

Name: _____

Date: _____

Rath Yatra

Rath Yatra literally means Chariot Festival. Ratha Yatra originated 5,000 years ago in India in Jagannatha Puri, Orissa - India. The Festival celebrates Lord Krishna's return to Vrindavan and is held annually in the months of June-July to honor Lord Jagannatha.

Usually the deities of Lord Jagannath, Balarama and Subhadra are worshipped within the temple, but on the day of the Rath Yatra festival they are taken through the streets so that everyone can have the fortune of seeing them. Richly decorated chariots, resembling temple structures, are pulled through the streets of Jagannath Puri.

This commemorates the annual journey of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balarama, and their sister Subhadra to the Gundicha Temple, situated 2 km from their temple. During the festival, devotees from all over the world go to Jagannath Puri with an earnest desire to help pull the chariot with the ropes. The huge processions accompanying the chariots play songs with drums, tambourines, trumpets etc.

Of all the festivals, the Ratha Yatra of Jagannatha is the most famous. This takes place on the second day of the waxing phase of the moon of the asadha month. Jagannatha's ratha is marked with a cakra and garuda, is yellow in color, with four white horses. The protecting deity is Nrsimha. Baladeva's cart is blue, with a palm tree insignia, and four black horses. The protecting deity is Sesa. Subhadra's cart is black, with lotus insignia, protected by anadurga.

The Festival of Chariots was first performed outside of India on July 9, 1967 in San Francisco, under the supervision of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada.

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