

Caitanya Mahaprabhu in Jagannath ratha yatra

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Occasion: Day before ratha yatra

You'll are so serious. Relax! What is today? Don't say it's Saturday! It is the day before

Jagannath ratha yatra. Jagannath ratha yatra mahotsav ki..jai!. Tomorrow is ratha yatra here. In Jagannath Puri, the day before ratha yatra there is darsana of Jagannath. Here we are getting darsana tomorrow. We have been praying and crying

"Jagannath svami nayana-patha-gami bhavatu me"

You are singing and praying: "Oh Jagannath! nayana patha- gami bhavatu me".

Bhavatu – You become. Patha – path and nayana are eyes. Oh! Lord you become visible on the path of my eyes. I am looking here; this is the path of my eyes. Now this is the path, nayan pathi gami wherever my eyes go, eyesight goes to see, see something, oh Lord you be there, wherever I look.

yato yato yami tato Narsimha

Wherever I go O Lord Narsimha, you be there. That's the idea. So, we have been praying. So here, we have to wait for another day. Could we manage? Could we survive another day? I am sure the Lord is also anxious to see the devotees. So, the day before ratha yatra in Jagannath Puri the Lord gives darsana. That day also has a name.

That day is also a festival, Netrutsava! Festival for the eyes or feast for the eyes. Netrutsava. The devotees have been

fasting for a long time now. For two weeks they have been fasting and they are very very eager to have darsana again of Jagannath and then Jagannath gives darsana on this day. Then that day becomes from fasting to feasting. Feast for eyes. And devotees see the Lord on that day to their hearts content.

I am remembering one such day. I was in Jagannath Puri for the first time ever. That was in 1977. I had never ever seen Jagannath. You can imagine how anxious I was to see Jagannath and it wasn't just myself. We had a BBT travelling sankirtana party. Rameshwara Prabhu reminds me of the BBT traveling party. We had gone to Jagannath Puri traveling and distributing Srila Prabhupada's books. We arrived the day before ratha yatra and we wanted to go in for darsana of Jagannath.

"Jay! Jagannath". We were shouting as we entered. I was kind of a brand-new sannyasi. We had some brahmacaris with me and we entered simhadwara. Have you heard that term? Lion Gate. There are different gates, four gates. So, this is the eastern gate and we had a few more gates to go through before we could get darsana. As we were trying to enter the next gate, we were stopped by the pandas. They stretched their arms out: "You can't go!." I said: "What! We can't go for darsana?" They had found out that this was an ISKCON team. And those days they didn't like ISKCON, even these days they don't like so much. I was the leader there, so I was asking: "Why can't I go?"

"You are born Christian and these ISKCON people have converted you. Now you have become Hindu. ISKCON converted you. "

I don't know if they had a dream or something. They found out. The tug of war continued. And we were kind of defeated. They were well-built pandas. We were tiny austere sannyasis and brahmacaris. So finally, they picked us up. Literally, they picked us up and placed us outside simha dwara. So, when we were there, looking around, one prabhu was missing. He was

Riksharaj. If you know Riksharaj. He played sitar also. So, he also wanted to join our team. He was born Christian and he wanted darsana. He looked different. He was of a different complexion. Like Shesha Prabhu. So, it was easy for him to sneak in. While we were battling, he took a detour and he entered. Most of the pandas were battling with us therefore there was no one to guard the other temple gates. So, as we were looking around for Riksharaj, there he comes from inside the temple and he says:

“Maharaja, caran tulsi for you!” He managed to even get tulsi. “Pujari gave tulsi for you.” Hari Hari! So, we took darsana of Riksharaj. Because he had taken darsana of Jagannath and we touched him. We embraced him because he had taken in Jagannath.

Jay! Jagannath! I thought that this was a lila of Jagannath. So that was my first encounter with Jagannath Puri and Jagannath on ratha yatra day. Then we had to wait for another day, like here we have to wait for another day. So, we must have the right mood for ratha yatra day.

I have been asked to read from Caitanya Caritamrita. Today is the climax and what we are asked to read is the pastime on the actual ratha yatra day.

Jaganath ratha yatra mahotsava ki..Jay!

Just to set the scene before we read Caitanya Caritamrita Madhya 14.

So, on ratha yatra day, In Jagannath Puri, Jagannath walks out of His residence, His temple. Their walking out pastime is called Pandu Vijay. Remember, we kind of see the pandas. They tie ropes around the waist of Jagannath. With 10, 20 or 50 of them on one side and they lift Him and place Him forward, lift Him and place Him forward. They do not just lift Him and place Him on the chariot. No, that doesn't happen. They let the Lord walk. The idea is that Lord is walking. He is walking and

climbing and getting on the chariot. It is a very beautiful scene. Then on ratha yatra day in 1977, and many more occasions we were there to witness. There is a big crowd and what do you end up seeing? I was strategically placed at the right location at the right time. A few years ago, when there was navakalevara. Nava – new. Kalevara- body or form. The Lord's daru brahma. Daru is wood. The wood He is made up of is Brahma, Daru Brahma. He gets a new form, new body every twelve years. So that happened a few years ago and I was in the courtyard. I managed to enter the courtyard. I was there and I think as soon as the Lord was stepping out of the temple, His glance fell upon me and I saw Jagannath. The meeting of eyes. I hope it was a meeting of hearts also. I want to think like that. A nice darsana, Jagannath Swami ki... Jay!! So that's Pandu Vijay. The Lord walks out of the temple, onto the street and onto the chariot then He takes His seat onto the throne.

Sri Krsna Caitanyaa Mahaprabhu ki...Jay!! He used to be there. Not that He is not there now. During his prakat lila, the Lord attended ratha yatra. Eighteen times Lord Caitanya attended ratha yatra mahotsava and as the Lord would take His seat on the chariot, Sri Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu would arrive, offering His full dandavats to Jagannath Swami. Then He would stand in front of the deity and He would offer prayers to Jagannath.

jayati jayati devo devaki-nandano 'sau
jayati jayati ko vrsni-vamSa-pradipah
jayati jayati megha-Syamalah komalango
jayati jayati prthvi-bhara-naSo mukundah

(CC. Madhya 13.78)

This is one of the many prayers the Lord will offer which are listed in Caitanya Caritamrita. So, this is very special. All glories to Jagannath! All glories!

jayati jayati devo – You are Dev. Jagannath Dev. devaki-nandano 'sau – You are none other than Devaki Nandana.

vrnsni-vamSa-pradipah – You are Krsna, appeared in Vrsni dynasty. You are deepa, you are lamp.

All glories to You, Jagannath!

jayati jayati – All glories to Jagannath

megha-Syamalah komalango- What kind of Jagannath are you? Megha shyamala. You are Shyamaal, Your complexion is of the monsoon clouds. And to touch You – You are very soft.

prthvi-bhara-naSo mukundah- You destroyed the extra burden of the earth and hence You are Mukundah – Liberator. You liberated Prithvi.

Then different devotees arrived from everywhere to Jagannath Puri. From west Bengal from east Bengal, from Kuling-gram, from Shantipur. Right? All of you have come from somewhere. Next door, next block, from Alachua and so on. So, in Caitanya Mahaprabhu's days, they would get divided into several kirtana parties. Kirtana mandalis- kirtana parties "And you will be leading in this group, And you Vishvambar, you are leading this group , and you will dance in that group and Vaisheshika prabhu will be the lead dancer in this group and Rameshwar Prabhu you will dance in another group." The kirtana was out of this world. When these parties were arriving, entering Jagannath Puri, King Prataprudra was reminded. He had climbed up on the rooftop of his palace and Sarvabhaum Bhattacharya was with him and Gopinath Acarya, I think, was also there. All these kirtana parties were new to King Prataprudra.

"Oh, who is that there, with the beard? Oh! Advaitacarya!"

"And that with the blue dhoti, who is that one? Oh, that is Nityananda."

King Prataprudra said: "You know, I have heard many kirtans, so many times in the past. Same mantra, same mridanga and kartals. This kirtana is different. What is this kirtana?"

And he was told this is prem nama. This kirtana is Prem nama.

Its offence-less chanting. It is pure chanting. That is how King Prataprudra was introduced to this kirtana. So kirtans are on. Seven parties are chanting and dancing and Sri Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu had seen Prataprudra.

Today what we are supposed to be reading is about Prataprudra. He is the hero of today's theme or topic. We are just setting the scene. Hari Hari!

So, Sri Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu had seen King Prataprudra with a broom in his hand and sweeping the street in front of Jagannath's cart. And that had amazed Sri Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu and He was pleased also, highly pleased and He made up His mind. There is nothing wrong with meeting King Prataprudra.

Caitanya Mahaprabhu did not want to meet at first. It went on for several months or years that Mahaprabhu was not going to meet the King.

"No no no no! King Prataprudra and I have to meet. I have made up my mind. I said no! Forget it. And if you appeal to Me one more time, I will leave the town. I will go away." So, the Lord had warned all those. Sarvabhauma and others. But today He saw King Prataprudra with broom in hand and He changed His mind towards King Prataprudra, and later on, He would be seeing him, touching him and embracing him. But before that, the topic for us is the meeting which is going to take place in Jagannath Vallabha garden on the way to Gundica temple.

So, before that happens Sri Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu started giving darsana to King Prataprudra. Exclusively to King Prataprudra. What was that darsana? When King Prataprudra was looking around, he saw Caitanya Mahaprabhu in all the kirtana mandalis.

Yet, the kirtanias in the different parties were thinking:

"He is only with us. We must be very special. He is in our

party. He is in our party!" That was not the case. Sri Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu was dancing in all the parties. Sri Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu bestowed very special mercy upon King Prataprudra and he was able to see Caitanya Mahaprabhu dancing in ALL the parties. Ok then, down the road as kirtana is happening, Caitanya Mahaprabhu is chanting and dancing in front of Jagannath also. Jagannath is Krsna and Caitanya Mahaprabhu is there as Radha Rani. Radha rani in Him, is in action. Krsna is also in Him. They are two in one, right? Krsna takes back seat, and Radha Rani is in the forefront and interfacing with Jagannath as,

radha-bhava-dyuti-suvalitam naumi krsna-svarupam [CC adi 1.5]

The Svarupa of Sri Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu is radha-bhava-dyuti-suvalitam radha-bhava- Radhas emotions Dyuti – the complexion like Radha Rani also. So, that Sri Krsna Caitanya Radha Krsna nahi anya. Now He is Radha rani and They are having pastimes during ratha yatra. Hari Hari! And you know ratha yatra festival is a festival of Vraja vasis. Vrndavan vasis. Those that are pulling the chariot, they are residents of Vrndavan, or they are in the mood of Vrajavasis. They are meeting after a very long time.

Vraja vasis had met Dwarkavasis in Kuruksetra and Vrajavasis had gone to meet and see Krsna in Kuruksetra. He had come from Dwarka and they had a plan. "This time as we see Him. We will bring Him back to Vrndavan. We will drag Him back to Vrndavan! He may be seated on the chariot. We will pull the chariot. We will get rid of the horses. You, horses, get out! We will become the horses! We will pull the chariot and bring the Lord back to Vrindavana. "

So Jagannath ratha yatra, this is what is happening. Jagannath Puri temple is like Dwarka or even Kuruksetra and Gundica temple is Vrndavan. All those that is pulling the chariot are residents of Vrndavan. And they are bringing Krsna back to Vrndavan.

Lord Caitanya is talking, praying. “mora mana Vrndavan. My mind is Vrndavan. Oh Jagannath! Please, make your residence in my mind. You were away from my mind or my heart. I invite you back into your home, my minds home, into my heart.” mora mana Vrndavan.

So Caitanya Mahaprabhu was chanting and dancing and dancing and dancing. It was very special. There is a description of the dance as uddanda nrtya [CC Madhya 13.82]

The Lord will fly high into the sky, and then He will crash, fall. And Nityananda prabhu is keeping watch. Before the crash He must be there to catch or to support. Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityananda moving like lightning. Caitanya Mahaprabhu sometimes goes moving round and round. The tears from his eyes, not just drops, but what? Shower! All around will get drenched or wet with the showers of Sri Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu. So then, time for uphala bhoga. On the way to Gundica, and it is time for the Lords offering. He is a big eater, Jagannath. The pujari doesn't give a little plate. Tons of food is offered. This we have seen. So, time for uphala bhoga of Lord Jagannath. Sri Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu has entered the garden. He is lying down with his eyes closed. You remember? The Lord had made up His mind to do what? To see, give darsana. Meet King Prataprudra.

That's all that the Lord had to do. Just desire! Then He has His Shakti's. Lila shaktis , jnana shaktis, all the shaktis, they get into desire. We also call her yoga maya. So, preparations were made for that meeting to take place. Caitanya Mahaprabhu was lying down and everyone told King Prataprudra. “This is the time. This is the time. Go, go go!”

So, he had taken out his crown and his sword. He put on vaisnava robes and he approached Sri Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

sarvabhauma-upadeSe chadi' raja-veSa

ekala vaisnava-veSe karila praveSa

[CC Madhya 14.5]

chadi raja-veSa. He gave up raja vesa – Kings royal dress. With vaisnava vesa he does pravesa. With vaisnava attire, he enters the garden.

**saba-bhaktera ajna nila yoda-hata hana
prabhu-pada dhari' pade sahasa kariya**

Maharaja Prataprudra was so humble that with folded hands he first took permission from all the devotees. Then, with great courage, he fell down and touched the lotus feet of the Lord.

[CC Madhya 14.6]

**ankhi mudi' prabhu preme bhumite Sayana
nrpati naipunye kare pada-samvahana**

As Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu lay on the raised platform with His eyes closed in ecstatic love and emotion, the King very expertly began to massage His legs.

[CC Madhya 14.7]

**rasa-lilara Sloka padi' karena stavana
"Jayati te 'dhikam" adhyaya karena pa?hana**

The King began to recite verses about the rasa-lila from Srimad-Bhagavatam. He recited the chapter beginning with the words "Jayati te 'dhikam."

[CC Madhya 14.8]

So, this is Gopi gita King Prataprudra starts recitation of Gopi gita This is the gita for the occasion. Corresponding the emotion of Sri Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu this is a befitting song or gita. Gopi gita. To nourish, to arouse and nourish His feelings, emotions of Radha bhava, Gopi bhava, the Gopis have expressed their bhava, their emotion, in that gita and through

ratha yatra Caitanya Mahaprabhu is in that mood. So, King Prataprudra is reciting that Gopi gita.

**Sunite Sunite prabhura santosa apara
'bala, bala' bali' prabhu bale bara bara**

[CC Madhya 14.9]

When Sri Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu heard these verses, he was pleased beyond limits and he said again and again "Go on reciting, go on reciting".

**"tava kathamrtam" Sloka raja ye padila
u?hi' premaveSe prabhu alingana kaila**

As soon as the King recited the verse beginning with the words "tava kathamrtam," the Lord arose in ecstatic love and embraced him.

[CC Madhya 14.10]

Hari Hari! Are you seeing? Watch the scene. Audio has to become video.

Upon hearing the verses recited by the King, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu said, "You have given Me invaluable gems, but I have nothing to give you in return. Therefore, I am simply embracing you."

– CC Madhya 14.11

Simply embracing! Not enough? The Lord is feeling grateful for what this reciter of Gopi gita has done. He doesn't even have a clue, of who this person is. No idea. Mahaprabhu had His eyes closed. And this person had come and started massaging and reciting Gopi gita. And the Lord is satisfied and feeling grateful. Just taking and taking is not a good policy, you also

have to give in return. Then Mahaprabhu is thinking,

“I should also give something in return to this person who is singing.” Then Mahaprabhu started thinking “I am just a bikshuka, ek dandi bikshuka. I have nothing to give in return. I have empty pockets; I don’t even have pockets. The kind of garments I wear, I don’t even have pockets. What could I give?” So, thinking like this, he started getting up with his arms stretched. He said: “You know, I have nothing to give. But if you don’t mind, could you accept my embrace? If you don’t mind. Is it ok?” Saying so, the Lord gave a deep embrace to King Prataprudra. King Prataprudra Ki...Jay!! Is that enough? If the Lord was to embrace you, would you like it? Would you say that’s all? For all that I have done for you, only embrace?

Sri Rama had also offered his embrace to Hanuman when Hanuman had just returned from Lanka with good news of Sita. When Rama heard that news, Rama was so pleased and He wanted to reward Hanuman for what Hanuman had done. Then Rama was thinking “I am just a vanvasi. I am just a forest dweller. If I was in Ayodhya I could have given him a big gift, big reward. Yet, this is not the case. I am in the forest.” So, then the Lord asked: “Could I embrace you?” saying so, the Lord embraced Hanuman. “Well done! Well done Hanuman!” Have u seen that photograph of Rama embracing Hanuman? No! How come? You missed it! Quite a famous photograph, taken with a selfie! [Laughs]

**eta bali’ sei Sloka pade bara bara
dui-janara ange kampa, netre jala-dhara**

After saying this, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu began to recite the same verse again and again. Both the King and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu were trembling, and tears were flowing from their eyes.

CC Madhya 14.12

Then they were reciting which verse again and again?
tava kathamrtam tapta-jivanam

**kavibhir iditam kalmasapaham
Sravana-mangalam Srimad-atatam
bhuvi grnanti ye bhurida janah**

My Lord, the nectar of Your words and the descriptions of Your activities are the life and soul of those who are always aggrieved in this material world. These narrations are transmitted by exalted personalities, and they eradicate all sinful reactions. Whoever hears these narrations attains all good fortune. These narrations are broadcast all over the world and are filled with spiritual power. Those who spread the message of Godhead are certainly the most munificent welfare workers.

[CC Madhya 14.13]

**‘bhurida’ ‘bhurida’ bali’ kare alingana
inho nahi jane, – ihon haya kon jana**

After reciting this verse, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu immediately embraced the King and cried, “You are the most munificent! You are the most munificent!” At this point Sri Caitanyaa Mahaprabhu did not know who the King was.

[CC Madhya 14.14]

**purva-seva dekhi’ tanre krpa upajila
anusandhana vina krpa-prasada karila**

Shri Caitanyaa Mahaprabhu’s mercy was aroused because of the King’s previous service therefore, without even asking who he was, the Lord immediately bestowed his mercy upon him.

[CC Madhya 14.15]

I think we will stop here.
Jagannath swami Ki.. Jay!
Caitanya Caritamrita Ki .. Jay!