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He has completed his graduation in Mechanical Engineering from Government College of Engineering, Keonjhar. He is currently undergoing A.C.F Training at CASFOS Coimbatore.

He is an exemplary Volleyball player and his loves towards Sports & Games makes him outstanding performer in his professional field. Inspired by nature and devotion, he believes that forests and faith both teach us harmony, patience, and balance.

This book, "The Holy Trinity of Odisha: Divinity, Unity and Eternal Love", is his heartfelt tribute to Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, and Devi Subhadra, and to the timeless traditions that unite people through devotion and love.

The Holy Trinity of Odisha: Divinity, Unity, and Eternal Love

Subham Behera



CENTRAL ACADEMY FOR STATE FOREST SERVICE
COIMBATORE

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but in the boundless love that holds Odisha together.

Whispers from Nilāchala (Interludes)

1. “The conch calls at dawn; even the waves bow.”
2. “In the chariot's wheel spins the world's destiny.”
3. “The flag atop Nilachala never bends to the wind – it commands it.”
4. “Faith here is not learned; it is inhaled.”
5. “The Lord's smile has no language – only silence.”
6. “All who walk to Puri Walk home.”

Glossary

- ◆ Daru Brahma: Divine spirit in wood form
- ◆ Mahaprasad: Sacred food offering
- ◆ Rathayatra: Annual chariot festival
- ◆ Nabakalebara: Renewal of idols
- ◆ PatitaPabana: Redeemer of the fallen

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The Holy Trinity of Odisha: Divinity, Unity, and Eternal Love



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Invocation (Maṅgala Cāraṇa)

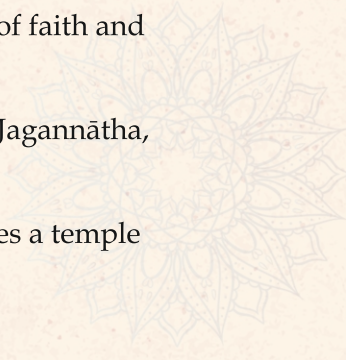
*O Jagannātha, Lord of the Universe,
Jibankudayākaru, patitapābanānātha!*

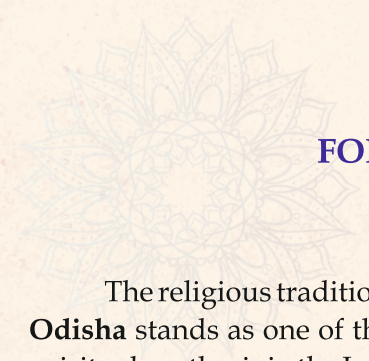
(Show compassion to all beings, O purifier of the fallen!)

From the depths of Nilāchal arises the call of faith and
fragrance of flowers.

The sea whispers the name of the Trinity — Jagannātha,
Balabhadra, and

Subhadrā — and the devotee's heart becomes a temple
where the Lord resides.





FOREWORD

The religious tradition centered on the **Jagannath cult of Odisha** stands as one of the most remarkable expressions of spiritual synthesis in the Indian subcontinent.

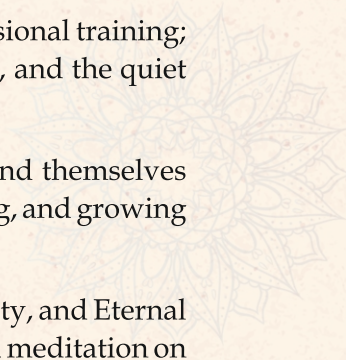
The book “*The Holy Trinity of Odisha: Divinity, Unity, and Eternal Love*” offers a comprehensive and nuanced examination of this tradition. The author's work presents the Trinity not only as an object of devotion but also as a cultural and intellectual construct that reflects Odisha's civilizational ethos.

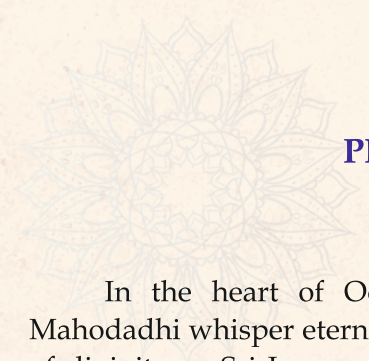
This book is not just a chronicle of professional training; it is a testament to personal growth, resilience, and the quiet wisdom gained from experience.

As readers turn these pages, they will find themselves walking alongside the author – learning, feeling, and growing with every tale.

The Holy Trinity of Odisha: Divinity, Unity, and Eternal Love is thus more than a study of deities – it is a meditation on the human longing for the divine, for oneness, and for eternal love.

V. Thirunavukarasu, IFS
APCCF & Principal,
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PREFACE

In the heart of Odisha, where the waves of the Mahodadhi whisper eternal hymns, stands the sacred abode of divinity — Sri Jagannath Dham of Puri. This holy land, known as Shree Kshetra or Nilachala, has for centuries been the soul of Odia faith, art, and identity. The Holy Trinity — Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, and Devi Subhadra — reign supreme not merely as deities but as symbols of love, equality, and cosmic unity.

This book, “The Holy Trinity of Odisha: Divinity, Unity and Eternal Love,” is a humble attempt to explore the divine lore, timeless rituals, and the spiritual philosophy woven around this celestial triad. Each chapter journeys through the sacred lanes of Puri — from the mysteries of the temple, the grandeur of the Rath Yatra, to the soulful songs of saints and poets who found liberation in Jagannath's boundless compassion.

May this work serve not merely as a collection of facts and traditions, but as a reflection of devotion — a bridge between faith and understanding. Every word here aspires to echo the chant that fills the air of Puri: “Jai Jagannath, the Lord of the Universe, May your divine chariot carry all hearts towards eternal peace.

-Subham Behera

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

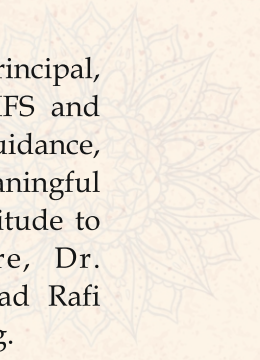
The completion of The Holy Trinity of Odisha: Divinity, Unity, and Eternal Love has been both an intellectual and spiritual journey, one made possible through the guidance, support, and encouragement of many individuals and institutions.

First and foremost, I bow in reverence to the Holy Trinity – Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, and Goddess Subhadra – whose divine grace and inspiration have guided every step of this endeavor. Their boundless compassion and unity of spirit form the essence of this work.

I express my profound gratitude to the Principal, CASFOS, Coimbatore, Shri V. Thirunavukarasu, IFS and Course Director, Dr. C. Vidhyasagar, IFS, for their guidance, encouragement, and motivation in undertaking meaningful work in my area of interest. I also extend my gratitude to Editorial committee of CASFOS Coimbatore, Dr. Ramkrishnan R., Scientist C and Dr. B. Muhamad Rafi Hussain for their technical guidance and proof reading.

I also express my appreciation to all the faculty of CASFOS, Coimbatore, for shaping my professional perspective and fostering a focused inclination toward my chosen field.

-Subham Behera



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Chapter 1

Puri: The Abode of Eternal Faith



Fig. 1. Puri Jagannath Temple

Puri, known as ShriKṣetra, is one of India's four Char Dhams. Here, faith and the sea meet in an endless dialogue. The sound of waves mingles with the chant — “Jai Jagannātha!” — echoing from lanes where every brick has heard the Lord's name.

The Jagannātha Temple stands majestically on the Nilachala hill, built by King Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva in the 12th century. The temple's architecture is Kalingan in style — a fusion of grace and strength. Its tower (Vimana) soars skyward, crowned by the Nila Chakra made of ashta-dhātu (eight metals), representing the cosmic wheel of Dharma.

The unique rituals of JagannāthaPuri reflect a fusion of tribal and Vedic traditions.

The Lord's form, carved from neem wood, symbolizes accessibility and impermanence — for every twelve to nineteen years, during Nabakalebara, the deities receive new bodies, a ritual of divine rebirth.

“Manisajanmalabakebe, Puridarśanaho je nahi,” sings Saint Balarama Dasa — “One who is born human but never sees Puri, wastes life's chance.”

Here, the sea itself is holy — the Mahodadhi — whose waves wash away sin and carry prayers to the Lord. Even today, the town's pulse beats to the rhythm of its temple bells and devotees' footsteps.

Chapter 2

The Holy Trinity: Symbols of Unity



Fig. 2. Suna Besa (Golden attire)

The Trinity of Puri is not a mere set of three idols but a philosophical vision.

Jagannātha embodies Lord Vishnu, Balabhadra symbolizes strength and protection, and Subhadrā represents the compassionate energy that binds them.

The three share a single pedestal in the sanctum (RatnaSinghāsana), a symbol of equality.

The brother-sister bond among them is unique in Hindu tradition — a reminder that divinity exists in affection, not hierarchy.

Each deity is painted in distinct colors: Jagannātha in black (the mystery of creation), Balabhadra in white (purity and truth), Subhadrā in yellow (energy and auspiciousness).

Together they symbolize the whole cosmos — matter, motion, and mind.

Odia Verse

“KālāJagannātha, dholaBalabhadra, piṭhaSubhadrārāṅga;

E tinideulērahasyaachhi, bhakta bujisaṅga.”

(Black is Jagannātha, white is Balabhadra, and yellow is Subhadrā – within them lies the mystery of existence, understood only by devotion.)

Scholars see in this Triad a synthesis of Saivism, Vaishnavism, and Shaktism — the three streams that flow through Odisha's spiritual life. Hence, Jagannātha culture is not sectarian but universal, embracing diversity in oneness.

Chapter 3

Legends and Lore of Nilāchala

No temple is as rich in legends as Puri. The most famous is that of King Indradyumna, who dreamt of building a temple for the Lord. When Vishwakarma, the divine artisan, agreed to sculpt the idols on one condition—that he would not be disturbed for 21 days—Indradyumna's impatience broke the vow.

The carving was left incomplete—hence the round-eyed, limbless forms of the Trinity.

Another legend tells of Lord Krishna's body turning to wood after cremation in Dwarka. The log floated to Puri's shore and became the Dāru Brahma — the divine wood enshrined as Jagannātha.

These stories are not myth alone—they carry philosophical depth. The unfinished form signifies that divinity transcends human imagination. Every rough edge of the idol invites the devotee to complete the Lord through love.

Chapter 4

The Temple Eternal: Architecture of Divinity

The Jagannātha Temple of Puri is more than a monument—it is a manifestation of cosmic order carved in stone.

Rising 214 feet above the sea, the main shrine (Sri Mandira) stands as a symbol of Odia craftsmanship and faith. Constructed in the Kalinga style, it comprises four distinct structures aligned east-west: the Vimana (Sanctum), Jagamohana (Assembly Hall), Nata Mandira (Dancing Hall), and Bhoga Mandapa (Offering Hall).

Each architectural element represents a journey — from the outer to the inner, from form to formlessness, from human to divine.

The temple's flag (PatitaPābanā Bana) flutters always against the wind, a mystery unexplained yet unquestioned by science. Priests climb the temple's towering height daily to replace it, chanting,

“Jaya Jagannātha, PatitaPābanā!”

The Nīla Chakra atop, cast from eight sacred metals, reflects the radiance of the sun by day and moonlight by night — a symbol that the Lord's vision never ceases.

Odia verse

“Deulauchanilāchale, śraddhārasāmrajarahe;
Bāyurebirājedhwaja, jete dekhileśāntipahe.”

(On Nilachala stands the lofty temple, kingdom of devotion;
its flag in the wind brings peace to all who see it.)

Every stone, every carving bears testimony to centuries of Odia kings and sculptors who saw no separation between art and worship.

To this day, even after invasions, time, and storms, the temple stands—its doors open to all faiths, its aura undimmed.



Fig. 3. Puri Jagannath Temple



Fig. 4. Shikhara of Puri Jagannath Temple

Chapter 5

The Rituals of Living Divinity

In Puri, the Lord does not remain aloof; He eats, sleeps, travels, and feels joy or fatigue like His devotees.

Every ritual in the temple is an enactment of life itself – making Jagannātha a living deity, ChalantaDevatā.

From the dawn ritual of Mangala Ārati to the night Pahuda, the day at Puri flows with divine rhythm.

At sunrise, the priests awaken the Lord with music and incense. Later comes the SakalaDhupa, the morning offering of ghee rice, dal, and vegetables.

The most unique offering is the MahāPrasāda (Abadha) – cooked in earthen pots stacked one atop another over a wood fire.

Miraculously, the pot at the top cooks first – a mystery that science has yet to explain but devotion fully believes.

Even the temple kitchen is sacred; no foreign elements are allowed, and more than 500 cooks serve the Lord daily.

It is said: “MahāPrasāda Brahma sama” – Mahaprasad is as sacred as the Lord Himself.

The daily rituals follow a cosmic pattern – bathing, feeding, adorning, resting. During Anavasara, when the deities “fall ill” after SnānaYātrā, devotees are denied darshan

for fifteen days. When the doors reopen, the Lord's new appearance brings tears to the eyes of millions.

Odia verse

“Je Jagannāthabhogakhāye, sei paramānandapāye;
Bhakta hrudaye basantitāṅkarūpa, anantamāye.”

(He who partakes in Jagannātha's food attains bliss;
The Lord's form dwells forever in the devotee's heart.)



Fig. 5. Snana ritual of Lord Jagannath Temple

Chapter 6

The Rathayātrā: Chariot of the Gods

The grandest celebration of Odisha – the Rathayātrā – is a spectacle of faith and unity unparalleled on earth.

Each year, during Āṣāḍha (June–July), the Holy Trinity leave their sanctum to journey to Gundicha Temple, symbolizing a visit to their maternal home.

Three massive wooden chariots are built anew each year from sacred trees –

Jagannātha's Nandighosha, Balabhadra's Taladhwaja, and Subhadra's Darpadalana – each distinct in color, design, and decoration.

When the Lord descends from the sanctum in the Pahandi procession,

devotees cry, “Jai Jagannātha!”

The air trembles with drums and conch shells. The Gajapati Maharaja of Puri sweeps the chariot platform with a golden broom – ChheraPanhara – symbolizing humility before divinity.

For devotees, pulling the chariot ropes is not just a ritual – it is salvation itself.

As the wheels roll through Bada Danda (the Grand Road), it feels as if the universe itself moves towards liberation.

Odia verse

“Rathācale Bada Dandāre, bhakta mane kāndeānandare;
Jibanajanmasafalaheba, Jagannāthadarśanapāre.”

(The chariot moves along the Grand Road, devotees cry
in joy;

Life's purpose is fulfilled in beholding Jagannātha.)

The Rathayātrā symbolizes motion – the divine coming out
to embrace humanity.

No caste, no creed, no nation remains apart when the Lord
His Chariot



Fig. 6. Puri Rath Yatra

Chapter 7

The Sacred Timber: Woods of the Divine Chariots

Every year, when the sacred chariots of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, and Devi Subhadra are built anew for the grand Rath Yatra, the forests of Odisha breathe in reverence. The process of selecting wood is not merely technical—it is ritual, spiritual, and ecological.

The timber used for constructing the rathas is chosen from specific species sanctified through tradition and scripture. Each type of wood embodies unique symbolic meaning and functional virtue. The selection is performed under the supervision of the Puri Temple Administration, the Forest Department, and the Temple's Maharana Sevayats (carpenters). The work begins months in advance, following a sacred ceremony called Banajaga Yatra.

The main timbers traditionally used are:

- Phasi (*Anogeissus acuminata*) – The principal wood for axles, wheels, and beams due to its strength and resistance.
- Dhaura (*Anogeissus latifolia*) – Known for durability; used in wheels and cross-bars.
- Asan (*Terminalia tomentosa*) – Used for the superstructure, providing flexibility and beauty.

- Simal (*Bombax ceiba*) – Lightweight and soft, ideal for decorative carvings and upper canopy work.
- Neem (*Azadirachta indica*) – Symbol of purity and health, often used for the idols themselves.
- Kansa (*Schleichera oleosa*) – For supporting frames and lesser beams.

The logs are brought ceremoniously from Dasapalla, Nayagarh, Khallikote, and other traditional forest ranges of Odisha. Forest officials accompany the Banajaga team, ensuring sustainable felling, marking, and transportation. Each log bears the sacred mark of Chakra and Sankha, transforming it from wood into divinity.

Once in Puri, carpenters begin the sacred construction at the RathaKhala, where chants of “Jai Jagannath!” mix with the rhythm of chisels. The work proceeds day and night until the mighty chariots—Nandighosha, Taladhwaja, and Darpadalana—stand ready, towering over the pilgrim town as symbols of moving divinity.

Beyond ritual, this practice highlights the ancient harmony between forests and faith—a reflection of Odisha's deep ecological ethics. The trees offered for the Rath Yatra are never seen as lifeless material but as living participants in divine service.

Thus, the sacred timber of the Rath Yatra bridges nature and divinity, reminding us that even the forests bow before Jagannath's call.

The Mystery of Mahāprasāda: Food as Divine Grace

In Jagannātha culture, food is not merely sustenance — it is Mahāprasāda, divine grace made edible.

Every grain offered to the Lord becomes a bridge between heaven and earth.

The kitchen of Puri, known as Ananda Bazaar, is the largest sacred kitchen in the world, where devotion and discipline simmer together.

Cooked by more than five hundred Suaras (temple cooks), the Mahāprasāda consists of 56 varieties of dishes, collectively called ChhappanBhoga.

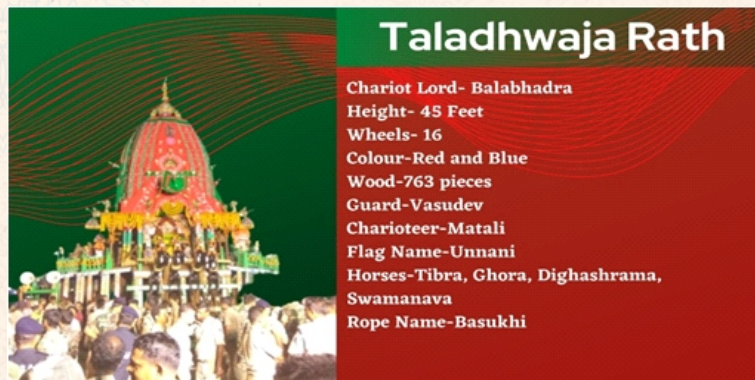
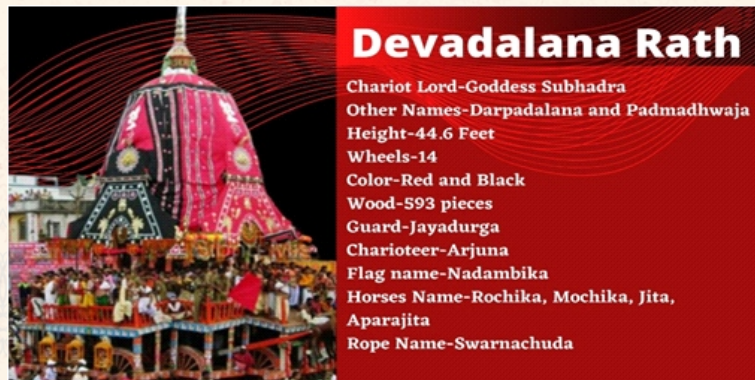
Rice, dal, vegetable curries, sweets like Khiri, Gaja, Khaja, and Malpua — each dish holds symbolic meaning.

Science bows before mystery here — food is cooked in earthen pots stacked one atop another, yet the topmost pot cooks first!

Devotees call it the “miracle of Jagannātha's touch.”

After the offering, the food becomes Abadha — available to all, regardless of caste or class.

In the Ananda Bazaar, Brahmins, tribals, and visitors from distant lands share the same plate, symbolizing Jagannātha's message of equality and compassion.



Odia verse

“Mahāprasāda brahma sama, bhakta hrudayesadādhyāna;

Je khaiśraddhāsahitatāra, pāpakṣaya, jīvanadhana.”

(Mahaprasad is as sacred as the Lord Himself;

he who eats with devotion is freed from sin and filled with
divine joy.)

The sharing of Mahaprasad teaches that God's grace knows no barriers -it unites hearts as much as it nourishes bodies



Fig. 8. Maha prasad: The divine offering of Lord Jagannath

Chapter 9

The Devotees and the Saints: Voices of Bhakti

The story of Jagannātha is also the story of His devotees. From the mystic poet Jayadeva to the humble Salabega, every heart that has sung His name becomes a verse in Odisha's living scripture.

Jayadeva, the 12th-century composer of GītaGovinda, envisioned Jagannātha as Krishna, the lover of Radha, and adorned Him daily with his songs.

During temple rituals, GītaGovinda verses are still sung as offerings of melody.

Salabega, a Muslim by birth, remains one of Jagannātha's dearest devotees.

Denied entry into the temple, he composed songs of longing from afar –

“AheNilaŚaila, prabalamattabarana...” –

which echo through Odisha's villages to this day.

Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, the saint from Bengal, spent eighteen years in Puri, losing Himself in divine ecstasy before the Lord.

His tears of devotion are said to have wet the temple floor.

Odia verse

“Bhakta nāme je gāye Jagannātha,

Se pāeānandapatha.”

(He who sings the Lord's name finds the path of bliss.)

In their songs, Jagannātha is not distant; He is friend,
lover, and companion —

the Divine made personal; the Infinite made intimate.

Chapter 10

The Art, Music, and Dance of the Lord

Art in Odisha breathes Jagannātha. From the rhythmic movements of Odissi dance to the intricate lines of Pattachitra paintings, every creative expression circles back to the blue-eyed Lord.

In Pattachitra, the Trinity's wide, circular eyes and bright colors depict simplicity and joy.

In Gotipua and Odissi, the graceful poses of dancers narrate tales from GītaGovinda, blending devotion with aesthetics.

Temple walls display carvings of musicians, elephants, and celestial beings—a visual rhythm that mirrors divine music.

Even today, Mahari dancers offer performances before the Lord, continuing a tradition older than memory.

Odia verse

“Nrutya, gīta, chitra re tāṅkanāma,

Saba kalāJagannāthadhāma.”

(In dance, song, and art lives His name;

All arts find their home in Jagannātha's domain.)

Art here is not entertainment – it is worship, a way to dissolve the self into beauty and faith.



9. Patta Chithra of the Holy Trinity



Fig. 10. Odissi Dance on Bada Danda

Chapter 11

Jagannātha Philosophy: The Universal Lord

Jagannātha represents universality. He transcends sectarian boundaries –

for the Vaishnava, He is Krishna; for the Shaiva, He is Bhairava; for the Shakta, He is Durga's brother;

for the tribal devotee, He is the Daru Devata, the wooden spirit of the forest.

This inclusivity is the heart of Jagannātha consciousness—a philosophy rooted in compassion, tolerance, and unity.

He embodies the Trimurti—Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva – and yet belongs to none alone.

Saints describe Him as Darubrahma –

God in wood, imperishable yet ever-changing.

Every Nabakalebara ritual, when new idols are carved, reflects the cycle of creation, death, and renewal –

reminding humanity of the eternal rhythm of life.

Odia verse

“Je Jagannāthasarbarupi,
Sehi param tattwaanupi.”

(He who is all forms,

is the supreme truth beyond measure.)

In Jagannātha's eyes, no one is alien, no path is wrong.

He is the universal deity who belongs to everyone — and
to no one exclusively.

Chapter 12

The Sea and the City: Puri's Living Spirit

The city of Puri breathes with its temple.

Its streets, from Bada Danda to Swargadwara, echo with
pilgrim footsteps.

The roaring Bay of Bengal seems to chant the Lord's
name with every wave —

Mahodadhi bole: Jai Jagannātha!

The city's festivals — Chandan Yatra, SnānaPurnimā,
Anavasara, Nabakalebara — mark the passage of time with
ritual precision.

Every home here carries an image of the Trinity; every
heart is a small temple.

The people of Puri say:

“JahaJagannātha, sehi mora ghara.” (Where Jagannātha
dwells, there is my home.)

The blending of human and divine is seamless here.
Fishermen, priests, artisans, and monks — all live under the
Lord's gaze.

The sea breeze carries both the salt of the ocean and the
sweetness of devotion.

Odia verse

“Purinagare bhakti bāse,
Nilasāgaratāresakhā pare.”

(In the city of Puri dwells devotion,
The blue sea stands as its eternal friend.)



Fig. 11. Sun rise in Puri Beach



Fig. 12. Puri City and Beach drone view

Chapter 13

The Eternal Journey: Faith Beyond Time

Jagannātha is not bound to a temple—He rides the chariot of human hearts.

As centuries pass, His philosophy continues to inspire—uniting people through compassion and love.

Pilgrims return from Puri carrying not just Maha prasad, but a fragment of faith that renews life.

Even beyond Odisha, Jagannātha temples rise—from London to New York—spreading the message of inclusivity.

His smiling face, unfinished yet perfect, reminds humanity that divinity is not about form, but feeling.

To see Him is to see oneself—broken, beautiful, eternal.

Odia verse

“JebedekheJagannāthamukha,
Bhakta bhulesamsāradukha.”

(When one beholds Jagannātha's face,
All sorrows of the world fade away.)

And so, the story continues— in every heart that whispers His name, in every life that finds solace in His gaze.

Jagannatha lives, not in idols or rituals alone,