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**MANAGEMENT AND ETHICS OF JAGANNATH AND BUDDHA CULTURE IN  
ODISHA**

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**ABSTRACT**

The icon of Jagannath is a carved and decorated wooden stump with large round eyes and with stumps as hands, with conspicuous absence of any legs. The worship procedures, practices, sacraments and rituals of Jagannath do not conform to those of classical Hinduism. The principal image of the deity at the temple city of Puri in the Indian state of Orissa is made of wood, which is an exception to common Hindu iconographic deities of stone. The origin and evolution of Buddhism is a religion and philosophy encompassing a variety of traditions, beliefs and practices, largely based on teachings attributed to Siddhartha Gautama, commonly known as the Buddha ("the awakened one"). The Buddha lived and taught in the northeastern Indian subcontinent sometime between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE. He is recognized by Buddhists as an awakened or enlightened teacher who shared his insights to help sentient beings end ignorance (avidyā) of dependent origination, thus escaping what is seen as a cycle of suffering and rebirth. Karma (from Sanskrit: "action, work") in Buddhism is the force that drives saṃsāra—the cycle of suffering and rebirth for each being. Good, skilful deeds (Pāli: "kusala") and bad, unskilful (Pāli: "akusala") actions produce "seeds" in the mind which come to fruition either in this life or in a subsequent rebirth. The avoidance of unwholesome actions and the cultivation of positive actions is called śīla (from Sanskrit: "ethical conduct"). In Buddhism, karma specifically refers to those actions (of body, speech, and mind) that spring from mental intent ("cetana"), and which bring about a consequence (or fruit, "phala") or result ("vipāka")

**Key Words:** Lord Jagannath, Lord Budha, Culture, Religion, Hinduism.

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**INTRODUCTION**

The academic domain of Sri Jagannath is not only shrouded in mystery but also gives rise to many doubts and debate. Some opine that Sri Jagannath is Lord Vishnu, some believe that Jagannath is Vairab, some conclude that Jagannath is Buddha.

To the best of my appreciation, it is difficult to pronounce a single term to reveal Sri Jagannath's identity. And I feel it is not necessary to confine Sri Jagannath within the bracket of any single term. As Sri Jagannath is considered to be 'the symbol' of supreme Godhead, people belonging to different sect and faith have their freedom to identify Sri Jagannath by any term they believe in or prefer. In Hinduism and Sri Jagannath's philosophy, Sri Jagannath is not 'Pratima' (idol), Sri Jagannath is 'Pratik' (symbol).

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Hence a symbol can be identified with any term from the perspective of any faith. And that happened in case of Sri Jagannath. The task of this short article is to impart some relevant information to explore the interrelationship between Sri Jagannath and Lord Buddha. I must admit that this subject is not at all a new area in the field of Jagannath Studies. Prof. Navin Kumar Sahu's "Buddhism in Orissa" (in English) and Prof. Banshidhar Mohanty's "Orissara Buddha Dharma" (in Oriya) are two significant works where the issue of Buddha and Jagannath has been addressed with serious academic sincerity with particular reference to history of Buddhism in Orissa and its impact on Sri Jagannath Culture (Makbul Sk. 2011). The culture of Lord Jagannath is meant for the universal brotherhood. It is the synthesis of all walks of religious and cultural heritage of the world. Scholars of different religions and faiths of Hinduism visited Puri, the abode of Lord Jagannath, popularly known as Shree Kshetra i.e., best of all religious place. "Avataravada" or the theory of incarnations is also aimed at the synthesis of cultural and scientific virtues. The concept of Avataravada is a psychological approach to determine the process of creation. Ten incarnations as vividly described in different religious scriptures of Hinduism, can be analysed from philosophical and scientific point of view. The theory of Darwin about the evolution of lives on the earth and gradual development of human society has been depicted in the concept of Avataravada. Out of ten incarnations, Buddha has been accepted as the ninth incarnation. The literary meaning of the Buddha is the Enlightened One. In the general parlance, the learned man is called as Buddha in the society. Lord Buddha as the incarnation of Vishnu, is not mentioned in any of the Vedas or Samhitas. Such

mention is also not found in Brahmanas and Upanisads. In the later Vedic literature, some references of Buddha are found in the narrations as Pratibodha, Baudhayana as mentioned in Baudhayana Sruta Sutra and Baudhiputra of Brhadaranyaka Upanisad. But all above as mentioned have no relation with Gautam Buddha the ninth incarnation. There is the mention of Bodha the name of a saint in the Mantrapatha. But on careful analysis, it is observed that it has no relationship with incarnation of Buddha. The importance of Lord Buddha as ninth incarnation was prominently narrated by Shri Jayadeva, the poet of Orissa who wrote the Gitagovinda in Sanskrit language during 12th Century. The description of Buddha incarnation in the first canto of Gitagovinda is as follows: "Nindasi Yajna Bidherah Ham Shrutijata Sadaya Hrudaya Darshrita Pashughatam, Keshab Dhruta! "Buddha Shareera, Jaya Jagadeesha Hare".

### **LORD BUDDHA IN JAGANNATH CULTURE**

Conventional systems of religious rites (Yajna) and sacrifice of innocent animals in it with the compassionate heart resulting in the incarnation accepted by the Almighty (Keshab) in the form of Buddha and cheers for Jagadeesha Hare (the Master of the Universe)." The above stanza written in Sanskrit language by the poet Jayadeva has proved the importance of the incarnation of Buddha as a reformer in the Hindu culture and further proclaimed that, Lord Krishna and Lord Jagannath are the same. Some historians made efforts to prove the existence of Buddha from the period of Vedas, due to mention of the name Buddha in different religious scriptures. Harivamsa and Bhagabat Gita are silent about Buddha incarnation. In Padmapurana, it is mentioned that Lord Vishnu took the Buddha form, teaching the doctrine of delusion to destroy

the demons. As per Agnipurana, as the son of Sudhodhana, Lord Vishnu removed the demons as the symbol of Mayamoha. In Garuda Purana, it is mentioned that, Lord Vishnu will take birth as the Buddha, the son of Jina to diminish the foes of God. In the Bhagabat Purana, Buddha has been depicted as the future incarnation after incarnation of Risabha, the first Jaina Tirthankar. Vishnu would incarnate as Buddha as the son of Ajana in the kingdom of Magadha. The mission of such incarnation as mentioned in Bhagabat Purana was to remove demons. Sometimes the confusion arose as some historians tried to establish Buddha as Jaina. Such ideas must have come to some scholars to prove Lord Vishnu as the incarnator of Buddha and Jaina. The efforts to derive the existence of Buddha from Vedic period were not successful in the pages of history of the world. The presence of idols of Lord Jagannath in the places of ninth incarnation in Jagannath temple at Puri proves the deep connection of Lord Buddha with Lord Jagannath. While entering the Jagannath temple the attention of the visitors are attracted to the idols of ten incarnations on the upper part of the Lions Gate (Singha Dwara). In the place of ninth incarnation i.e., after Haladhara and before Kalki, the idol of Lord Jagannath is placed in the place of Lord Buddha. Hence, as per the scholars the devotees of Lord Jagannath have accepted Gautam Buddha as that of Lord Jagannath. The second evidence is found inside Jagamohana (the assembly hall) of the Jagannath temple. On the left hand side of Garuda stambha images of ten incarnations have been made on the wall. In the place of ninth incarnation in the place of Gautam Buddha the image of Lord Jagannath has been postured. But the style of construction of images is a departure from the general style of construction of images of Lord Jagannath. However, the above two

evidences prove that, the devotees of Lord Jagannath have accepted the relation of Lord Buddha with Lord Jagannath. Some historians also believe that the "Brahma" i.e., the sacred soul present inside the idol of Lord Jagannath is the tooth relic of Lord Buddha. It is astonishing that, though the birth day of Rama, Vamana and Krishna as the incarnations of Shri Jagannath have been celebrated in the Jagannath temple as important festivals, the birthday of Lord Buddha (on the sacred day of Buddha Purnima) is never celebrated in the temple. While analysing the cause of the above, it is presumed that Gautam Buddha who was born at Lumbini during 623 B.C. was not the same. According to some scholars, like that of Jaina religion and birth of many religious masters as Tirthankars, in the Buddhist religion also a number of religious masters in the name of Buddha were born in different years. Hence, according to them, Gautam Buddha of 623 B.C. was the 20th religious master in the Buddha tradition. He was called as the Sarba Buddha Maya Purusottama (Nanda, 2009).

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The outstanding contributions of Orissa towards the Buddhist culture are uncountable. In past Buddhism occupied a great position in religious history of Orissa. Lord Buddha is rightly said the light of Asia. The great Vaishnav poet Jayadev of Orissa of twelfth century A.D. described Buddha as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Buddhism had influenced the social, cultural and political life of Kalinga. The relation of Orissa with Buddhism is very ancient. The early Buddhist text Nikaya and Jatak mention the names of two merchants of Utkal: Tapassu and Bhallika who become the first devotees of Lord Buddha. They had also received the sacred hairs of Buddha and enshrined the "Kushadhatu" at Kalinga. In

this way the Buddhism entered in Orissa. During that period "Akiria bad" was established in Orissa and the followers of this ideology were strongly protesting the Buddhism in Orissa. When Buddha defeated the religious faiths of Akariabzad, then after Buddhism became very popular in the soil of Orissa. According to Buddhist "Mahaparinirvanasutta" Kalinga was one of the kingdoms to obtain the tooth-relic of Buddha after his Cremation at Kusinara. BhikkhuKhemathera had brought the sacred tooth relic of Buddha to Kalinga. This tooth relic was enshrined and worshipped at Dantapure, the capital of Kalinga. The text Dathvamsa of Ceylon states that Danta Kumar the Pince of UjjaiOrissa is a holy land of different gods and goddesses. Lord Jagannath is the supreme Lord of the land. Jagannath is the centre of human conscience and consciousness. The cult of Lord Jagannath is the cult of Orissa. The religion of Jagannath is the religion of Orissa. The history of Lord Jagannath is the history of Orissa. Kindness, benevolence, tolerance, peace and tranquillity are the ornaments of the philosophy which enrich and deepen the sense of humanitarian values and Absolute freedom. The cult develop the mental insight to build up super human consciousness for obtaining liberation from materialistic needs and desires and to attain salvation and to merge with the absolute In Theravada doctrine, a person may awaken from the "sleep of ignorance" by directly realizing the true nature of reality; such people are called *arahants* and occasionally *Buddhas*. After numerous lifetimes of spiritual striving, they have reached the end of the cycle of rebirth, no longer reincarnating as human, animal, ghost, or other being. The commentaries to the Pali Canon classify these awakened beings into three types:

- *Sammāsambuddha*, usually just called Buddha, who discovers the

truth by himself and teaches the path to awakening to others

- *Paccekabuddha*, who discovers the truth by himself but lacks the skill to teach others
- *Savakabuddha*, who receive the truth directly or indirectly from a *Sammāsambuddha*

*Bodhi* and *nirvana* carry the same meaning, that of being freed from craving, hate, and delusion. In attaining *bodhi*, the *arahant* has overcome these obstacles. As a further distinction, the extinction of only hatred and greed (in the sensory context) with some residue of delusion is called *anagami*.

Jagannath Culture -The principle of SarvaDharma samanwaya

Orissa is the land of Jagannath culture. It represents the religious worships of Orissa. It has unique and valuable religious tourism resources. The state has something for everyone. The monuments- the sun temple at Konark, the Jagannath temple at Puri, the Lingraj temple at Bhubaneswar are the sacred places of Orissa attract thousands of pilgrimages from the different parts of world in recent time. The beautiful yatra, Car festivals of Lord Jagannath motivate many devotees from different parts of the world. There are many spots of Orissa, which deserve to be publicized worldwide by international tourism. The temple architect and sculpture of Orissa are world famous. Apart from Indian culture, Orissa like any other region of the country have no separate culture of own. Lord Jagannath is the presiding deity of Orissa culture. It became the symbol of unified religion and culture among the Jainism, Buddhism, shaivism, vaishnavism and Shaktism from time to time. But Jagannath is the lord of universe, almighty and omnipresent. The sacred place, Puri of Orissa is prominent as purusottamkshetra. In the Hindu belief it is one of the four centres of salvation from

ancient times, the people of India regarded four places, namely, Badrinath in the north, Rameswaram in the south, Dwaraka in the west, and Puri on the eastern sea coast as their destinations for pilgrimage. Puri was thus recognized as one of the most sacred places of India from an immemorial past. It is also known as 'Shreeksheṭra, Niladri, Sankhakshetra and Martya-baikuntha.

### DESCRIPTION AND SOURCE

Buddhism as a religion had a special appeal in Orissa. The presence of many universities and shrines in the state is a pointer to the fact that Buddhism in fact had been a strong force in Orissa at certain period of time. It is hardly a matter of surprise than that the most prevalent cult in Orissa today, the Jagannath cult has deeply ingrained elements of Buddhism in it. There is lot of controversy among the historians regarding the birth place of Gautam Buddha. Though it is widely believed that Lord Buddha was born in Nepal, there is a set of historians who are firm in proving Kapileswar in Orissa as his actual place of birth. This fact is corroborated from the discovery of a stone inscription from Kapileswar in Orissa. The epigraph describes that “King DevanamPriyadarsi Asoka after 20 years of his anointment as king, came to Kalinga and worshipped at this spot, because Buddha Sakyamuni was born here. He also caused a stone pillar to be set-up and made the village of Lummuni tax free.” This particular inscription is now in Asutosh Museum of Kolkata. In addition to this references in Buddhist literature about Tapasu and Bhallika ( two merchant brothers from Kalinga) becoming the first disciples of Lord Buddha give credence to the belief of Lord Buddha being born in Orissa. If Buddhism had its genesis in Orissa and Lord Buddha actually roamed and lived in the soils of Orissa before shifting elsewhere

to preach his sermons, it is but natural that the religious practices of Orissa itself had been at some point of time influenced by Buddhism. Lord Buddha being depicted as the ninth incarnation of Lord Jagannath might well be a direct shortfall of this. Further, references about Lord Jagannath are found in the Buddhist literature Gyansiddhi of Indrabhuti which alludes to direct connection between Buddhism and the Jagannath cult. The couplet mentioned below from the book is a pointer to the same Pranipatyajagannatham Sarvajina Vararchitam. Sarva Buddha Mayam Siddhi Vyapinam Gaganopamam'. It should be worth notice that Lord Jagannath is referred to as Buddha for the first time in this scripture only. The goal of Buddhism is to achieve Nirvana or Salvation. For achieving this one should follow the three jewels (Tri Ratna) of Buddha i.e. Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Similarly in Jagannath cult, to get Salvation from this illusory world, one should take refuge at the feet of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra. The Triad of Jagannath is recognized as Buddhists triad of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Now coming to the most glorious festivals of Lord Jagannath – the Car festival; there are interminable arguments extended in favor of the same that goes on to prove the Buddhist connection that it has. The famous historian W. Hunter in his book – “The Indian Empire” had compared the Car Festival of Lord Jagannath with the tooth-relic ceremony of Lord Buddha. The famous Chinese traveller Hieun-Tsang had also stated that in order to commemorate the day of enlightenment of Gautam Buddha, the Buddhists used to take his remains in a chariot to celebrate the car festival. The car festival of Lord Jagannath and other ceremonies have been derived from this Buddhist cult practice only. Buddhist

literatures are abound with the fact that a person named Therakhema brought the tooth-relic of Gautam Buddha to the Kalinga and it was worshipped in Danta Puri i.e the present day township of Puri. The relics used to be installed in a chariot annually and the festival of chariot puling was being organized. The practice has lived on in form of the car festival of lord Jagannath. There is a resemblance of one incomplete Jagannatha with Buddha at Bodhagaya. For this many scholars have accepted Lord Jagannatha as the symbol of Lord Buddha. The incarnation (Avatara) of Jagannatha in the form of Lord Buddha has also given the strong evidence to the above contention (Orissa Blog, 2011).

### CONCLUSION

I would like to spend a few moments by way of conclusion to reflect upon what we have done over the past weeks and relate it to what we can do now and in the future. The teachings of the Buddha are exceedingly vast and very profound. In fact, over the past weeks, we have only managed to survey a few of the fundamental teachings of the Buddha, and these too only superficially. Yet, you may feel that what we have covered is a lot, and you may feel that it is impossible to practice all that we have discussed. In fact, it is said that it is difficult even for a monk living in isolation to practise all of the fundamental teachings of the Buddha. No small wonder that it is difficult for laymen and women like ourselves who have many secular responsibilities. Nonetheless, if one succeeds in sincerely cultivating and practising even a few of the many teachings of the Buddha, and then one will have succeeded in making this life more meaningful.

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