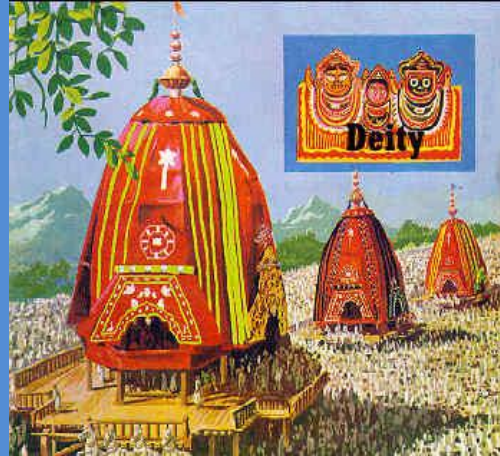


# Ratha-Yatra

---



Ratha Yatra (Oriya: ରଥଯାତ୍ରା) or the Car Festival is a huge Hindu festival associated with Lord Jagannath held at Puri in the state of Orissa, India.

This annual festival is celebrated on Ashad Shukla Dwitiya (second day in bright fortnight of Ashad month). In 2012 it falls on the 28th of June.

The festival commemorates Lord Jagannath's annual visit to Gundicha mata's temple via aunt's home (Mausi Maa Temple which is near Balagandi Chaka in Puri).

As part of Rath Yatra, the idols of Lord Puri Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Subhadra are taken out in a procession to Gundicha Temple and remain there for nine days. Then the idols or Rath Yatra returns to Puri Jagannath temple. The return journey of Puri Jagannath Rath Yatra is known as Bahuda Yatra.

## The Festival

---

Three richly decorated chariots, resembling temple structures, are pulled through the streets of Puri called Badadanda. This commemorates the annual journey of Lord Jagannath, Lord





in the Kali Yuga to emancipate humanity and to relieve them from their sufferings. Lord Jagannatha is identified fully with Krishna. In his original manifestation as Nilamadhava, he was worshipped in a sacred Nyagrodha Briksha or banyan tree. The branches of the tree had spread for several miles and anyone entering this area was instantly emancipated and was relieved of the travails of the birth and re-birth. In fact, the influence of Yama, the God of Death, is supposed to have been curtailed in the sacred city of Puri – Srikshetra on account of the presence of Lord Jagannatha and therefore it is also called the Yamanika Tirtha.

A glimpse of Lord Jagannatha on the chariot is considered to be very auspicious and saints, poets and scriptures have repeatedly glorified the sanctity of this special festival. The sanctity of the festival is such that even a touch of the chariot or even the ropes with which these are pulled is considered enough to confer the results of several pious deeds or penance for ages. In fact, there is a famous Oriya song which says that on this occasion, the chariot, the wheels, the grand avenue all become one with Lord Jagannatha himself.

The concept of the chariot has been explained in the Kathopanishada in the following words-

*Atmaanam rathinam viddhi shareeram rathamevatu Buddhim tu saarathim viddhi manah pragrahameva cha.* The body is the Chariot and the soul is the deity installed in the chariot. The wisdom acts as the charioteer to control the mind and thoughts.

The *Skanda Purana* glorifies the sanctity of the Rath Jatra in the following words-



chariots are lined across the wide avenue in front of the majestic temple close to its eastern entrance, which is also known as the *Sinhadwara* or the *Lion's Gate*.

Lord Jagannatha's Chariot is called *Nandighosa*. It is forty-five feet high and forty-five feet square at the wheel level. It has sixteen wheels, each of seven-foot diameter, and is decked with a cover made of red and yellow cloth. Lord Jagannatha is identified with *Krushna*, who is also known as *Pitambara*, the one attired in golden yellow robes and hence the distinguishing yellow stripes on the canopy of this chariot.



*Nandighosa Rath*



*Taladhawaja Rath*



*Dwarpadalana Rath*

The Chariot of Lord Balarama, called the *Taladhawaja*, is the one with the *Palm Tree* on its flag. It has fourteen wheels, each of seven-foot diameter and is covered with red and blue cloth. Its height is forty-four feet.

The Chariot of *Subhadra*, known as *Dwarpadalana*, literally "trampler of pride," is forty-three feet high with twelve wheels, each of seven-foot diameter. This Chariot is decked with a covering of red and black cloth - black being traditionally associated with *Shakti* and the *Mother Goddess*.

Around each of the chariots are nine *Parsva devatas*, painted wooden images representing different deities on the chariots' sides. Each of the

chariots is attached to four horses. These are of different colours – white ones for Balarama, dark ones for Jagannatha, and red ones for Subhadra. Each chariot has a charioteer called Sarathi. The three charioteers attached to the chariots of Jagannatha, Balarama and Subhadra respectively are Daruka , Matali and Arjuna.

## DESCRIPTION OF CHARIOTS

### 1) Chariot of Jagannath - NANDIGHOSHA/GARUDADHWAJA/KAPIDHWAJA

Number of wheels: 16

Total Number of wooden pieces used: 832

Height: 44' 2"

Length and breadth: 34'6" x 34'6"

Wrappings: Red, Yellow colour cloths

Guarded by: Garuda

Name of the charioteer: Daruka

The flag: Trailokyamohini

The horses: Shankha, Balahaka, Suweta, Haridashwa

The rope: Sankhachuda Naguni

Presiding Nine Deities: (i) Varaha

(ii) Gobardhan

(iii) Krushna, Gopi Krushna

(iv) Nrusingha

(v) Rama

(vi) Narayan

(vii) Trivikrama

(viii) Hanuman

(ix) Rudra

## 2) Chariot of Balabhadra - TALADHWAJA

Number of wheels: 14

Total Number of wooden pieces used: 763

Height: 43' 3"

Length and breadth: 33' x 33'

Wrappings: Red, Bluish green colour cloths

Guarded by: Basudev

Name of the charioteer: Matali

The flag: Unnani

The horses: Tribra, Ghora, Dirghasharma, Swornanava

The rope: Basuki Naga

Presiding Nine Deities: (i) Ganesh

(ii) Kartikeya

(iii) Sarvamangala

(iv) Pralambari

(v) Hatayudha

(vi) Mrutyunjaya

(vii) Natamvara

(viii) Mukteswar

(ix) Sheshadeva

## 3) Chariot of Subhadra - DARPADALANA/PADMADHWAJA/DEVADALANA

Number of wheels: 12



