

Math and Ashram connected with Jagannath temple , Puri

Centering round the great temple of Lord Jagannath, many a Math (Monasteries) grew up gradually in course of time in this holy town. In the past many Saints and Sadhus had come to Puri to have darshan of Lord Jagannath. They came in contact with and influenced the Gajapati Kings through their philosophical doctrines. The saints and sadhus established their monasteries on the lands donated to them by the kings and wealthy persons. The Math's continued preaching their respective doctrines and also performed certain ritual services in the Jagannath Temple. With endowed properties and lands, the heads of the Math's were able to maintain their institutions. Lands were donated to the Math's for 'Amritmanohi' the proceeds thereof were spent in offering 'Bhoga' to Lord Jagannath and the 'Mahaprasad' thus obtained, were distributed among the pilgrims, pupils, ascetics, and beggars. The functions of the Math's were: (1) Propagation of the essential philosophy of Hinduism and Jagannath Culture. (2) Providing shelter to pilgrims coming to Puri. (3) Providing accommodation / financial help to poor and meritorious students. (4) Participating in various rituals of the temple of Lord Jagannath.

As reported in the Puri Gazetteer (1929) the "Math's are monastic houses originally founded with the object of giving religious instructions to chelas or disciples and generally of encouraging a religious life." The heads of the Math's are called Mahantas or Mathadharis. They are generally celibates but in certain Math's married men can become the Mahantas.

They are generally selected from among their 'Chelas'. Some math's were setup for defense purposes. King Narasingh Dev-1 established 4 math's ('Akhadas') namely Bagha, Khaki, Hati and Nirmohi math's with strong valiant Sadhus to guard the temple. As per the said Gazetteer "there are over seventy math's in Puri town." The Math's are affiliated to different sects of Hinduism, namely Angira sect, Adwait sect, Ramanandi sect, Ramanuja sect, Atibadi sect, Gaudiya sect, Pancha Ramanandi sect, Gauda Mahaba sect, Nimbarka sect, Anant sect, Utkal Vaishnab sect, Madhabacharya sect, Dashanami sect, Pustimarga sect. etc. There are also some math's belonging to the Gurunanaka sect and the Kabir sect.

Most of the Math's of Puri have ritual relation with the Sri Jagannath temple.

Jagannath Ballab Matha

It is so to say the pleasure garden of Lord Jagannath. The "Bije pratimas" (the representative images) of the Lords visit this Matha on different festive occasions like "Basanta Panchami", on the 1st, 4th, 5th, and 12th days in the bright fortnight of Falguna. This Matha supplies flower-ornaments like 'tilak' and 'jhumpa' for Baddasinghara besha and supplies 'Kora' (a sweet food) for 'Kaliya dalana' and 'Pralambasura badha' beshas. It also supplies 'dayana' for 'dayana chori' ritual. This Matha situated on the grand road has a trust board under the administrative control of the Endowment Commissioner of the State. It has no Mahanta.

Raghaba Das Matha

It is situated near the southern gate of the Jagannath temple. This Matha supplies 'tahia' on Snana Purnima, Car festival, Return Car festival and Niladribije days. It supplies a part of the Hati besha. It supplies 'tuli' for pahandi and a certain quantity of sandal wood for 'Sarbanga'neeti on 'Khalilagi ekadasi. It also supplies flower garlands for 'Nabanka bedha' and offers 'adhara pana bhog' and 'panti bhog' on certain festive days.

Oriya Matha

This Matha is responsible for supply of the materials for certain rituals. It supplies, 'trimundi chandua' and silk clothes for 'Chaka apasara', repairs 'Kanakamundi'. It also supplies till oil for Phuluri neeti, oil and ghee etc. For 'Deva deepawali', offers 'Chakata bhog' in 'Anasara' and adharpana bhog' and 'Panti bhog' on certain days. On Neeladri bije day, the Mahanta makes 'majana' of ratnavedi. This Matha was set up by Atibadi Jagannath Das, a poet-saint of Orissa in early part of the 16th century.

Emar Matha

It was established by the Saint Ramanuja. This Matha supplies 'Chandrika' and 'Chausara' made of flowers for the Badasinghar besha of the Lords, 'Mala' and 'Chula' for the 'nabanka' ritual. It offers 'Pana bhog' during the Chandan Yatra, 'Chakata bhog' during the 'anasara' period and 'bala bhog' during the month of Kartika.

Gopaltirtha Matha

This Matha supplies a part of 'Hati besha' on the Snana Purnima day and 'makara chula' on the Snana Purnima and Makara Sankranti days and offers panti bhog.

Govardhan Matha

It was established by the great Sankaracharya in the Swargadwar area. Puri became one of the four important 'dhamas' (places) of Hinduism because of the establishment of this Matha by the great Saint.

The head of this Matha also known as Sankaracharya is the permanent head (nayak) of the Muktimandap of the Sri Jagannath temple by virtue of his position. The temple authorities use to consult him in religious or ritual matters whenever necessary.

Bada chhata Matha

Situated in front of the temple. Performs 'Kirtan' at the time of 'mangala arati' and 'pahuda arati' and bala dhupa. Padma besha of the Lords is done and 'Kshiri bhog' offered by this Matha.

Suna goswami Matha

It supplies flower ornaments like 'alaka' and 'chausara' during the Chandan Yatra, makes 'majana' of 'ratnavedi' at the time of 'banakalagi', supplies 'adhibasa jala' from the well of Sitala for Snana Purnima rituals, and offers 'panti bhog' to Dola Govinda at the time of 'Agni utsava'. The Mahanta of this math also happens to be the mahanta of Darpanarayan Matha.

Mangu Matha

It is located by the side of the Emar Matha. It is associated with the memory of Guru Nanak. This Matha supplies a ram for 'bali' (sacrifice) before the Goddess Bimala, each year on Mahanabami night. There is another Matha of Guru Nanak sect, known as Baaul Matha.

The other Math's connected with the affairs of Sri Jagannath temple are Sri Ram Das (Dakhina parshaw) Matha, Uttara parshaw Matha, Trimali Matha, Mahiprakash Matha, Sankarananda Matha, Gangamata Matha, Gangamata Matha, Radhaballav Matha, Labanikhia Matha, Chhauni Matha, Jhadu Matha, Papudia Matha, Nebal Das Matha, Devagiri Matha, Pipili Sadabarta Matha, Sanachhata Matha, Jhanjapita Matha, Samadhi Matha, Balaram Kota Matha, Badasantha Matha, Ramji Matha, Sidhabakula Matha, Venkatachari Matha, Narasinghachari Matha, Ghumusara Matha, (now in ruins), Radhakanta Matha, (Sri Chaitanya visited Puri in 1510 AD and stayed in this Matha, Some of his personal belongings have been preserved in this Matha). Kothabhog Matha, Mahabir Matha etc. The mahantas of these Matha are entitled to perform 'Upachara Chamara seva', but most of them are not doing the seva. The Math's are under the control of State Endowment Commissioner. There are two Math's under the Sri Jagannath Temple Managing Committee. They are Chaulia Matha and Delhi Nalak Ram Das Matha (near Gundicha temple). There is another Matha known as Sata lahadi Matha in the Swargadwar area. It is the burial place of Atibadi Jagannath Das, author of the Bhagabata purana in Oriya. This Matha is being managed by a committee under the Chairmanship of Collector, Puri. Another Matha located in the same area is the Kabir choura Matha, associated with the Kabir sect. It is said that Kabir, the mystic poet stayed here when he visited Puri. There are some other Matha unconnected with the rituals of the Jagannath temple like Chaitanya Goudiya Matha, Purusottam Goudiya Matha, and Panjabi Matha etc. Many Math's have stopped performing services in the temple and those who perform now, do so to a limited extent. Some of the Math's are entitled to get 'Khei' (a portion of the Kotha bhog) of the temple.

Outside Puri town, there is another Matha in the Kakatpur village area, known as Deuli Matha which is connected with the Nabakalebar ceremony of the temple.

The Four Ashrams

Connected with certain rituals of the temple of Jagannath, there are four Ashrams (hermitages) in Puri town. These are Angira Ashram, Pandu Ashram, Markandeya Ashram and Parasara (Ugrasena) Ashram.

On the ninth day of the bright fortnight of Sravana, the Nrusimha deity of the Sri Jagannath temple pays a visit in a ceremonial manner to these four Ashrams. This is

called 'Badi Nrusimha bije'. 'Sital bhog' is offered to the Deity in each Ashram. On the full moon day of Margasira, Nrusimha again visits these places. On the full moon day of Sravana, Lord Sudarshan visits all these Ashrams. These Ashrams are being managed by different local committees.