



Goddess Batamangala

(At the Gateway of Puri)

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Jagannath Mahaprabhu is very compassionate to His devotees. He can't bear with anybody tormenting them in any manner or form. The Lord at the same time, is very clever. True, He is always behind His devotees but He is not so easily to be caught by them. The more they run closer to Him, the more He distances Himself away from their proximity. In the cosmic game, this is known as "His hide and seek pastime". His kingdom is however within the heart of a devotee. To commune with it, one has to go deep into silent adoration. But for that purpose, one has to have a simple heart like that of Vidura's consort on the path of devotion. He has to be honest, and virtuous at heart. This is what is known as impeccable devotion.

Nonetheless, His mercy is essential to get oneself freed from the bondage of delusion

which reigns supreme in one's material life. The mind experiencing myriad vicissitudes at last holds on to the rational conviction that to have "Moksha" in life, there has to be no life after death. Birth after birth through the womb of a mother is doubtless a painful experience in the material world. The goal of life being God-realization, this is possible only when one is freed from the bondage of birth and death in the cosmic process of evolution.



In *Devi Tatwa*, one can have the blessings of the Lord, only after the blessings of Devimata are achieved. Devimata is the replica of delusion. In the cosmic game of the Lord, Devimata is the first divine event of the creation. It is actually She Who incites the spirit of action in the Almighty Lord. God is omnipresent. So, in this sense, He is static by nature and devoid of action. He leaps into



action within only when He comes in contact with the activating force of Devimata in the process of the cosmic game. Maya is actually the activating force of the Goddess. It is both in the affirmative and the negative forms. The affirmative form of Maya is known as 'Vidyamaya'. Its negative form is known as 'Avidyamaya'. One gets the result of one's action in the manner the same is directed. This is the whole concept of Devi *Tatwa* in relation to worship of Devimata in life. Devi is always one. She is Kali. She is Mahalakshmi. She is also Maha Saraswati. She however assumes a name according to the nature of Her service. She is worshipped in a multitude of divine expressions. Batamangala near Puri is one such divine expression. She is a Vaishnabi Thakurani by nature. She is worshipped as the divine precursor of all-round happiness.

The poet sings "Re, the fatigued mind, walk along the path ahead of you that leads to the Grand Temple of Lord Jagannath. On the way comes Batamangala first. Then comes Atharanala. Then Badadanda, the Grand Road. Take its dust on your forehead and serve the Sadhus. Reach Siddheswar next. Have the divine stroke on your forehead from the sacred cane at the Singhdwar of the temple. And next enter the Temple climbing the 22 steps. Kaibalya is available on either side. And finally have the 'Darshan' of the Lord Who is called "Kalasrimukha" standing behind the Garuda Pillar".

These are the various parts of the pathway that lead one from Batamangala to the Grand Temple. The land of Lord Jagannath thus starts from Batamangala. The temple of the Goddess is situated by the side of the main road about 5 km before the temple of Lord Jagannath.

The devotee bound for the Grand Temple from Bhubaneswar stands for a while in front of Batamangala and offers sacred light (Alati) seeking her blessings.

There is a beautiful story in this regard. It is said that at the time of creation of the universe, Mother Batamangala had shown the path to Lord Brahma to have the Darshan of the Lord. It is the popular belief in this connection that Brahma had come into existence in the cosmic creation on a Tuesday in the month of Chaitra. At that point of time, he saw around him the vastness of an endless void and seeing that horrific syndrome, he became ruffled in mind. Maa Batamangala had appeared in front of Brahma at that particular point of time and shown him the path for further course of action. As a result of this, Lord Brahma had been able to see the bottom of the universe down below the navel of Lord Narayan and created the universe. Since Maa Batamangala had shown Brahma the way in the midst of his utter perplexities, she was known in the subsequent period of time as Batamangala in the land of Lord Jagannath. Batamangala however does not have any place in customary rituals of Lord Jagannath.

It is known to one and all that in the early days, when there was no proper road-communication to Puri, the devotees who were coming to this sacred land on pilgrimage, had to pass through several hardships and tribulations. There was a belief then that once they set out on their pilgrimage, there was no chance of their returning back to their respective homes. So in that way, their journey to Puri was considered as their last journey in life. In the context of that situation, it was popularly believed that whosoever died at Puri during their sacred pilgrimage was destined to go to heaven and attain "Moksha". This belief even continues today. For which reason, the old people even today prefer to spend their last part of life at Puri in the hope of getting Moksha after their death.

Purursottoma Kshetra is now well communicated in all respect. It is connected by



both rails and roads on all sides. Till 1811, there was virtually no road-communication to Puri. Orissa came under British control in 1803. In 1826, the then British chief chalked out a plan for construction of a Pucca road from Calcutta to St George Fortress. This was a massive development project. This was considered necessary for effective control over the areas included under British control. During the process of the aforesaid construction, a branch-road was provided on the highway at a point near Bhubaneswar which was later known as Jagannath Sadak. This was done in the interests of the pilgrims visiting Puri. On the request of the British Chief, the Moharaja of Calcutta, Sukhamaya Ray had contributed Rs.1.50 Lakh for this purpose. However prior to this road project, king Machya-kesari of Machya Dynasty who had ruled our place during the period from 975 AD to 995AD had got a bridge constructed at Atharanala which in the subsequent period of time maintained the continuity of the aforesaid branch-road upto Singhadwara, Puri.

It is further discernable from historical records that Bhanudev(1) of Ganga Dynasty who was the ruler of this place from 1264 to 1279 had developed the Banki Muhana area by filling up the intervening water courses and reduced the number of chariots from 6 to 3 during the sacred Car Festival. All these and other ancillary developments which had taken place from time to time had led to the overall development of the area around Batamangala and enhanced the importance of the place to a considerable extent.

Worship of Batamangala, during Chaitra month is found mention in the Sakti cult of Utkal Pradesh. It is stated here that Shree Rama by worshipping Sarbamangala, (also known as Mangala Chandrika, Mangala and so on) had killed Ravan and rescued Sita from Lanka.

Batamangala is a four armed Brahmashaktimai goddess. She looks youthful and immaculately graceful in Her elegant appearance like freshly bloomed flowers. Attired magnificently in different ornaments, She has three beautiful eyes. She is the symbol of peace and impeccable divinity. She is the conferrer of divine blessings on all devotees.

But Batamangala like Mangala of Kakatpur does not have any connection with the customary rituals of Jagannath Temple, Puri. Everybody is in know of the fact of that during Nabakalebar festival, the Sebayats of the temple in search of Neem wood for making the divine images first come to the temple of Mangala, Kakatpur. They fall prostrate before the deity for getting divine directions as regards the location of the sacred Neem trees. If within 3 days, no divine direction is forthcoming in dream, the Sebayats would next conduct a special worship before the goddess. It is believed in this connection that a flower at proper time would fall from the head of the deity during the special performance of the religious ritual and the falling of the flower would indicate the direction pertaining to the location of the Neem trees. The Sebayats would then proceed to these places in search of the trees for truncating their trunks.

Bata Mangala has a unique place in Shakti *Tatwa* of Utkal Pradesh. She is seated in the temple in lotus pose. She is slightly more than 2ft high. Of Her four hands, two hands downward are found loftily extended indicating a pose conferring harmonious blessings on Her devotees. The other two hands are noticeable in upward pose. The right upper hand holds a conch and the left upper hand a trident. The devotees get captivated noticing the enchanting deity adorned in different ornaments. The Panthei Osha, also known as Bata Osha as a popular religious ritual is intimately connected with Goddess of



Batamangala. This Puja is conducted by women at the bi-junction points of village-roads. At night, the women observing the ritual install a pasple and worship it as the symbol of Batamangala. They offer a peculiar type of sweetmeat known as Atakali to the deity.

The Puja is performed on all Tuesdays in month of Chaitra. It is known from Brahmapurana that on a Tuesday in the month of Chaitra, Lord Brahma had begun the creation of the universe. The bi-junction mode of worship is reflective of the concept of bewildering confusion. At a bi-junction point, it is but natural that one cannot offhand know which road of the two actually leads to one's proper destination. At the time of creation of the universe, Lord Brahma was on similarly the horns of several dilemmas. It is said in Brahmapurana that Maa Mangala at that time came to the rescue of Brahma and gave him proper direction after which of the creation of the universe could be possible.

Considered from the significance of all these descriptions, Maa Mangala is thus described as a Goddess symbolic of a proper pathfinder in life. She is worshiped as a universal divine guide. She is also believed as the displayer of right and proper directions to all Her devotees. It is believed in some corners that worship of Batamangala is related to Adivasi culture. It pertains to a sort of non-Arian mode of worship which gained its force from a rural customary practice.

Batamangala Temple has thus got its own spiritual importance. Its existence at the entry-point of Puri is deemed as a displayer of righteous path to the pilgrims bound for Puri. The deity it is believed bestows blessings on the devotees before they enter the grand temple.

The temple of Batamangala is managed on the offerings of the pilgrims and normal passengers. The temple has no property of its own except its 8-decimal land on which the temple and all its premises have been constructed. This fact is discernable from the settlement records. We also get many other information about the past of the temple from the Sebayats who are the residents of Krupasagar-patna village now in Puri Municipality. The temple has a height of about 15ft from its basement, its entrance being about 4ft high. About 20 years back, the deity was being worshiped on a roadside land under the open sky as a local Goddess of Krupasagar-patna. Now however the position of the temple is totally different. The temple is well furnished from all sides. All the expenses of the temple are met out of public contributions.

It is seen over the period of the time that with the increase in the number of vehicles plying along Bhubaneswar-Puri road, the income of the temple has increased. Now the vehicles passing through this way usually halt in front of Batamangala temple. Sometimes the drivers and the passengers getting down offer Dipa and coins as divine offerings to the deity. They also take the vermilion of the deity on their foreheads and even apply the same on their vehicles. This is the famous temple of Batamangala on the way to Puri.

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