

THE NAVAKALEVARA

It has been already stated that the bodies of the deities of the Puri temple have been fabricated out of the logs of wood of the margosa tree. A wooden object is liable to decay after a certain period and needs replacement. So the images of Jagannatha require a change over to new bodies. In such years as have two months of Asadha, this new body change-over ceremony called the Nava Kalevara takes place. when the old images are replaced by new ones. Normally, this should take place once in 12 years, but actually the shortest period is 8 years and the longest is 19 years.

Even a brief account of the Nava Kalevara rituals and procedures would be a small book. The various steps taken by the temple authorities to celebrate the festival in the traditional manner are very extensive and hence the main points to be remembered are described below.

Specific persons including the Daitas are deputed from the Puri temple to the Mangala temple in Kakatapur village to implore the mercy of the said goddess, so that they would be able to spot out the suitable margosa trees. There are many specifications about the environment, location, height, age and other details of the trees which should be thoroughly checked before they are (procured for the purpose.

After the trees are located and selected, a small ritual, including homa (offering to fire) takes place and the tree is felled. Then it is cut to size and brought to the temple. In Koili Vaikuntha, the skilled carpenters called Visvakarma fashion the wooden images under the strict supervision and guidance of the Daitas. On those days an elaborate sacrifice invoking the god Nrsimha is performed. After the images are carved out, these are taken inside the temple and the Brahma (a mysterious object always placed inside the images - see chap.7) is transferred from the old images to the new images. Then the old images are buried in Koili Vaikuntha. The new images are painted and made ready for worship.