Chaitra*, the deities are taken to the *Snana Mandap*, bathing porch where the deities are given ritualistic bath with consecrated water from a designated well, *Suna Kua*.







The Ratha (chariots of the Chaturdha Murti)



The *Gajapati Maharaja* of Puri is the first servitor of the Lord. He accords permission for some key activities in the *Rath Yatra* and *Nabakalebara*. *Gajapati Maharaja* leaving his palace for *Chhera Pahanra* (Sweeping of the Chariots).





The *Gajapati Maharaja* of Puri being the first servitor of Lord Jagannath has the honour of *Chhera Pahanra* (sweeping of the chariots) which symbolises equality before the Holy Deities.



Daru of Chakraraj Sudarshan



Pahandi of Chakraraj Sudarshan



Daru of Shree Balabhadra



Pahandi of Shree Balabhadra



Pahandi of Shree Balabhadra



Daru of Devi Subhadra



Pahandi of Devi Subhadra



Daru of Shree Jagannath





Pahandi of Shree Jagannath



Rath Yatra is the most important religious event in Shree Mandir, Puri. It attracts millions of devotees from far and wide. The *Rath Yatra* after *Nabakalebara* has a special significance and the number of devotees attending it is much higher as compared to other times. The *Bada Danda* of Puri becomes a sea of devotees during the *Rath Yatra*.



Chariots of the *Chaturdha Murti*



Muruja (Rangoli) display in Badadanda as part of the Nabakalebara festivities.



Muruja (Rangoli) art work in the Bada Danda with the official Nabakalebara logo.



An artist performing the *Medha* dance on *Bada Danda* during the *Rath Yatra*



Mahari Dancers

The ritual of golden attire (*Suna Beshha*) of the deities was observed a day after *Bahuda* (Return Car Festival). Lakhs of devotees got the rare opportunity to have the *Darshan* of the Holy Deities.







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Paintings:

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The Editorial Board would like to express its gratitude to Shree Jagannath Temple Administration, Puri for the valuable information about Nabakalebara 2015.

