

The Story Behind That Unforgettable Smile!

You've seen it before... that curious face with the big smile. It may even seem a bit haunting... when you least expect it, those big eyes catch you off guard from the most unexpected place and then you recognize that un-mistakable grin. You know it means something special but every time you try to find out anything specific about that face with the oval eyes, you are told all sorts of strange comments like, "...it's circus art," or a "radical Goth piercing," or maybe "a vaudeville clown," or "something that descended from the Aztec civilization."

Well it's time for all this confusion to get cleared up! Allow us to introduce you to one of the most withstanding expressions of Divine Love worldwide. This particular image extends back thousands of years ago to an extraordinary place on the northern east side of India in the state of Orissia. The big eyes and beaming grin belong to Jagannatha. This name comes from a compound Sanskrit lexical composed from the word "*Jagat*," which means "...the sum total of everything that moves in the universe..." and "*Natha*," which means "...the proprietor, or master worthy of great reverence and worship..." So this unique graphic expression is not just another commercial happy face, it is actually a sacred ancient icon from Vedic India that is affectionately known as "*Lord Jagannatha, Lord of the Universe*"

Such an honorable name begs the question; "*How did this colorful illustration of Lord Jagannatha get such an exalted title?*" The answer lies way back in time to a powerful king who lived in primeval India. His name was King Indradyumna and he was a very pious man who loved God so much that his only desire was to meet the Supreme Lord face to face.

King Indradyumna's passion to see God began after he had the opportunity to hear one of the Lord's confidential devotees describe how extraordinarily beautiful He was. For many years the King attempted to see the Lord in the temple, but all his efforts failed. When his patience was nearly exhausted, the Lord within his heart instructed him to construct a very large stone temple decorated with golden ornaments and a great round spire that could be seen from many miles. When it was completed King Indradyumna sought out Lord Brahma to consecrate his great temple. But he was gone so long in his search for Lord Brahma, the nearby ocean floor swept ashore and completely buried the big temple he built in sand!

King Indradyumna eventually did meet with Lord Brahma but when he did, he was disappointed to discover that even though Lord Brahma was the most powerful entity in this Universe, he was incapable of



summoning the Supreme Lord on demand. At this point King Indradyumna became so discouraged he lay down determined to fast until death. At that time the Lord of the Universe took mercy on the King and revealed that he would appear to him as a chunk of wood floating in the sea. The King immediately went to the ocean and there he discovered a huge piece of wood marked with the conch, disk, club and lotus. (The four auspicious signs of Vishnu.) After great effort, and only with the assistance of his soldiers, the King finally got the heavy block back to the temple. Upon returning he immediately contracted with the best sculptors in the kingdom to carve for him the beautiful deity of the Lord that he sought for so many long years.

But all the sculptors failed, and King Indradyumna could not find anyone capable of the task. As soon as any artisan attempted to carve the massive wooden block from the sea, his chisels would break! The King became despondent again but the Supreme Lord was so moved by his relentless efforts that he disguised Himself as an old artist and approached the king to carve a deity of Himself! He promised the King that if he were allowed to work behind closed doors for twenty-one days, the Deity he so desired would be carved to his complete satisfaction.

The King was elated! He promised not to open the door and agreed to let the sculptor reside alone. But after fourteen days the sounds of carving that had come from the studio went silent. King Indradyumna became so anxious that he thrust open the door prematurely. Inside, he found that the old sculptor was gone, and the unfinished form of Lord Jagannatha,

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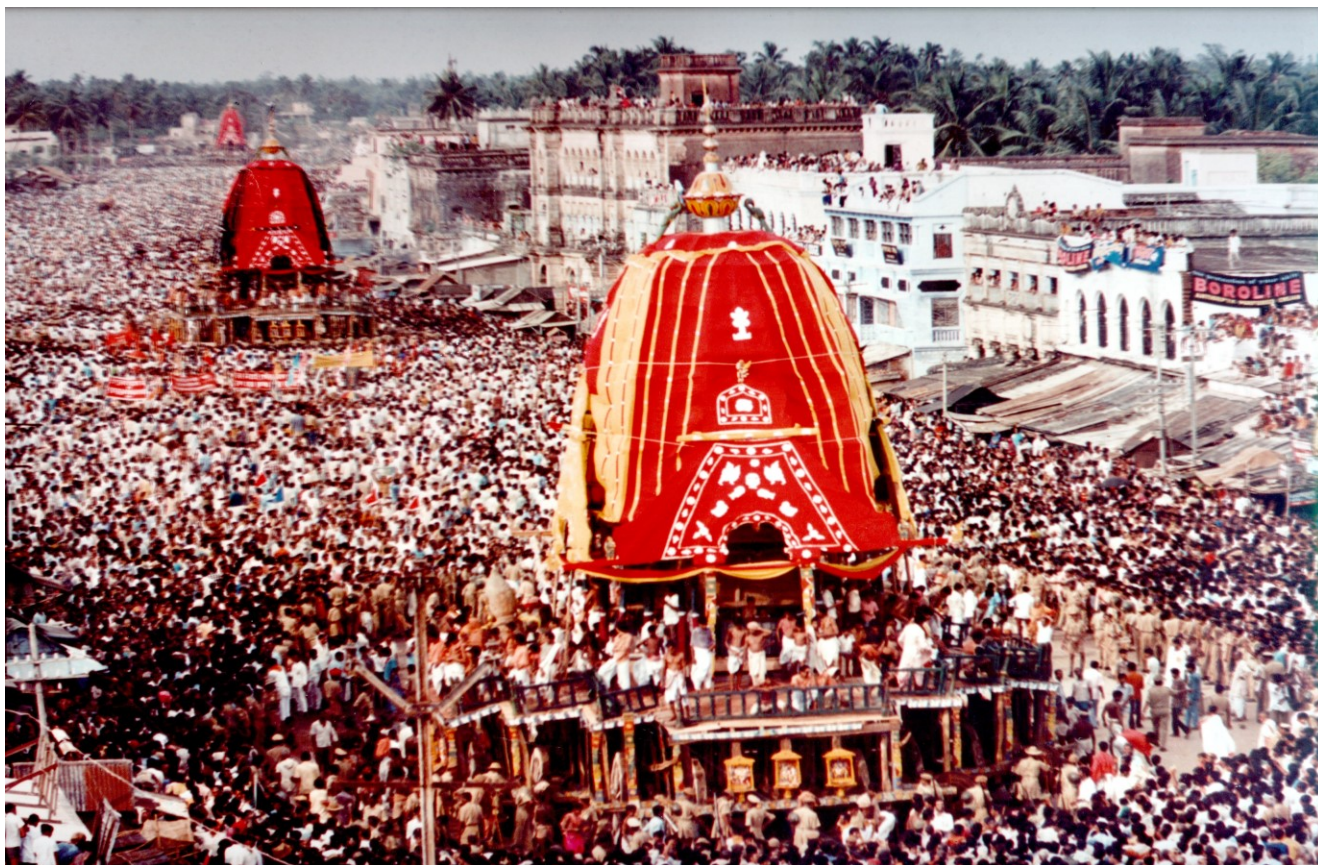
along with a carving of his sister, Lady Subhadra, and his Brother Lord Balarama. All the carvings were incomplete and had no fingers or toes.

The King felt so grieved by his offensive behavior that he felt he should again fast to death. But the king's wise minister was able to perceive that the sculpture who carved the great block of wood retrieved from the ocean was none other than Lord Jagannatha Himself. He then reassured him that he should not lament because whatever the Lord does is always for a wonderful reason! Sure enough, that night Lord Jagannatha appeared to King Indradyumna in his dreams and said: *"Do not lament about opening the door prematurely. It was part of my plan to appear in this unfinished form without hands or feet but with an expression of great happiness. Grieve not! Advanced devotees will see within this form all my splendor, fully manifested and beautiful, in my original form holding a flute."*

The comforting words of Lord Jagannatha soothed the distressed King. From that day on, King Indradyumna, all his constituents, and all his

descendents accepted those incomplete carvings as a full expression of the Lords most loving and intimate affection. As a gesture of reciprocal loving exchange, the King issued the command to built three big rolling temples chariots for Lord Jagannatha, Lady Subhadra, and Lord Balaram to travel in so they could personally visit with all the people in the land. Even to this day, every year there is a big festival held to commemorate this marvelous exchange and it has come to be know as "RathaYatra" which means: "The Festival of the Chariots."

So the next time you encounter the big eyes of Lord Jagannatha remember Him as the most wonderful manifestation of the Supreme Lord's kindness. When you see Lord Jagannatha's big beaming smile, recall this wondrous story of the devoted King Indradyumna and, beam right back at Him, confident that you have been blessed by the countenance of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Lord Jagannatha, Lord of the Universe!



The Rathayatra festival started by King Indradyumna thousands of years ago, and attended by Lord Jagannatha, Lady Subhadra, and Lord Balarama in their rolling temples, is still held annually in Orissia India!

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