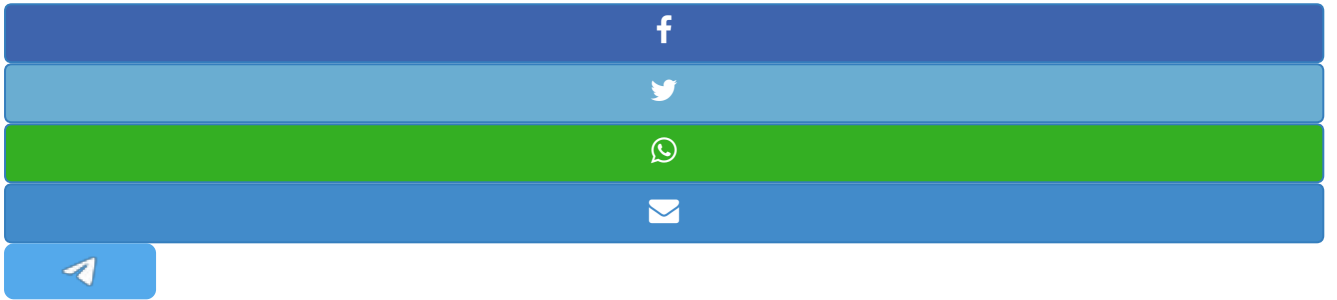




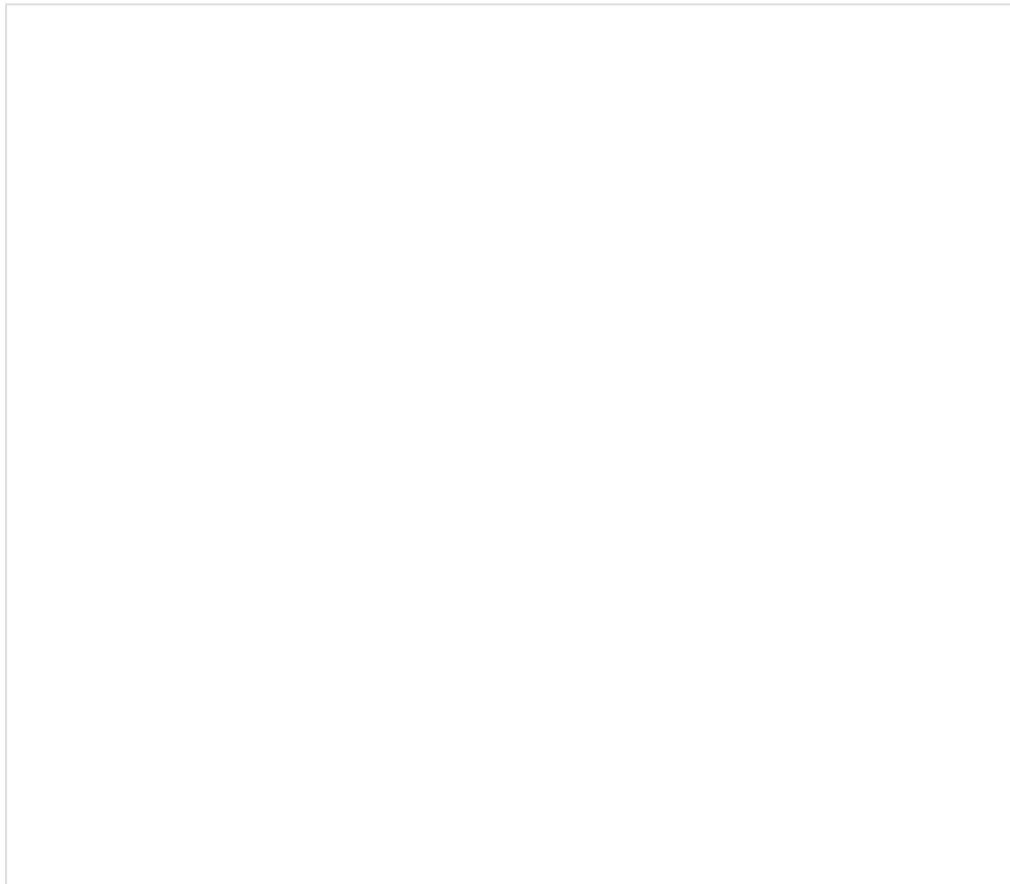
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Lord Jagganath – The living God of Hinduism



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Lord Jagganath – The living God of Hinduism

This is the first time in five thousand years, that the Jagannath Rath Yatra in Puri was held without public participation. I am an ardent devotee of Lord Jagannath and firmly believe that Lord Jagannath is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient.

Some of the most spiritual experiences of my life, have been my visits to Odisha and in Odisha, specifically to the Jagannath temple in Puri. The reason for this powerful attraction to a temple thousands of miles away from my native place in Kerala or my adopted home at good in Gujarat was unknown to me.

However, I was compelled to go to Jagannath temple, every year for the last 22 years as due to the Lord's blessings after I was married to a girl from Odisha at Bhubaneswar in 1998.

The more I went to the Jagannath temple, the more I felt attracted to the divine energy emanating from the Lord and The more I felt a sense of tranquility, peace and spiritual empowerment.

During one of my visits to Puri, I was fortunate enough to have a personal meeting with Gajapati Maharaj of Puri. And as my hobbies include palmistry astrology, face-reading and tarot card reading, I was able to manage a meeting with Gajpatiji whom I was introduced to, by my friend the internationally famous Chau exponent, Jugbhanu Singh Deo from Seraikella.

I managed to get a private audience with Gajpati Maharaj, to read the palm of the famous palms that push Lord Jagganth's chariot. It is believed that unless the Maharaja of Puri first pushes the Rath with his own hands, the wheels of the chariot will not move! So, his presence at every Rath Yarra is a pre-requisite for the Rath Yatra.

After writing 15 books on Palaces and Forts of Rajputana and Gujarat, I started researching the spiritual significance of Lord Jagannath and the divine protection it received during the 2004 tsunami and countless invasions from hostile forces and how the religious traditions of Lord Jagganath have survived the onslaught of other religions over the centuries. I read through the Mahabharata and the Ramayana and the Holy Bhagavad Gita for clues on how storytelling kept the flame of Lord Jagannath alive through the centuries.

But unknown to me, Lord Jagganath was helping me. Through cosmic consciousness, I was led to Bell Guest House, Sayla, whose owner Sommraj Singh Jhala was also a devout Jagannath follower. One day I saw dream after spending a week at Sommraj's 150 year old heritage homestay on the way to Lord Krishna's Karmabhoomi Dwarka. In this lucid dream, I saw that I was swimming in Arabian Sea near Dwarkadheesh temple.

I woke up from my dream and recollected that once, on my visit to Porbandar, I had found a divine golden Ganesha statue on the beach near the Circuit House, where I stayed. I awoke from my slumber but drifted off to a deeper sleep in the wee hours of dawn. Then I had my second dream. In the second dream, I saw myself walking on Dwarka beach. As I was walking along the beach, I found a rusted iron tipped arrow. I picked up this rust coloured arrow and looked towards the land and saw a peacock dancing under a Peepal tree on the shore. This was the divine help I received from Lord Jagannath.

In the morning, Somrraj Singh Jhala, informed me that Jugbhanu Singh Deo of Seraikella was his uncle from his mother's side. Bell Guest House, Sayla is one of the best heritage hotels in Gujarat to explore your own consciousness through the language of dreams as it is an extremely peaceful, quiet and tranquil setting for sonorous sleep and lucid dreaming. It is located on the way from Ahmedabad to Dwarka and Somnath. And suddenly that morning, a new realization dawned on me. I recollected the story of Lord Krishna's death. After the death of Duryodhana, Gandhari the mother of the Kauravas had cursed Lord, Krishna that he would die within 36 years! Though, Lord Krishna was an incarnation of the Supreme Lord Vishnu and was infinite he had taken birth in the human form, so he had to have a physical death.

In Dwarka, the Yaduvanshis decided to play a trick on Durvasa Muni. One of the Yaduvanshi men dressed as a female and carrying an iron mace hidden under his flowing robe, he pretended to be pregnant. Unfortunately, Rishi Durvasa could see through the deception and cursed the Yaduvanshis by proclaiming that the child who would be born to that pregnant mother would destroy all the Yaduvanshis of Dwarka. The Yaduvanshis got scared of Durvasa's curse and ran to Ugrasen who advised them to throw the iron mace into the sea off the coast of Dwarka, which they promptly did.

However, the iron mace broke into many small pieces and sharp reeds grew on the beach. One day, the Yaduvanshis of Dwarka met on this beach where they got intoxicated and started pulling out the razor sharp reeds and killing each other in their inebriated state and soon all the Yaduvanshis were killed. And the rishi's curse almost came true as Lord Krishna was the only Yadu alive.

Now, it so happened that a fisherman on the beach caught a fish and inside the fish, he found a piece of iron. The fisherman sold that iron piece to the hunter Jara who sharpened the iron piece and made it into an arrow. One day, Jara the hunter went hunting, while Lord Krishna was resting under a Peepal tree. Jara mistook the moving foot of Krishna between the peepal leaves as a parrot and shot his arrow at the parrot but pierced Lord Krishna's feet and this fatal shot killed the Lord. The last piece from the iron mace was the arrowhead sharpened by Jara. As soon as the hunter reached Lord Krishna, he realized his mistake and prayed to the Lord for forgiveness. Lord Krishna consoled Jara and told him how his death was inevitable. Lord Krishna narrated that in his previous birth as Rama, he had killed Vali (Sugriva's brother) from behind. So, he has now reaped the price for the same through Jara who was King Vali in his previous birth. Lord Krishna died under this Peepal tree and this sacred spot is named Bhalka Teerth and this 5000 year old Peepal tree near Dwarka is a pilgrimage for Hindus. I have been fortunate to visit Bhalka Teerth and relax under the shade of this giant peepal tree and soak the incredible spiritual energy emanating from this historic pilgrimage spot. The Pandavas cremated Lord Krishna's body at Dwarka. The whole body was consumed in the funeral pyre and transformed to ashes but Lord Krishna's heart remained as it is and continued beating.

This divine heart was given to the forefathers of the Maharaja of Puri who brought it to the Jagannath Temple. Lord Krishna's beating heart was kept inside the wooden idol of Jagannath, where it continues to be till today. Every 12 years the idols of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra are changed but Lord Krishna's heart still beats inside the new Lord Jagannath idol. Electricity in Puri is switched off every twelve years during the idol changing ceremony.

Till date, Lord Jagannath is considered as a living God with a beating heart and Puri is one of the four spiritual places Hindus must visit once during their lifetime. The other three dhams are the Vishnu temple at Badrinath, the Lord Krishna temple at Dwarka and the Jyotirling at Rameshwaram.

So whenever you go to the Jagannath temple in Puri you are near divine heart of Lord Krishna which has been in the temple since the last 5000 years. Only those are destined to reach Lord Jagannath would be

teaching there and I've been fortunate to have visited the temple innumerable times in the last 22 years since I've married. I visited Lord Jagannath first in 1998, the year of my marriage and since then I have regularly visited Puri every year for Rath Yatra without fail.

I could not make this pilgrimage in 2020 because the Rath yatra was not available to the general public I could not go physically but mentally and spiritually I am at the feet of Lord Jagannath and travel astrally as I am well versed in astral travel. I thought of writing this article and informing others of the omnipresent power of Lord Jagannath and how he has pulled me to Puri, since the last 22 years and guides me everyday in every way. Next year, I am definitely revisiting the yatra with his divine wish and guidance.

One of the other other things that attracted me to Puri is the Jahania Pira beach where I camp at the Ashtaranga Turtle Hut every year in March. I visit Puri regularly every Holi Purnima day to watch the Olive Ridley Turtles who come to this beach on a full moon night to lay their eggs. It is surprising that every year since thousands of years these Olive Ridley turtles have come to lay their eggs from thousands of miles away from South America. I have been to beaches all across the world but Jahania Pira beach is the best secluded beach I have visited during my International travels for my books on "Tranquil destinations for meditation". Every year I visit Puri twice, once for the Rath Yatra and once for watching the Olive Ridely Turtle migration.

Murli Menon is the author of ZeNLP- learning through stories and ZeNLP-the power to relax and ZeNLP-the power to succeed and 20 other travel storytelling books titled ZeNLP travel guides on Rajputana, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Nepal, Tibet, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, India And Thailand, available on amazon books and Google play books worldwide. His hobbies include Palmistry, Facereading and Astrology. Murli conducts Travel Storytelling webinars online for corporates. He can be reached at zenlp@rediffmail.com

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