

# Essentialising the Jagannath Cult: A Discourse on Self and Other

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Perhaps, of all the images and motifs of ‘the Orient’ that have engaged the attention of Western observers and scholars, the most enduring is India’s religion(s). The West’s distinct style of thought, ideas and perceptions of the Orient, collectively placed within the rubric of ‘Orientalism’ is based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and (most of the time) ‘the Occident.’<sup>1</sup> No doubt, this perceived distinction has informed the West’s mind to construe and construct Indian religious traditions. The ‘knowledge about distinction’ coupled with a colonial sense of superiority, has prompted the West’s knowledge about the Orient to be essentialist, thus giving rise to a binary opposition of ‘self’ and ‘other’, i.e., European self-image and Indian ‘otherness’.

This article seeks to demonstrate how the Jagannath Cult, the most revered and presiding Hindu religious institution of Oriyas has been imputed with essentialisations by the Orientalist discourse, and how this has been an exercise in colonial hegemony over the subjected ‘other’ Oriyas. But I must admit here that owing to less importance attached to Orissa, and the consequential marginalisation of this part of India in the British colonial considerations, the writings about the Jagannath cult by Western scholars and observers were limited. Moreover, the majority of whatsoever written, were by Christian theologians, i.e., missionaries, thereby bringing with them ideals and ideas of Christianity to their intellectual exercise.

In order to understand the Orientalist discourse on the Jagannath cult by the missionaries, it is pertinent first to define two perspectives, which they adopted while engaging themselves with the Jagannath cult. First is their Judaeo-Christian presuppositions with which they grew up, and second is their general understanding of Hinduism. But both were interrelated, in the sense the former determined the missionaries’ formulation of the ontology of Hinduism. As we have been shown, the term ‘Hinduism’ is a Western explanatory construct, and as such it reflects the colonial and Judaeo-Christian presuppositions of the Western Orientalists who first coined the term.<sup>2</sup> No doubt, a normative paradigm was employed to construct ‘Hinduism’, and that included textuality, monotheism, salvation etc.—the hallmarks of Christianity. But this prevented the Orientalist discourse from appreciating and engaging with the heterogeneity of Indian religious traditions. A homogenized Hinduism was born, and came to be loaded with simplistic, essentialist judgments. Consequently, India’s regional religious traditions

like the Jagannath cult were ignored, and even bullied. But when the West came in direct contact with such a tradition like the Jagannath cult, the discourse that developed around it, became antagonistic and highly prejudicial, based on the European superiority.

In the case of the Jagannath cult, the context became rather complicated, as it was initially an issue in the colonial power struggle, and due to subsequent missionary involvement in both the cult affairs and power struggle. As soon as the British occupied the main land Orissa in 1803 they realized the importance of the Jagannath cult for Orissa and Oriyas, and hence tried to control it for their better access and acceptability. In that, the declared policy of the 'Cornwallis Code' (1793 A.D.) to protect the Indian subjects 'in the free exercise of their religion'—which served as a 'compact' between the Company Government and its Indian subjects—helped the British to achieve their goal.<sup>3</sup> Under the pretext of the 'compact', the British took the administration of the Puri temple<sup>4</sup> to their hands, protected the rights of the temple priests and other servitors, and streamlined the collection of the pilgrim tax. But the Christian missionaries, both in India and England opposed the British involvement in the temple, thereby forcing the British to gradually withdraw from the temple affairs. Of course, the withdrawal was also dictated by the realisation on the part of the Christian government of their inability to manage the details of a Hindu temple. Yet, given the 'compact' of the Cornwallis code, the British did not completely disengage themselves from the Puri temple, but continued with a supervisory role that finally transformed to active interference in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This manifested itself in their struggle against the Gajapati kings of Puri over the authority of the Puri temple. Though the struggle was finally decided in favour of the Kings of Puri,<sup>5</sup> the Christian missionaries had already played their role in this struggle by way of their debate and discourse over the Jagannath cult. We will see in the succeeding pages how under these circumstances, the missionaries developed essentialist stereotypes on the Jagannath cult.

## II

The presiding deity of the Jagannath cult is Jagannath, the eponym of the cult. The cult has been accepted as a regional tradition of Vaishnavism in which Jagannath has been variously identified with Vaishnavite godheads like Vishnu and Krishna. The close relationship between Orissa/Oriyas and the Jagannath cult can be gauged from the fact that in popular parlance, Oriyas' religion is known as 'Jagannath Dharma' and the Oriya culture as 'Jagannath Samskriti'. In other words, the cult came to impart religious and cultural identity on Oriyas, and enforced unity in the Oriya-speaking region during the British period. Although there is contestation to a Jagannath-centric Oriya identity from sub-regional movements like the Mahima Dharma, it can be historically and logically shown how the contestants themselves had been either co-opted to or absorbed into the overarching Jagannath cult.<sup>6</sup>

The very fact that the Jagannath cult occupies a pivotal place in the religio-cultural life of Orissa, drew the attention of Westerners whenever they happened to visit this part of the country, particularly the town Puri, the hallowed seat of the cult. Long before the Christian missionaries made their forays to Orissa, some other Westerners had already come in contact with the Jagannath cult, and the Puri temple in

particular. Many of the stereotypes about the cult and the Puri temple can be traced back to these Western observers, the earliest foreigners to visit this part of the country. One of the foremost annual events of the Puri temple that drew immediate attention of the visiting Westerners was the Car festival or Rath Yatra, an annual ritualistic event. Given its magnitude and elaboration, the Car festival could at once strike dismay and confusion in their mind as they were exposed to a totally new situation marked by revelry and ecstasy. The little known Franciscan monk from the Northern Italy, Friar Odoric who traveled India during 1316-18, wrote in 1321 about the Car festival and the death of pilgrims under the car wheels. According to Friar, the pilgrims flung themselves before the rolling chariots so that they died for their gods. 'The car passes over them and crunches them, and cuts them in sunder and so they perish on the spot.'<sup>7</sup> Friar Odoric visited almost the whole of modern Asia, and his personal narrative contains fascinating details of the geography and culture of the places and peoples he visited.<sup>8</sup> No doubt, his narrative is one of the earliest testimonies to the West's prejudices and disdainful superiority over the East. At the beginning of his narrative, Odoric declares that he visited the countries of the 'unbelievers', thereby asserting the superiority of the Christian West over the East. According to Franco Mormando, Odoric, like his contemporaries believed that non-Christians were all 'idol worshippers' whose ontological status as human beings was decidedly less than Christians and whose eternal salvation was strongly to be doubted.<sup>9</sup> All this explains as to why Odoric opined so categorically, but mistakenly about deaths occurring during the time of the Car festival. Without going into the real causes of such deaths, he construed it as an essential feature of the idolatry and general religious practice of 'lesser mortals.'

Before the British occupation of Orissa in 1803 and after Odoric's visit to this part of the country in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, we have two more English travelers, William Bruton and Thomas Bowrey whose narratives set the tune for later Christian missionaries to essentialise some important institutions of the cult, namely the Car festival and the Puri temple. William Bruton, a famous seaman of his time, is the first Englishman to give an account of the Puri temple after his visit to the town of Puri in November, 1633. In his travelogue, *News from the East Indies*, otherwise called *A Voyage to Bengalla*, he describes the idols of the Jagannath Triad as 'a great serpent with seven heads', and according to him, 'on the cheeks of each head, it has the form of a wing which opens, shuts and flaps, as it is carried in a stately chariot'.<sup>10</sup> Bruton's observation is the result of his ignorance about the Jagannath iconography and prejudicial mindset against its theology. It is more blatantly reflected in his observation on the Car festival when he says that during the festival many people offer themselves a sacrifice to the Chariot, and by this means, 'they think to merit Heaven.'<sup>11</sup>

But when Bruton speaks of the Puri temple, his ignorance is coupled with a flippant attitude towards the Jagannath cult as a whole. According to him, the temple is the mirror of all wickedness and idolatry, and 'the home of Satan' which belongs to 9000 Brahmins or Priests.<sup>12</sup> The temple, being a Hindu religious institution was restricted only to Hindus, and hence non-Hindu Westerners had no opportunity to look at the idols of Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra except during the Car festival when the holy Triad are brought out of the temple premises. This disadvantage must have severely

limited Bruton's understanding of the iconography of the holy Triad, but at the same time such a distortion of the temple, the hallowed sea of the Triad, was no doubt prompted by a judgmental attitude of a self-professed 'superior race and religion' to which he belonged to.

In the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, an English sailing-master, named Thomas Bowrey visited this part of the Bay of Bengal, which he called 'Orixa'. In his travelogue, while portraying Oriyas as 'poor, idolatrous and low-spirited' people, he characterizes the Puri temple, its priests and the Car festival as 'diabolic'.<sup>13</sup> It is but natural that his such low estimation of Oriyas and their religion resulted not only from his ignorance but also from a general Christian disdainful attitude towards the religion of 'East', and particularly idolatry. Even, as we know, the Ten Commandments prohibit idolatry.

Like Bruton before him, Bowrey also misjudged the Car festival. Writing in old English, he construes death under the wheels as deliberate, suicidal. 'And which is both stranger and more incredible, many of them (crowd) come to a great many miles to end their days here, under the wheels of this ponderous, but accompited by them, holy arke. It is a noble, heroic and jealous death.'<sup>14</sup>

It may be noted here that both Bruton and Bowrey have seen the institution of Jagannath, from the perspective of a traveler to a new, far-off, but exotic land. Devoid of any understanding of the Jagannath theology, they tried to essentialise various aspects of the Jagannath cult on the basis of their prejudicial Christian mindset and racial arrogance. So not only the Car festival was construed as evil and diabolic but also the images, sanctum sanctorum of the Puri temple, serving priests etc. were cast in a negative mould. This way of looking at the institution of Jagannath continued with the Christian missionaries.

The earliest Reverend to visit Puri (1806) after the British annexation of the coastal Orissa in 1803 was Claudius Buchanan, a chaplain from Calcutta (1806). He was vehemently opposed to the institutions of Jagannath as evidenced in his virulent attack on Jagannath, His temple and the Car festival. He describes the Jagannath idol as 'the monster holding high carnival', and the Puri temple as 'a stately pagoda—a hideous grotesque thing, of huge proportions, in the semblance of mutilated humanity stuck about with pseudo-divine emblems...'<sup>15</sup> Equally vociferous in his condemnation of the Car festival, he writes that pilgrims overcome obstacles like harsh climate, want and horrible diseases, in order to kill themselves under the wheels of the Car in a sort of ecstatic mockery of martyrdom.<sup>16</sup> In a religious tract, *Christian Researches in Asia*, he laments, 'a record of Juggernaut would be a roll written within and without with blood, obscenity and woe.'<sup>17</sup> For Buchanan, the Hindu idolatry was responsible for such human disaster, but this is no doubt, a theological misconception on his part even though he himself visited Puri in 1806 during the Car festival. Witnessing the dead and dying among pilgrims during the festival and other consequences of the pilgrimage, he even compares the institution of Jagannath with Moloch, the deity of the Hell who is propitiated by the sacrificial burning of children.

In reality, Buchanan's account created a stir among Christians in England, and its horrific description aroused their conscience to start a Mission in Orissa. Accordingly,

the first Protestant General Baptist Missionary Society was formed in 1816. Buchanan's account is also very important in setting the tone for future missionaries to look at the institution of Jagannath from a set perspective. In other words, Orientalist stereotypes on this great institution started evolving with Buchanan's account as subsequent commentators on Jagannath followed his suit.

Earlier, I have shown how the missionaries carried with them their Christian ideas and paradigms on the basis of which they tried to weigh the institution of Jagannath. Their main plank of an oppositional discourse was idolatry. And those who visited Puri considered Jagannath as the stronghold of idolatry. That is why, during the early years of the British rule when the Company Government became involved in the affairs of the Jagannath cult by way of imposing the pilgrim tax and providing support to the Puri temple, the missionaries reprimanded the government for encouraging idolatry. A missionary, by the name W.F.B. Laurie observed that 'it was inconsistent to give money for the expenses attendant upon idolatry (Jagannath) while the efforts were made for the promulgation of educations and Christianity among people'.<sup>18</sup> Laurie made it clear that Western education and Christianity were superior to the 'East' and did not sanction idolatry.

For W.F.B. Laurie, Orissa was an ignoble and abominable place, and his disdainful attitude towards Orissa is reflected in the title of his account itself. 'Orissa may be compared to a huge cauldron which has been boiling for many hundred years, into which ignorance, stupidity and bigotry have cast so many poisonous ingredients that, it is difficult to say when the contents will become purified and good.'<sup>19</sup> He holds Jagannath as the inspiring soul of all, thus fixing responsibility on the State deity of Oriyas for their own misery. 'Jagannath is the principal stronghold of Hindu superstitions.'<sup>20</sup>

The Car festival came under the scathing attack of Laurie, and evoked similar reactions as that from Buchanan, Bruton and Bowrey. According to Laurie, 'the entire scene of the Rath Jatra Savours, to an incredible extent, of the ludicrous, the barbarous and the awful', and after the festival is over, 'many of the delighted pilgrims either retire or die, or reach their deserted homes, the victims of ignorance, poverty and wretchedness.'<sup>21</sup> He concludes that 'the whole history of Jagannath from nearly beginning of the 19th century is neither more or less than one huge calendar of crime'.<sup>22</sup> But the truth behind such comment lies in his attempt to assign Christianity to a high pedestal vis-à-vis the Jagannath cult when he himself witnessed the Car festival. Emotionally swayed, Laurie observes that 'in the face of the Car festival, Christianity shuddered, morality in it wept, the god of mirth slunk away trembling and finally interact slumbered in silence awaiting the down of a better day'.<sup>23</sup> In other words, the Car festival, the biggest ritualistic religious event of Oriyas, was a wretched, horrifying barbarous affair! Thus, like his predecessors, the Car festival has been the main plank of attack by Laurie on the Jagannath cult without any understanding of the theology of Jagannath or religious significance of the festival. At the same time, we cannot miss the sight of the hidden agenda of the missionaries, i.e., propagation of Christianity by downgrading and condemning Hindu religious institutions and Laurie himself was of course, a missionary.

Like Laurie who reprimanded the East India Company for promoting the Jagannath cult, another missionary, by the name William Kaye, challenged the government role in the affairs of the Puri temple. Kaye dubbed the government as 'Jagannath's Churchwarden,' and blamed it for 'openly and authoritatively aiding and abetting the worst forms of devil worship' and 'taking all the hideous indecencies and cruelties of Hinduism under their especial patronage.'<sup>24</sup> While insisting on the severance of all sorts of links with the institution of Jagannath, he denigrated it for having devil worship, indecencies and cruelties. In other words, the Jagannath cult again came to be construed as barbaric and uncivilized, much inferior to Christianity! Kaye thus followed the suit of his predecessors in his observation and estimation of Jagannath.

The professed aim of those missionaries who came to Orissa was the evangelization, so it was natural for them to pick up those features or issues of the most popular religious cult of the local people (i.e., Jagannath cult) that appeared to them or to their Christian scruples, anathematic, incompatible and illogical. Then, these were construed and interpreted as barbaric and inhuman, whereas Christianity was projected as a 'great, rational, civilized religion'! Development of such a discourse assigned the Jagannath cult to a lowly position, which gave rise to certain negative stereotypes about the cult and its various aspects. One such stereotype that was constantly harped on by the missionaries was the idolatry of the cult.

The first missionaries, deputed by the General Baptist Missionary Society to come to Orissa were James Peggs and William Bampton who arrived in Orissa in 1822, and who were familiar with Buchanan's account of the Jagannath cult. Already schooled in the conventional, tainted wisdom of his predecessors about the cult and influenced particularly by Buchanan's observation, Peggs found the popularity of Lord Jagannath as the stumbling block in the evangelization drive. So he also started attacking and denigrating the institution of Jagannath, and the main plank of his attack was naturally idolatry. But the institution of Jagannath was supported by the Company government by way of maintaining the pilgrim tax and protecting the temple. So Peggs' first victim of condemnation was the government itself, and according to him the pilgrim tax enhanced the supposed value of pilgrimage, and hence the fame of such idolatrous resorts like Puri.<sup>25</sup> He saw the consequences of the pilgrimage to Puri in terms of sickness, mortality and brutality. So he castigated the Company government for promoting pilgrimage by way of being associated with the Jagannath cult. Peggs considers the pilgrims to Puri as 'a painted pagan, semi-barbarous race', and for Britain to be associated with these idolaters in their 'scenes of revelry, vice and misery was degrading to the British national character.'<sup>26</sup>

Peggs, Kaye, Laurie, and other missionaries who came in contact with the institution of Jagannath supposedly claimed to represent Christian morality and theological ideas. It may be stated here that in Europe, simple lay Christianity of revivalist congregations of the time demanded a missionary to denounce all 'pagan idolatry'. But the philosophy of Enlightenment in the 18<sup>th</sup> century had spread the idea of acknowledging the plurality of higher religions among the educated in Europe. In this, some non-Christian higher religions were recognized, thereby advocating for religious tolerance

and a comparative study of religions. But in case of Hinduism, the Christian missionaries had rather a hostile attitude towards it, concentrating mostly on idolatry. This was reflected in their treatment of the Jagannath cult that was construed with an air of racial superiority and chastisement. Their anti-Jagannath perspective led to the development of Orientalist stereotypes on the cult, which were reiterated and strengthened by historiographical writings of some British scholars of the time.

### III

The two earliest English scholars to refer to the Jagannath cult in their historical works on India are Beveridge and Hamilton. But they also picked up some visible popular aspects of the cult like the pilgrimage and Car festival, and projected them in a negative mould. Take for example Beveridge writing in 1814 in *Asiatic Journal* about the Car festival. He describes how the people killed themselves under the wheels of the Cars, and for him the sight was so horrible that it 'beggared all description'.<sup>27</sup> Hamilton gives a horrifying account of the pilgrimage to the Jagannath temple. According to him, 'the concourse of pilgrims to this temple is so immense, that at 50 miles distance its approach may be known by the quantity of human bones which are strewed by the way.'<sup>28</sup> He added that many perished by dysentery, and the surrounding country abounded with skulls and human bones.<sup>29</sup> Both the historians held Jagannath responsible for such mass death during the pilgrimage and Car festival. Like the missionaries, these early historians had also misunderstanding of the nature and extent of the death. It was further aggravated by their colonial mentality of looking at anything belonging to their subjects as 'hostile, inferior and loathsome.'

Even a historian like Andrew Stirling who is known as a scholar-administrator of the British India, admits the existence of excess fanaticism, which once used to prompt pilgrims to court death by throwing themselves under the wheels of the Car of Jagannath. But, writing in 1818 he opines that the same fanaticism 'has happily long ceased to actuate the worshippers of the present day to kill themselves.'<sup>30</sup> Although Stirling thinks the missionaries' estimate of the number of deaths during the Car festival an exaggeration, he still testifies the occurrence of death, due to variety of reasons including fanaticism, inclement weather etc. Like the missionaries, he also considers the Puri temple as the mirror of all wickedness and idolatry. Thus, Stirling falls in line with the missionaries in his treatment of the Jagannath cult. But his treatment of Jagannath mostly follows from his general impression of Orissa and Oriyas. Taking clue from Abul Fazal, the great scholar in the *darbar* of the Mughal emperor, Akbar (1556–1605), Stirling considers Oriyas as effeminate, devoid of manly spirit, ignorant and stupid, and Orissa as 'Boeotia' of India because of the intellectual dullness of Oriyas.<sup>31</sup> He even goes to the extent of asserting dissolute manners of Oriyas on the basis of 'the obscene characters and impure symbols of the demoralizing religion which they profess'.<sup>32</sup> In other words, he relates the Oriya character to the Oriyas' religion, that is the Jagannath cult, which is a 'demoralizing religion.' This sort of inference is not only illogical but also highly irrational and prejudicial.

W.W.Hunter, one of the earliest British to write a detailed history of Orissa in two volumes, has devoted substantially to the Jagannath cult. In the first volume, there

are two chapters ‘Jagannath’ and ‘The Pilgrims of Jagannath’ where he has extensively dwelt on the origin, rites, temple and pilgrimage of Jagannath, and His association with Orissa and Oriyas. Although Hunter is sensitive, even sympathetic to Oriya’s yearning for Jagannath as the ‘outcome of centuries of companionship in suffering between the people and their god’, he cannot escape his Christian and colonial mindset that dictates his perceptions of Jagannath, the pilgrimage and Car festival. Like his predecessors, he also essentialises the institution of pilgrimage in the Jagannath cult by way of construing its negative aspects as its essence. For him, diseases and death mark the pilgrimage. He is afraid that the over-crowded, pest-hunted dens (lodges) around the Puri temple may become at any moment the center from which disease radiates to the great manufacturing towns of France and England.<sup>33</sup> He is so obsessed with the anti-pilgrimage and anti-idolatry feelings that he goes to the extent of making such illogical comment that ‘the squalid pilgrim army of Jagannath with its rags and hair and skin freighted with vermin and impregnated with infection, may any year slay thousands of the most talented and the most beautiful of our age in Vienna, London or Washington.’<sup>34</sup> Perhaps, Hunter was not aware of the topography of the places he was talking of! How infection could travel without any proper mode of transportation, thousands of miles from one end of the globe to the other end to haunt ‘the most talented and the most beautiful!’

#### IV

In the writings and observations of the missionaries, historians and scholar-administrators, one can thus notice biased criticism, falsified allegations and irrational arguments against the Jagannath cult. Starting from the iconography of the Jagannath Triad to the Car festival, all came under their scathing attack. Jagannath was constructed as ‘diabolic’ and held as the springboard of idolatry and all corrupt practices. Perhaps, that is why gradually Jagannath came to be described in scurrilous, flippant manner. Even the distorted form of His name, ‘Juggernaut’ came to be used as a metaphor for any relentless force or object of devotion and sacrifice. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, the US President Roosevelt used the term ‘Juggernaut’ to explain how the ordnance was being manufactured relentlessly in his country.<sup>35</sup> This sort of metaphoric use of ‘Jagannath’ for mundane object to show its force and dashing nature, definitely denounces the sanctity, religious significance and respect Jagannath enjoys among Hindus, and Oriyas, in particular. But one can hardly fail to notice how this metaphor derives its meaning from the Car or Rath that Jagannath boards during the famous Car festival.

The West’s stereotypes about the Jagannath cult that persisted for long and influenced the development of a discourse on the cult resulted from a number of interconnected factors. These, we have already discussed in the preceding pages. But the West’s ignorance and theological misunderstanding of the Jagannath cult, the evangelization spirit, and above all its hegemonic attitude towards the ‘other’ Orient also contributed to its ‘civilizing mission’—altering, restructuring and conquering the Indian society and culture. This is also attested by so many Christian chapbooks published in Oriya during the period. There is direct attack and denigration of Jagannath, and praise for Jesus Christ and Christianity in these books. In many of the Christian tracts, Jagannath is compared and contrasted with Jesus Christ, tenets of Hinduism are

ridiculed and different aspects of the Jagannath cult construed as evil, uncivilized and superstitious. Take for example, a small tract, *Christashcharyakriya* or Miracle of Christ by an unknown author, in which miracles of Jesus are described, and finally he is declared as the true and only saviour.<sup>36</sup> Yet, in another tract, *Jagannath Tirtha Mahatmya* or Glory of Jagannath Pilgrimage Centre, the sufferings and miseries of pilgrims to Puri are overplayed.<sup>37</sup> Even some convert Christians also produced tract literature, propagating Christianity and imputing falsehood, hypocrisy, unholiness and impurity to Jagannath.

The production of such tract literature in simple vernacular aimed at reorienting the knowledge about the Jagannath cult that was at public domain. Needless to mention that it helped in the evangelization drive of the missionaries among Oriyas.

According to Richard King, there are two forms of Orientalist discourse, the first generally antagonistic and confident in European superiority, the second, generally affirmative, enthusiastic and suggestive of Indian superiority in certain key areas.<sup>38</sup> What we have seen from the foregoing discussion is the evolution of the first form of discourse, which resulted out of a host of factors. But as already hinted at the outset of the article, due to historical reasons there were not much writings nor attention paid on Orissa or the Jagannath cult. Perhaps, that is why the Orientalist stereotypes that evolved on the Jagannath cult could not have much currency. Nor the West wrote much on Jagannath. Of course, since the later half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a typical Oriya (nationalist?) perspective developed on Jagannath that contested the Orientalist essentialisations. Jagannath and His cult came to be construed and constructed not only within the nationalist paradigms but also sometimes in highly exaggerated and sentimental way.<sup>39</sup> For example, as opposed to the Western missionaries’ and historians’ construction of Jagannath as stronghold of superstitions and evils, an Oriya historian, Krupasindhu Mishra describes Jagannath as the ‘Sparshamani’ or touchstone in the history of Orissa. Lord Jagannath transformed Utkal (Orissa), the land of the down-trodden (*patita*), the *Bratyabhumi*, to a great religious and holy land.<sup>40</sup> For Mishra, Jagannath spreads equality and fraternity and epitomizes all the essence and glory of Hinduism.<sup>41</sup> Another nationalist Oriya, Nilakantha Das considers Jagannath as the symbol of friendship (*maitree*), which is required for salvation (*nirvana*).<sup>42</sup> Jagannath promotes *nirvana* for all by way of propagating universal brotherhood or *maitree*. However little justified or supported by facts such claims may be, these ultimately helped in countering and checking Western stereotypes about Jagannath and the cult.

#### Notes and References

<sup>1</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism. Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London, Penguin Book, 1995), p.2

<sup>2</sup> Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion* (New Delhi, OUP, 1999), p.100

<sup>3</sup> N.G.Cassels, *Religion and Pilgrim Tax under the Company Raj* (New Delhi, 1987), p.ix

<sup>4</sup> The main temple of the Jagannath cult is situated in the town of Puri. It houses the Jagannath Triad—Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra.

<sup>5</sup> See, Subhakanta Behera, *Construction of an Identity Discourse. Oriya Literature and the Jagannath cult, 1866-1936* (New Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2002) for a detailed discussion.

<sup>6</sup> See Subhakanta Behera, op.cit., chapter 6

- <sup>7</sup> Henry Yule and A.C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson. An Anglo-Indian Dictionary* (New edn., Hertfordshire, Wordsworth Edt. Ltd., 1996), p.466
- <sup>8</sup> See, *The Travels of Friar Odoric*, transl., Henry Yule (William B. Endmans, 2001)
- <sup>9</sup> Franco Mormando, 'A Friar's Journey to the East', *The National Catholic Weekly*, Vol.186, No.16, May 13, 2002
- <sup>10</sup> P.N.Nair (ed.), Bruton's visit to Lord Jagannath 350 years Ago (Calcutta, 1985), p.68
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.70
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.68
- <sup>13</sup> R.C.Temple (ed.), *A Geographical Account of Countries Round the Bay of Bengal, 1669-1679* (Cambridge, 1903), pps.12-18
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*,p.18
- <sup>15</sup> J.W.Kaye, *Christianity in India: An Historical Narrative* (London, 1859), p.369
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*,p.370
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*,p.3
- <sup>18</sup> W.F.B.Laurie, *Orissa: The Garden of Superstition and Idolatry* (London, 1848), p.101
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*,p.18
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*,p.47
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*,p.47
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*,p.51
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>24</sup> Subhakanta Behera, op.cit.,p.204
- <sup>25</sup> James Peggs, *India' Cries to British Humanity* (London, 1832), p.120
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>27</sup> Henry Yule and A.C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson* (Hertfordshire, Wordsworth Ref., reprt., 1996), p.467
- <sup>28</sup> W.Hamilton, *The Geographical, Statistical and Historical Description of Hindostan and Adjacent* (1820), vol, I, in Sri Mandir (Puri), vol.XXIV, Oct.,1994, p.5
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*,p.5
- <sup>30</sup> Andrew Stirling, *Orissa: Its Geography, Statistics, History, Religion and Antiquities* (London, 1846) p.127
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*,pp.47-48
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>33</sup> W.W.Hunter, *Orissa* (London, 1872),I,p.166
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*,p.167
- <sup>35</sup> S.N.Das, *Jagannatha Mandira o' Jagannatha Tattwa* (4<sup>th</sup> edn., Cuttack, Friends Publisher, 1985), p.28 (in Oriya)
- <sup>36</sup> See, *Christashcharyakriya* (6<sup>th</sup> edn., Cuttack, 1898)
- <sup>37</sup> P.K.Patra, *Odisare Baptist Misanari Sosaitira Karya abam Christa Mandali Sthapanara Itihasa, 1822-1942* (Cuttack, 1943), p.178 (in Oriya)
- <sup>38</sup> Richard King, op.cit., p.116
- <sup>39</sup> See, for example, Jagabandhu Singh, *Prachina Utkala* (3rd edn., Bhubaneswar, Orissa Sahitya Akademi, 1982), and Nilakantha Das, *Odia Sahityaya Krama Parinama* (2 volumes, Cuttack, 1948). Both are in Oriya.
- <sup>40</sup> Krupasindh Mishra, *Utkal Itihasa* (New edn., Books and Books, Cuttack, 1979), pp.38-39 (in Oriya)
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>42</sup> Nilakantha Das, op.cit., vol.I, pp.212-13

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