The Brahmacandra ISKCON- Purī Peace Plan

Dear King Gajapati Mahārāja Dibyasingha Deva IV, Scholars of Śrī Jagannātha Temple Administration (SSJT), and the Governing Body Commission of ISKCON (GBC),

Please accept our humble obeisances. All Glories to Jagannātha, Baladeva, Subhadrā. All glories to Jagannātha Purī Dhāma. All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Aniruddha dās here, Managing Director of the nonprofit Ocean of Milk Foundation. We were horrified to learn about this conflict between ISKCON and the Purī Authorities. We just recently saw the video with Govardhana Prabhu, a Member of the GBC Executive Committee, explaining the situation, and that there had actually been Hindus in the west demonstrating against ISKCON Ratha-yātrās!! It sounds like some strange, surreal nightmare!

After reading the respective position papers of both parties, and after deep, deep, deep meditation on Lord Jagannātha, it became clear to us that the conflict could be solved. And since this is such an unfortunate conflict, it shortly became clear to us that we had a duty to quickly write up our solution to the impasse, and get it quickly into the GBC, and to the Purī Authorities, such as the King of Purī, the Śrī Jagannath Temple Managing Committee (SJTMC), and the Purī Scholars. We know the Age of Kali is the Age of Quarrels! But we can also try to peacefully resolve such quarrels… hopefully in a speedy manner.

The Issues

We know that many who read this may think that the only issue is about which date the Ratha-yātrā Processions will take place. But another very important issue is about which day is celebrated as the Appearance Day of Lords Jagannātha, Baladeva, Subhadrā. In fact, in the letter that the King of Purī wrote to the GBC, he actually mentioned the issue about the Appearance Day first, before the issue about the day of the Ratha-yātrā. So those appear to be the top two issues, and then there appears to also be a third, perhaps somewhat less important issue, about the ISKCON Temples properly observing the 15-day seclusion of the Deities.

This is important, because we can hopefully get ISKCON to yield on a few of the issues, and hopefully get the Purī Authorities to yield somewhat on the other issues, and both parties can meet peacefully in the middle. In this solution, both parties will have to move a little.

The Number One Ground Rule

We just want to make it clear at the outset to all parties that we are in 100 percent agreement with the Purī Scholars about the importance of basing decisions on the statements in the *śāstras*. The Purī Scholars state:

> **“In the present context, Skanda Purāṇa and Brahma Purāṇa as well as Smriti shastras categorically prescribe specific Tithis for performance of Shree Jagannātha Snāna-yatra and Ratha-yatra.” (p.22)**

So we will categorically state at the outset that we will certainly base anything important on the *Skanda Purāṇa* and *Brahma Purāṇa* as well as *Smṛti śāstras*. However, it is an important point to note that these *Purāṇas* may possibly allow some other dates for the Ratha-yātrā.

Additionally, there are three authorities, not only one, which are of course, *Guru*, *Sādhu*, and *Śāstra*. *Śāstra* is certainly the most important of those authorities, as explained by Śrīla Prabhupāda himself, but the other two authorities may have their role to play as well, and should ideally corroborate what the *śāstras* say.

None other than Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself speaks about the importance of following the *śāstras* in *Bhagavad-gītā* 16.24:

> **"One should understand what is duty and what is not duty by the regulations of the scriptures. Knowing such rules and regulations, one should act so that he may gradually be elevated."**

And of course, ISKCON Founder-Ācārya His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Śrīla Prabhupāda has talked about the importance of the *śāstras* on innumerable occasions, as for example, in this Lecture on *Śrīmad Bhāgavataṁ*, given October 5, 1976, in Śrī Vṛndāvana Dhāma, where he declares:

> **"Śāstra must be the medium. Without śāstra, nothing is acceptable…. So nobody can transgress the rules and regulation of śāstra."**

So there is no question that we shall carefully be in compliance with Lord Kṛṣṇa's and Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions, and we are certain that the GBC and everyone in ISKCON would agree with that.

However, there is an important note of caution to add here, which is that we cannot be overly narrow or closed in our interpretations of the *śāstras*. We are trying to resolve a conflict here, not get stuck in the mud.

The Number Two Ground Rule

We also wish to state at the outset that we are also in 100 percent agreement with the Purī Scholars about the importance of observing sacred days at the proper times. These sacred days, or particular *Tithis* (lunar days) or *Nakṣatras* (lunar asterisms), are mentioned innumerable times in the *śāstras*. We do not want to say that there is never an exception to celebrating some special event on the wrong day, but we accept that the general rule is certainly to celebrate all auspicious occurrences at the proper day and time.

We would like to commend and thank the Purī Scholars for actually researching the dates of many of the early ISKCON Ratha-yātrās, and what they found what that the very first Ratha-

yātrā in San Francisco, 1967, was in fact held on the exact proper *Tithi*, *Āṣāḍha Śuklā-pakṣa Dvitīyā*; and so were many of the other early Ratha-yātrās held on the proper *Tithi*, or within the auspicious nine days therefrom, including:

> San Francisco in 1968, 1970, 1971, and 1972; London in 1970,1971,1972,1973, and 1974; Melbourne in 1972 and 1974; Philadelphia in 1975; and New York in 1976.

Now we believe that the very great majority of ISKCON devotees will look at this list and agree that celebrating Ratha-yātrā on or near the correct *Tithi* was important to ISKCON Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda. Especially telling, of course, is the selection of the exactly correct *Tithi*, *Āṣāḍha Śuklā-pakṣa Dvitīyā*, for the very first International Ratha-yātrā in history, in San Francisco in 1967, personally directed and attended by ISKCON Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda himself.

And this subject of auspicious and correct timings is of course mentioned so, so many times in the *śāstras*, and in *Śrīmad Bhāgavataṁ* of course as well, as for example in *Śrīmad Bhāgavataṁ* 7.15.5, wherein the Illustrious Third Guru of our Glorious *Sampradāya*, Śrīpada Nārada Muniji instructs:

> **"When one gets the opportunity of a suitable auspicious time and place, one should, with love, offer food prepared with ghee to the Deity of the Supreme Personality of Godhead."**

We can see here the specific phrase "**suitable auspicious time**," and not just any time that one wishes, nor at inauspicious times. Just like the various *āratikas* and *prasād* offerings in ISKCON Temples are scheduled at various auspicious times, such as *maṅgala āratika* being held during the auspicious *brahma-muhūrta* time-period.

So here are our basic ground rules which we are certain both sides of this dispute and most Hindus would agree to: we must proceed from *śāstra*, and we must be very respectful of any instructions about auspicious timing. Now let us turn to the first major issue:

Issue #1: The Appearance Day of the Jagannātha Deities

We are starting with the issue about the Appearance Day of the Jagannātha Deities because we believe it will be the easiest to resolve. This issue was the first mentioned by the King of Purī in his letter to the ISKCON GBC, and the Purī Scholars were saying how so many other days, such as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī, Rāma Navamī, and Nṛsiṁha Caturdaśī are all celebrated on their proper *Tithi*. Also, the Purī Scholars were saying how so many other religions celebrate their various holy days on the exact auspicious day. All we can say about this is that we fully agree with the Purī Scholars on this point.

However, the situation is slightly more complicated than that, because the Appearance Day of Lords Jagannātha, Baladeva, Subhadrā, which is known as Snāna-yātrā, is not solely an Appearance Day, but is also the day when the Deities receive the special, 108-pot sacred bath, and then go into seclusion before Ratha-yātrā.

Now we can only give our educated opinion about what has happened here in ISKCON: we believe that Snāna-yātrā has become much more associated with the special 108-pot sacred bath, and the going into seclusion, before the largest event of them all, the Ratha-yātrā parade. And the fact that Snāna-yātrā is also the Appearance Day of the Deities has been somewhat forgotten or lost.

So we already know that ISKCON Temples around the world have the Ratha-yātrā on different dates around the year. What we believe has happened is that all the temples and devotees have been more focused on timing the sacred bath and seclusion appropriately for the big Ratha-yātrā events, and have maybe not been thinking about the Appearance Day at all. We say that because we know that ISKCON Temples do in fact normally celebrate Appearance Days on the correct *Tithi* or lunar day.

ISKCON Los Angeles

Our explanation does also appear to be supported by objective evidence. For example, if we look at the calendar for ISKCON Los Angeles, which holds one of the most famous and iconic Ratha-yātrās going down Venice Beach, it shows this description for Snāna-yātrā:

Snāna Yātrā

4:30 PM: Arati & Kīrtana

5:15 PM: Procession of Jagannātha, Baladeva & Subhadrā

5:45 PM: Bathing Ceremony Begins

6:30 PM: Prasādam Feast

7:00 PM: Bathing Ceremony Ends

We can all see that there is nothing about the Appearance Day, but mostly about the Bathing Ceremony and Procession. There is also a picture on the webpage, and it is a picture of the Deities being bathed.

Of course, the date when this L.A. Snāna-yātrā is being held is in fact *not* the Appearance Day. The Appearance Day of the Deities will be celebrated next year in Śrī Jagannātha Purī Dhāma on June 18, 2027, while the L.A. Snāna-yātrā will be celebrated one month later on July 18, 2027, approximately two weeks before the L.A. Ratha-yātrā, which is to be held on August 1, which is the timing that we shall probably find at most ISKCON Temples.

So does L.A. ISKCON Temple have the Appearance Day of the Jagannātha Deities, listed as another Snāna-yātrā, on their calendar, as a separate event, and on the proper day? Actually, their online calendar does not reach to that date, either forward or backward. But if we look at another ISKCON Temple, at ISKCON New York's online calendar, it does go to that date, and they do *not* list the Appearance Day as a separate event. We suspect that will be the case at most ISKCON Temples, except for the Indian ISKCON Temples of course, who we believe have all already changed their Ratha-yātrā to align with Purī's, and who therefore should already be celebrating both the Bathing Festival, and also the Appearance Day on the same day each year, *Jyeṣṭhā Pūrṇimā* (the full moon of the month of *Jyeṣṭhā*).

In other words, what we are saying is that this whole mixup is mostly about ISKCON Temples trying to time the Snāna-yātrā Bathing Ceremonies appropriately for their planned Ratha-yātrās, which have varied dates, and the Appearance Day is, for that reason, somewhat out of the picture, so to speak. We certainly do not believe that there is any intention on the part of ISKCON to celebrate the Appearance Day on the wrong date or *Tithi*. What we believe has happened is that the Appearance Day has simply become somewhat lost in the mix, at the individual temples level. As we stated previously, we believe it is factually the policy of all ISKCON Temples and the GBC to normally celebrate all Appearance Days on their proper *Tithi*.

All of that means that this particular issue can hopefully be easily resolved. All the ISKCON GBC would have to do is put out a new directive to all ISKCON Temples, stating that, whatever various dates the Ratha-yātrā, and the attendant Snāna-yātrā Bathing Ceremonies might fall on for various ISKCON Temples, the Appearance Day of Lords Jagannātha, Baladeva, Subhadrā should now be celebrated by *all* temples on the Snāna-yātrā *Tithi* specified in the *Skanda Purāṇa*, which is *Jyeṣṭhā Pūrṇimā* (the full moon of the month of *Jyeṣṭhā*).

One point of possible confusion about this is that the name "Snāna-yātrā" has traditionally been used to refer to both the Bathing Ceremony and the Appearance Day together, plus there is normally a smaller procession as well (just not as large as Ratha-yātrā). Therefore, the GBC may want to distinguish somewhat, and call one day the "Snāna-yātrā Bathing Ceremonies," and the other the "Snāna-yātrā Appearance Day Celebrations." Something like this, which would appear on individual ISKCON temple calendars, to be able to tell the two celebrations apart.

The main reason that this issue should hopefully be easy to resolve is that ISKCON is of course very serious about observing all the various sacred days on the proper *Tithis*. That is the general ISKCON practice. So in effect, what ISKCON would be doing is simply adding another minor festival day to the calendar of most ISKCON Temples, which would be the Snāna-yātrā Appearance Day Celebrations. And, just for the sake of clarity, it is quite possible that the Deities would be bathed as well on that day, since ISKCON does generally do *abhiṣekas* on Appearance Days.

That naturally leads us into the question about whether there would now be another Bathing Ceremony some two weeks before the respective Ratha Yātrās… or should ISKCON now skip

those? But those are the Snāna-yātrā Bathing Ceremonies that ISKCON has been previously practicing, and those are quite well-known events, kind of the warm-up for Ratha-yātrā. We could say that the Snāna-yātrā Bathing Ceremonies are an important part of ISKCON's Jagannath worship. ISKCON Temples do not of course practice the huge multitude of special *pūjās* and so on that Śrī Jagannātha Purī Mandira practices… but ISKCON Temples do indeed normally observe Snāna-yātrā Bathing Ceremonies. Actually, with what we have described here, many ISKCON Temples might now effectively be celebrating two Snāna-yātrās Bathing Ceremonies. (The Appearance Day could also just be known as "Lord Jagannātha, Baladava, Subhadrā's Appearance Day." Perhaps having two "Snāna-yātrās" is a bit confusing.)

Bhaktivedanta Manor

It is a little complicated because there truly appears to be some variety out there with what the different ISKCON Temples are doing with respect to Ratha-yātrās. For example, with one of the most important and iconic ISKCON Temples in the world, Bhaktivedanta Manor, it appears that they sometimes have three Ratha-yātrās: a local Ratha-yātrā in Watford, and then also a bigger Central London Ratha-yātrā, and then also they are sometimes doing Ratha-yātrās in some of the other cities in England, such as the City of Luton, or the City of Slough.

As far as Bhaktivedanta Manor's dates, it seems difficult to criticize what they are doing, because the Watford Ratha-yātrā, which is the Ratha-yātrā just in their own local area, is in fact timed to exactly the correct *Tithi*, just like the Purī Authorities are requesting. But obviously, the other Ratha-yātrās which they carry out, such as the Central London one, which is the largest Ratha-yātrā in the country, or other Ratha-yātrās in other cities, are going to be on some other dates or *Tithis*, and not the exact one that the Purī Authorities are requesting. And if anyone from the preaching mission looks at this, they will probably all say it is totally fine. This may be important, because it shows how other Ratha-yātrās can legitimately be held on other *Tithis*, without necessarily being in contravention to what the Purī Authorities are requesting. We can see all this clearly with Bhaktivedanta Manor, because their local Ratha-yātrā is always scheduled for the correct *Tithi*, *Āṣāḍha Śuklā-pakṣa Dvitīyā.*

For the sake of the many who may read this, it should be noted here that Jagannātha Deities are quite unusual among Hindu Deities in one respect, which is that they are said to very much enjoy various outings and road-trips, such as for example, Chandan-yātrā, which is an outing on boats. With other Hindu Deities, they are, on the one hand, extremely heavy from being made of stone or metal; and on the other hand, it is normally forbidden to move them, at least the Large Deities, once they have been installed. With the Small Deities, it is different, and they may be moved for *abhiṣekas*, or for the Jhulana Yātrā Swing Festival, etc. But the main point here is that Jagannātha Deities are said to enjoy these various outings, so having some Ratha-yātrās in some various surrounding cities, like they have sometimes done in England, in cities like Slough or Luton, appears very, very appropriate.

Moving forward to Snāna-yātrā at Bhaktivedanta Manor, it is a completely different story. Just like the other ISKCON Temples we have looked at, Snāna-yātrā is scheduled approximately two weeks before the Central London Ratha-yātrā, the biggest Ratha-yātrā, and its description only talks about bathing ceremonies and nothing about any Appearance Day. Bhaktivedanta Manor's online calendar also sticks out a little from the other temple calendars we have looked at, because this calendar has quite a lot of entries on it, including Ekādaśīs, and minor Appearance Days and such. So we know all the readers must be wondering: does Bhaktivedanta Manor's calendar have Lords Jagannātha, Baladeva, Subhadrā's Appearance Day on their calendar, separately from their calendar entry for the Snāna-yātrā Bathing Ceremonies? And the answer is that they do *not*… which confirms what we were saying about the Appearance Day somehow becoming lost in the mix. We can see here again that the issue truthfully is not about celebrating the Appearance Day on the wrong *Tithi*, which is what the Purī authorities are objecting to, but more that many ISKCON Temples look like they are simply not celebrating the Appearance Day at all!

But the original reason we brought up Bhaktivedanta Manor was because we are discussing bathing ceremonies in the runup to Ratha-yātrā. So if Bhaktivedanta Manor is holding three Ratha-yātrās in one year, should they also be holding three Snāna-yātrā bathing ceremonies each year? And what about the 15-day Anavasara Seclusion Period? Should there also be three of those?

But the reality is that those questions are perhaps beyond what we need to establish here. But we can address the questions since they have come up, just for the sake of clarity. We believe what most would probably agree to is definitely having just the one 15-day Anavasara Seclusion Period, and not three of them. And probably just the one Snāna-yātrā Bathing Ceremony as well, and not three of them, right before the Anavasara Seclusion Period. But this Bhaktivedanta Manor case is probably not typical. We believe most ISKCON Temples only do one Ratha-yātrā per year, and not two or three.

And we probably do need to leave the door open for doing more abhiṣekas, because abhiṣekas are often a part of major festivals, such as the Appearance Day, which is exactly the main subject here. However, there is also the issue with possibly washing the paint off of the Deities, so maybe more than one abhiṣeka a year is not so desired with Jagannātha Deities.

So where that leaves us with respect to abhiṣekas is that there will definitely be at least one per year at all Snāna-yātrā Bathing Ceremonies (obviously), approximately two weeks before the Ratha-yātrā. And then if the individual ISKCON Temples want to also have an abhiṣeka on the Appearance Day of the Jagannātha Deities, then they can certainly do that as well, depending on the situation with the paint of course.

And for Bhaktivedanta Manor with its two or three Ratha-yātrās every year, they could actually do an *abhiṣeka* before each one, effectively a Snāna-yātrā before each one, we are certain all would agree. It gives the local *Brāhmaṇas* practice on their *abhiṣekas*! But the paint issue is a real thing… so maybe not. With metal or stone deities though, that would not be an issue.

The Standard Arrangement

But all that we truly need at the current moment is the "Standard Arrangement," where there is at least one Appearance Day, and at least one Bathing Ceremony, and at least one Anavasara Seclusion Period, and at least one Ratha-yātrā are being celebrated in each temple. Where is ISKCON falling short out of that list of four? Let us state it once again, in case anyone is lost: ISKCON is often missing the Appearance Day Celebrations.

So we are saying that the Standard Arrangement will be that most ISKCON Temples will be adding Appearance Day Celebrations to their festival calendars, and those Celebrations will be on the exact *Tithi* that the Purī Authorities are requesting, the full moon of the month of Jyeṣṭhā.

The Perfect Setup

In fact, no one will probably believe it, but ISKCON already has the perfect setup on their official calendar… because ISKCON already has the main Purī dates on its official calendar. Purī and everyone must be careful about criticizing ISKCON. ISKCON does not put all the dates for 600 Ratha-yātrās or however many there are, and then there will probably be 600 Snāna-yātrās as well! All of those entries would doubtless clog up the official calendar too much! So ISKCON simply puts the Jagannātha Purī dates, for both Snāna-yātrā and Ratha-yātrā, which makes ISKCON difficult to criticize in this regard. We suppose that the individual ISKCON Temples can be criticized for not celebrating the Appearance Day on the correct Tithi, or for not celebrating the Appearance Day at all, which is what we have been finding. But the central official ISKCON Festival calendar actually has everything on the correct *Tithis* already, so there is nothing to criticize about it.

The Largest Performer of Ratha-yātrā Processions on Planet Earth

And while we are on the subject of number of Ratha-yātrās, we know many readers must be wondering how many Ratha-yātrās ISKCON puts on every year. Well, there are believed to be 650-800 ISKCON Temples worldwide, and we have seen reports that ISKCON holds as many as 815 Ratha-yātrās every year! That makes ISKCON easily the largest performer of Ratha-yātrā Processions on Planet Earth.

Complete Agreement

But the main important point here, from the standpoint of the conflict with the Purī Authorities, is that their request about observing the Appearance Day of the Jagannātha Deities will be completely agreed to by ISKCON. Definitely, all ISKCON Temples are to add to their Festival Calendar the Appearance Day, and all of the ISKCON Temples are to celebrate it on the correct *Tithi*, *Jyeṣṭhā Pūrṇimā*, just as requested by the Purī Authorities, which should not really be any problem at all. It will give the local ISKCON *Brāhmaṇas* at the various temples more practice at performing special Appearance Day *pūjās*! And their will be a higher standard of Jagannātha worship! And temples will have another major event to fundraise as well!

What this means is that many ISKCON Temples would now have three major Jagannātha events every year instead of two: There would be the Appearance Day Celebrations which would be on June 18 next year for most temples (bearing in mind that the time zone might move the schedule by one day), and then there would be the Snāna-yātrā Bathing Ceremonies approximately two weeks before the planned Ratha-yātrā (the dates of which vary by temple), and then of course the Ratha-yātrā (the date of which would also vary by temple). So the entire business would appear to be positive in that way, in that another very important Jagannātha festival would now be celebrated by most ISKCON Temples.

In conclusion, it seems not so much that ISKCON Temples are not celebrating the Appearance Day of the Jagannātha Deities on the correct day or *Tithi*, but that many ISKCON Temples appear to not be celebrating the Appearance Day at all! Just like we looked at the L.A. Temple calendar, and their Snāna-yātrā announcement had nothing about the Appearance Day, and neither did New York Temple, and neither did Bhaktivedanta Manor.

Also, with respect to this current process of making peace between ISKCON and the Purī Authorities, ISKCON has now made the first step in resolving the conflict, giving full agreement to comply with the first request of the King of Purī and the Purī Scholars, the request to celebrate the Appearance Day of the Jagannātha Deities on the correct *Tithi*. So hopefully, the Purī Authorities will also move their position a little further down the line with respect to other matters. Now let us proceed forward to…

Issue #2: Timing of the Ratha-yātrā Parades

ISKCON currently holds Ratha-yātrās on many different dates around the world at its 800+ temples. Śrī Jagannātha Purī Dhāma, on the other hand, does of course hold solely the one giant Ratha-yātrā, and on the exact *Tithi* that has been specified in the *śāstras*, which is *Āṣāḍha Śuklā-pakṣa Dvitīyā Tithi*, or the second lunar day of the bright half of the month of *Āṣāḍha*, as directed by *Skanda Purāṇa* 2.2.29.32. The Purī Authorities have requested that all ISKCON Temples also hold their Ratha-yātrās on said exact *Tithi*, emphasizing that said instruction is direct from the *Skanda Purāṇa*, and also mentioned in some other *Purāṇas* as well.

In response, ISKCON did adopt a policy some years ago, that all ISKCON Temples *in India* should celebrate Ratha-yātrā on said *Tithi*. However, for various reasons, ISKCON Temples in other countries continue to celebrate Ratha-yātrā on various other days. Such reasons include getting the main parade onto a Sunday, not clashing with other city parades, wanting to see a good turnout and therefore avoiding the same day as other Ratha-yātrās, wanting to make use of the travelling Festival of India setup with all the carts and tents and so on which can only service one Ratha-yātrā at a time, and also concerns about various government permits that may be grandfathered in and are best not to disrupt in any way. So the dispute continues, including, apparently, Indian protesters at some International Ratha-yātrās! Truly, is it not like some horrible surreal nightmare?

Śrīla Prabhupāda's Instructions

It does indeed appear quite clear that ISKCON Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda authorized various dates for Ratha-yātrā. The following passage from one of his letters is perhaps a good example of his attitude:

> "**Regarding Ratha-yātrā, we shall choose the most favorable time to hold our celebration. If for our preaching, it is going to be more beneficial to hold it in September, then you may do so**." (Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Madhudviṣa, June 17th, 1975)

We should note right away that if Madhudviṣa Prabhu had been made to wait until the recommended *Tithi*, he would have had to wait practically a whole additional year, which is obviously a long time to wait. There is actually a well-known Sanskrit Proverb in this respect:

शुभस्य शीघ्रम् अशुभस्य कालहरणम्

"Do what is auspicious immediately, and delay what is inauspicious as long as possible."

This proverb agrees with common sense, we believe, because most people doubtless know it is true that big opportunities can slip away if they are not seized right away. So that is perhaps one part of explaining what ISKCON Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda is saying in his letter.

Also, it must be born in mind, we believe, that setting up a massive public parade is obviously a very large and difficult endeavor. One big issue would be simply getting enough manpower to put on such a festival nicely. Therefore, early Ratha-yātrās would have used manpower from other nearby ISKCON Temples. Drivers, and brakemen, and pūjāris would be needed for the three carts of course, and then cooking enough prasādam for possibly thousands of guests, then also devotees are needed to distribute the prasādam, then enough people to pull the carts, and then also enough devotees to have three respectable kīrtanas one in front of each cart, and then also the setup of tents and stages and such, and breakdown as well. Therefore, from an objective and practical standpoint, it may be necessary to hold the Ratha-yātrās on various dates, simply to have enough devotee manpower to throw a nice festival. However, the Purī Scholars appear to soundly reject that some adjustment of dates may have been necessary, writing:

> "This violation of scriptures and tradition in conducting Snāna-yātrā and Ratha-yātrā on tithis/dates not sanctioned by scriptures or tradition was most inappropriate and should not have been permitted by an Acharya of the stature and eminence of HDG Śrīla Prabhupāda." (p.8)

Well… perhaps this is an opportune moment to mention…

The Purī Bubble

One thing about Jagannātha Purī Temple, we can objectively observe, is that they do not have to grapple with many everyday issues that others have to struggle with. For instance, does Jagannātha Purī have to worry about having enough people to pull the carts? Obviously not. This is an objective observation. They have millions of devotees attending every Ratha-yātrā. Having enough people to pull the carts is obviously not at all a concern. So this is the "Purī Bubble."

Therefore, ISKCON can say that those early Ratha-yātrās needed enough devotees to pull the carts, but the Purī Authorities can simply insist that no other dates are permissible no matter what is said, even if it is about very practical considerations. But this only shows how much the Purī Authorities are in a bubble. They appear to be incorrect with what they are saying, because manpower considerations are obviously extremely important, and cannot be ignored.

If fact, this exact subject is addressed by the example of Pṛthu Mahārāja in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.22.50, where he goes beyond "time, place, and circumstance," and gets into things like resources and strength, and what is appropriate:

> **"Mahārāja Pṛthu performed his activities according to the time, place, his strength, what was appropriate, and his financial resources, dedicating everything to the Supreme."**

We are certain most readers can spot at least a few areas that fall squarely within the Purī Bubble. For instance, Purī Temple does not have to worry about financial resources, and they certainly do not have to worry about strength, as in having enough people to pull the carts. But others, especially those trying to organize Ratha-yātrās in far-off lands, must take all those points into serious consideration, and do what is "**appropriate**," which may often involve a different date.

It is very similar with overall turnout. There is one letter from ISKCON Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda where he is saying that festivals at nearby temples should not be in competition with one another, which seems to us to be a pretty obvious strategical approach to maximizing turnout at these festivals. But the Purī Scholars write about this:

> "There is no question of one Yātrā being "diminished" by another "due to competition".(p.15)

But it is obviously true that if two Ratha-yātrās are held in neighboring cities on the same day, then they probably will indeed both be in competition and both be "**diminished**." The Purī people write things like that, and it just seems like they are in some other strange alternate reality. That is why we are talking about the Purī Bubble. This is another good example of it. Of course, with millions and millions of people attending Ratha-yātrā in Purī every year, any sort of "diminishment" or "competition" is probably the last thing in anyone's head there in Purī. There are always millions of pilgrims, and there is definitely no concern whatsoever about any competing festivals. We can see that clearly when the Purī Scholars write:

> "Opportunity for participation of larger number of devotees in the Ratha-yātrā or the possibility of lesser participation because of the Yātrā being held in a neighbouring locality cannot at all be a ground for holding the Yātrā on a tithi/date not sanctioned by the scriptures." (p.14)

But in the States, and in many other nations around the world, achieving a good turnout is a very serious concern, as we are certain practically all Hindus will agree, at least the ones that are not in a bubble. So that again means holding the Ratha-yātrās on various dates, and not only on one date.

Issues with government authorities also cannot be ignored. In the States, many government workers may be Christians, or of other various religions, and sometimes they may not be helpful. That means that ISKCON should probably avoid changing the dates every year to agree with the Hindu Lunar Calendar. And once ISKCON has a set date or weekend, they should probably stick with it and be careful about not losing it.

On the contrary, in Purī, they will obviously receive full and complete cooperation as far as scheduling Ratha-yātrā, even though the calendar date is different every year. There is no danger that Purī Temple will lose its permits to have Ratha-yātrā or anything like that. Again, that is the Purī Bubble. Other temples around the world have to be much more careful.

A related issue to watch out about is making government employees work too much, (which we can joke about, but is actually a serious issue). If ISKCON Temples are applying to get a different calendar date every year, or a different weekend each year, which is what they would have to do to stay in sync with the lunar calendar, it makes the government employees have to work more. This is actually a serious issue, and if it is ignored, it could result in Ratha-yātrā permits being lost or simply not approved. Keeping government workers happy can be important! Do not make them work too hard!

On the contrary, in Purī, there would never be any question of such a difficulty arising. Of course, since the lunar calendar is different, and requires a different date on the regular Gregorian Calendar every year, the government of Purī would of course grant whatever permits that the Purī Temple is requesting. Again, this is the Purī Bubble.

In fact, the Purī Scholars were even mentioning about how Ratha-yātrā in Purī was allowed to continue even during the pandemic, although there were restrictions that had to be respected. But in other countries, there were truly strict lockdowns, sometimes for many months, as many readers must know for themselves, and any large public gatherings like Ratha-yātrā were exactly the kind of event that was completely prohibited. So here is a very clear example of the Purī Bubble at work. Additionally, Śrī Jagannātha Purī Dhāma is of course a very auspicious place to visit, but for better or worse, obviously…

Purī Temple is not Śrīman Preaching Prabhu

Purī is a huge, huge pilgrimage destination… everyone must know that. Millions and millions of pilgrims are constantly visiting. So everyone there who is part of the Temple Administration, they do not go out and do things like preach to people who are not Hindus, or convert people to Hinduism, or go out to start Jagannātha Temples in cities that have no Hindu Temple at all, or for that matter, organize Ratha-yātrā parades in far-off cities. Therefore, it seems to us that the Purī Authorities, all blessings be upon them, but issues that are connected to the preaching mission are probably *not* going to be their strong suite. On the contrary, the Purī Authorities seem likely to be very ignorant about the needs of the preaching mission.

Additionally, it is perhaps known by some readers that the Purī *Sevāyāt* System is strictly hereditary. In other words, to perform some service like offering pūjās or cooking prasād at Purī Temple, one has to have been born into certain families that traditionally carry out the particular service. So once again, we can see from an objective perspective, that the entire Purī system is truly very distant from the preaching mission. We are not criticizing anyone there in Purī, but simply stating an objective fact about the Purī Temple and its administration, that they truly do not believe in preaching to others and converting them to their school of Hinduism. That is factually not allowed in their school, in their *Sampradāya*.

So if we take all of this together, we can go back to what the Purī Scholars wrote about ISKCON Founder Śrīla Prabhupāda allowing other dates for Ratha-yātrā parades, saying that it was "most inappropriate and should not have been permitted." And we can say that the Purī Scholars, and probably all the Purī Authorities, including the King of Purī, are truly in their Purī Bubble. They simply have no idea about such critically important matters as having enough manpower to throw the festival nicely, having a good turnout, and getting government permits and keeping them. Additionally, no offense intended towards the Purī Authorities, but they do truly seem very clueless about the preaching mission and the various compromises that sometimes need to be made, no offense at all to them.

The Leading Modern Promulgator of Lord Jagannātha, Baladeva, Subhadrā's Worship

On the opposite side of being clueless about the Preaching Mission, there is of course ISKCON Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda, who founded ISKCON with minimal resources, and went from a small, humble, storefront temple on the Lower East Side of New York City, to now including approximately 800 temples worldwide. And there are apparently over 800 Ratha-yātrā Parades happening every year currently. But in ISKCON Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda, we can see the essence of the principle: "**Do the needful**," which he would often give as an instruction to his disciples.

There is also the principle of not arguing with success. If certain means are used to achieve great success, like not being too strict about Ratha-yātrā dates, we believe the general policy is to accept such means. The policy is judged by its results, and everyone reading this probably knows the results, more or less, which are the 800 or so Ratha-yātrās apparently being successfully organized every year all around the world! That is obviously a lot of success! Therefore, to

criticize the policy that appears to have played a critical role in that great success appears to be inappropriate. One of the ISKCON Scholars, Kṛṣṇa Kirti Das, was saying something similar. We have to respect the lead decisionmaker that has brought about such success, and the means that he used to achieve such success. This subject of "the means" and respecting success appears to be mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*, Sauptika Parva 2.22, where one of the teachers of the Pāṇḍavas, Kṛpācārya, advises his nephew Aśvatthāmā thusly:

> **"One should continually seek the advice of those approved by the wise elders. They are the essential means, and success is said to have its root in those means."**

That is a quote that would seem to fit ISKCON Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda well. He was the "**essential means**," and the success of ISKCON had its roots in the means that he used. In the end, he ends up as the Leading Modern Promulgator of Lord Jagannātha, Baladeva, Subhadrā's Worship, with approximately 800 temples, and over 800 Ratha-yātrās, and it appears difficult to argue with his success.

The Importance of the Guru versus Śāstra

It should probably also be noted that while *śāstra* tends to be emphasized more than Guru or Sādhu in Hinduism, all three are accepted as important. Especially, we can see from real life that people often come to the Hindu Scriptures through a Guru or Sādhu. Like someone may be handed a *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, and we could say that only the *śāstra* has come to them. But ISKCON Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda had to first write that book and get it published, and then get it distributed, which we are certain that everyone can see. Therefore, it follows that the person of the guru can be sometimes more important than the *śāstra*, and provide a better answer to some situation than the *śāstras* can.

We have seen that idea best expressed in the story of when the Pāṇḍavas encountered a Yakṣa spirit which took the form of a giant crane, which was demanding that the Pāṇḍavas answer its questions, and was killing them one by one. So finally, Prince Yudhiṣṭhira comes along, and sees all his brothers dead, and he has this strange crane demanding that its questions be answered, and the crow asks him: "**What is the path of Dharma?**" And Prince Yudhiṣṭhira, we will see, ends up discarding the *śāstras* in his answer, and choosing the behavior of a self-realized person as the topmost guide. This is from *Mahābhārata*, Vana Parva 313.117; and this verse is also quoted in the purport to *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Madhya 17.186, wherein Prince Yudhiṣṭhira responds to the strange crane thusly about finding the path of Dharma:

> **"Dry arguments are inconclusive. A great personality whose opinion does not differ from others is not considered a great sage. Simply by studying the Vedas, which are variegated, one cannot come to the right path by which religious principles are understood. The solid truth of religious principles is hidden in**

> **the heart of an unadulterated, self-realized person. Consequently, as the śāstras confirm, one should accept whatever progressive path the mahājanas advocate."**

It appears quite accurate the point about the Vedas or scriptures saying different things, which is a difficulty most of the readers may be familiar with. Therefore, as Prince Yudhiṣṭhira answers, the final solution about how to identify the Dharmic Path is to see what the great Mahājanas do, what the Great Teachers do. We also see mention of the "**progressive path**," which in this case is not particularly shocking, but is simply allowing more leeway on the dates to throw Ratha-yātrā Parades.

This is important because the King of Purī and the Purī Scholars are very focused on the *Tithi* given in the *Skanda Purāṇa*, and they are insisting that the *śāstra* be strictly followed, which is difficult to criticize in some sense. However, in certain situations, just like Prince Yudhiṣṭhira explains, a progressive path forward is the best way to go, and in such cases, the conduct of the Mahājanas is what should be accepted… and the *śāstras*, in this particular kind of situation, are not considered to be quite as good a guide to Dharmic Conduct as the self-realized souls.

Temporal Infraction versus Liberation

It is probably also worth mentioning that a temporal violation, like throwing a festival at some other time than the recommended one, is objectively a somewhat minor infraction. With a big festival like Ratha-yātrā, it is a great victory simply to manage to throw the festival. And the philosophy is that everyone is blessed by seeing the Jagannātha Deities, so matter what day it is, which is confirmed by *Skanda Purāṇa* 2.2.37.8, where Sage Jaimini declares:

> **"Whether the pilgrimage is small or great, every visit to Hari bestows liberation! On whatever day the Lord is seen, He assuredly bestows liberation!"**

"**On whatever day the Lord is seen**." So when ISKCON Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda manages to get the Ratha-yātrās thrown, they bring liberation to all who see them… even if it is on the wrong lunar day! That is what this verse from *Skanda Purāṇa* is saying. So this is also a very important point to bear in mind with this entire matter. To a certain degree, it is independent of the day. And by the way, this verse is specifically in relation to Lord Jagannātha, just in case anyone is wondering.

And we are certain that there are many millions of Hindus around the world who can attest to having very auspicious and wonderful experiences at ISKCON Ratha-yātrās. We are certain that there are not going to be a bunch of Hindus saying that the Ratha-yātrās have a bad vibration, or seem to be cursed, or anything like that. In other words, there does not seem to be any evidence that holding the parades on the wrong *Tithis* has hurt the Ratha-yātrās in any way. That would seem to confirm what *Skanda Purāṇa* 2.2.37.8 is saying: "**On whatever day the Lord is seen, He assuredly bestows liberation**."

This also confirms what we were saying earlier about temporal discrepancies being quite minor, within the larger picture. This standpoint is also confirmed in *Śrīmad Bhāgavataṁ* 8.23.16:

> **"There may be discrepancies in pronouncing the mantras and observing the regulative principles, and, moreover, *there may be discrepancies in regard to time*, place, person and paraphernalia. But when Your Lordship's holy name is chanted, everything becomes faultless."**

So that is the proper understanding, given directly in the *śāstras,* that minor discrepancies can be made faultless. This verse was also cited by Śrīdhara Śrīnivasa Prabhu, one of the ISKCON Scholars. Of course, it is certainly excellent and praiseworthy to hold events such as Ratha-yātrā on the recommended *Tithi*, but if it makes sense to hold the Ratha-yātrā on some other day, then it is still very wonderful that the festival is being held. Everyone knows that a big public parade is a very different matter than holding celebrations at the temple. At ISKCON Temples, of course pretty much all the main festivals are held on the proper Lunar Days. But for an exterior public parade, it is obviously a different kind of matter, and there are many other important considerations.

Like the King of Purī was directly talking about how having Ratha-yātrās on different days is "hurting the religious sentiments of countless devotees within India and abroad." However, with all due respect to the King of Purī, we have personally been to many ISKCON Ratha-yātrās, and we have never seen any of the devotees or guests who looked like their religious sentiments were being hurt. On the contrary, everyone always looks like they are having a great time! So the King of Purī is maybe making a bigger deal out of this than necessary, because everyone was fine with everything until the King of Purī started making a big public outcry about the issue. The timing of the parades is such a minor issue to most people that most Ratha-yātrā attendees in International countries have probably never even thought about the lunar days involved, until it became this big controversy.

And as far as the preaching mission goes, which is objectively not Purī Temple's or the King of Purī's strong suite, it seems quite easy to understand how the exact Lunar Day would not be focused on. The important thing is to successfully throw the Ratha-yātrā Celebration, no matter what the Lunar Day might be, just as explained in *Skanda Purāṇa* 2.2.37.8: "**On whatever day the Lord is seen**." Many millions of people may obtain liberation through seeing these hundreds of Ratha-yātrās that ISKCON puts on every year, and comparatively speaking, the minor infraction with the wrong *Tithi* is obviously forgivable.

This particular quotation from Skanda Purāṇa seems to also be one that those Hindus who have protested at ISKCON Ratha-yātrās should consider deeply. They should think about how many persons are achieving liberation by seeing Lord Jagannātha, and compare that against the relatively minor infraction of performance on the wrong *Tithi* before they come out and start protesting at ISKCON Ratha-yātrās any further.

Changing One Tithi into Another

And last but not least, an important possibility that may not have been considered by the King of Purī or the Purī Scholars, or by ISKCON for that matter, is the possibility that Lord Jagannātha may be changing the *Tithi*, whatever Lunar Day it is, to *Āṣāḍha Śuklā-pakṣa Dvitīyā Tithi*, the exact most recommended *Tithi*. We know many of the readers must be wondering, "Is there concrete evidence that such a thing is possible?" And yes, we do indeed believe that we have such concrete evidence from the *śāstras*.

For clear evidence about the possibility of changing one *Tithi* to another, there is in fact a verse from the *Mahābhārata* on this subject, from Mausala Parva 16.3.16, where the situation is that the entire Yadava Clan is about to be destroyed, and none other than Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself speaks thusly about what he sees or senses:

> **"The fourteenth lunar day has once again been made into the fifteenth by Rāhu. This occurred at the time of the great Bharata war, and now it has come again for our destruction."**

We are certain that all can see for themselves that Lord Kṛṣṇa clearly speaks of the 14th Tithi being made into the 15th, which appears to obviously be a negative astrological phenomenon. But we are talking about something slightly different here, of course, namely changing whatever Lunar Day the Ratha-yātrā is happening on into the correct Tithi, the one that the King of Purī is requesting, which would obviously (hopefully) be much more of a positive occurrence.

As to which personality is doing the changing, in the case of the Mahābhārata verse, we can see that Rahu is identified as the causative factor. But surely Rāhu is not the only personality that can do such amazing feats with manipulating time. In fact, believe it or not, we have found evidence that Lord Jagannātha may be a manipulator of the strands of time! For example, Lord Jagannātha is specifically addressed as "Kalānātha," or the "Lord of Time," in *Skanda Purāṇa* 2.2.52.35:

> **"O Lord of the distressed, Jagannātha, ***Kalānātha***, bestower of mercy! May my devotion to your two lotus feet remain unwavering."**

Additionally, there is incontrovertible evidence that Lord Jagannātha causes transformation of the cosmic circumstances, like transforming one *Tithi* into another, as described in *Skanda Purāṇa* 2.2.29.36

> **"O Lord of Gods, Jagannātha, You who bring about transformation of the cosmic arrangement! By You everything, both stationary and moving, is transformed."**

Besides simply the demonstrated possibility of such a thing, there is also a huge amount of circumstantial evidence from the ISKCON Ratha-yātrās themselves. These Ratha-yātrās have been attended by hundreds of thousands or millions of people over the decades, and we are

certain that the very great majority of them will report experiencing a good time at the festivals, and not report any bad energy, or accursed events, or other such unfortunate happenings that one might expect from holding such a festival on the wrong *Tithi*.

In other words, there is a preponderance of circumstantial evidence that some such thing is taking place, like Lord Jagannātha is changing all the incorrect *Tithis* into the Correct *Tithi*. We just want to bring it to the attention of the King of Purī and the Purī Scholars that such a thing may possibly have been happening all these years, because the ISKCON Ratha-yātrās are always great successes! We have heard that even the King of Purī went to one ISKCON International Ratha-yātrā years ago, in Germany. So he should know!

That completes our exploration of how Ratha-yātrās ended up getting held on various days throughout the year, instead of on only one particular Lunar Day; and our discussion of the Purī Bubble, which we are sure all will agree is a real factor here. There were also a few later developments, at least in the States, which militated strongly towards having multiple Ratha-yātrā dates, or more specifically, a chain of festivals. The first was…

The Festival of India

Another important consideration, at least in the States, was the Festival of India setup, which was a huge travelling festival group, which included very nice chariots (which were specially designed to fold up and fit in the back of a truck), a whole bunch of nice paṇḍāla tents, all sorts of displays about the faith, and more! The only issue with such a specialized and huge Festival of India setup is that they can of course only service one Ratha-yātrā at a time. So here we have, we are sure all would agree, a very strong reason for making the Ratha-yātrās a chain of festivals.

Additionally, it should be noted that the Festival of India would generally take on a crew of young men for the tour season, young men who would do all the setup and breakdown of all the giant paṇḍāla tents, and young men who would take care of many tasks! These young men would also get a chance to get out and see the world a bit, travel around the country, visit many different ISKCON Temples, attend many different Ratha-yātrās, meet so many different people, and basically have a great time! So this was a stellar Youth Program! And everyone must know how difficult it is to establish good youth programs.

So what appears to have happened is that Ratha-yātrās were happening at various times, but then the Festival of India was put together in1979, and that led to the Ratha-yātrās being scheduled in a very obvious chain of festivals across the States. We are certain that all the readers will appreciate just how big a help the Festival of India must have been to all the Ratha-yātrās in the States, with such magnificent chariots, and such huge paṇḍāla tents, and so many displays, and a whole crew of ISKCON's young men ready to get everything done. We are sure everyone can appreciate just how much all the Ratha-yātrās would have been improved. And of course, we know everyone will greatly appreciate a good youth program, which is truly not an insignificant

matter. But of course the only thing with all of this… the festivals cannot all be on the same date, everyone knows that. There must be a chain of festival dates for it to work.

Youth Bus Tours

A somewhat similar development occurred with Youth Bus Tours, which would follow the route of the Festival of India Ratha-yātrās, but with camping and sightseeing in between the festivals. Again we have here a great kind of youth program, which, once again, everyone must know that they can be a real challenge to develop nicely. These tours were open to both young women and young men of ISKCON. But once again, everyone should be able to see very clearly that such tours are dependent upon the Chain of Festivals Model, and there cannot only be one festival date across the whole country

In Conclusion

What we have been doing here is looking closely at the claim by the Purī Scholars that it was "very inappropriate" for ISKCON Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda to allow other Ratha-yātrā dates. But after reviewing all of the available evidence and pertinent factors, we believe practically all Hindus will agree that ISKCON Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda managed to achieve phenomenal success, resulting in over 800 Ratha-yātrā parades worldwide every year, and what is probably "very inappropriate" is criticizing what he did.

We have also seen the Purī side is in a real bubble, and they have made many statements that are clearly incorrect, such as claiming that holding competing festivals on the same day will *not* lead to both festivals being "diminished," or claiming that such a concern is illegitimate or does not matter. And we have seen that the Purī side is simply completely clueless about the preaching mission, probably connected to the fact that the Purī system is hereditary. And of course, Purī does not have to worry about financial resources, or having enough cart pullers, or any difficulty with getting government permits. They were even allowed to have Ratha-yātrā during the pandemic! And of course, there is no need whatsoever for them to worry about turnout either.

Additionally, we have seen that all who glimpse the Deities achieve liberation, as stated directly in *Skanda Purāṇa*, **no matter what Lunar Day it is**. And we have also seen that minor discrepancies, such as performance on an incorrect *Tithi*, are forgiven and made faultless, as stated in *Śrīmad Bhāgavataṁ*. Furthermore, *Mahābhārata* and Prince Yudhiṣṭhira tell us that the best guide to Dharmic Conduct is the self-realized person, even more than the *śāstras*, especially when it comes to chalking out a progressive path in unusual or new circumstances.

And lastly, all should be able to see that having a timed Chain of Festivals can have certain undeniable benefits, such as being able to use the Festival of India, which hugely improved all the Ratha-yātrās that it was a part of. And of course, we are certain that all the readers will very much appreciate that two different very successful youth programs were inextricably linked to holding the Ratha-yātrās in a scheduled Chain of Festivals.

Therefore, taking this all together, we cannot agree with the Purī Scholars that ISKCON Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda did anything inappropriate. The Purī Scholars should probably try to avoid criticizing him further in the future. Generally speaking, they truly seemed like they were in a bubble and had no clue about the preaching mission.

It is perhaps worth noting that certain religious or cultural practices "do not appear to travel well," if we may put it that way. Like for example, naked Shaivaits smeared with ash are a common sight in India, but if they tried to go abroad, they would probably be quickly arrested. Or having cows and bulls wandering around freely is another example. These practices are known and accepted in India, but we never seem to see them in other countries, even if we see Indian restaurants, or Indian clothing stores, or Ratha-yātrā parades for that matter.

So this business with being on exactly the correct *Tithi*, particularly in reference to a public parade which requires special permits and so on, and where a good turnout is a big concern, does not seem to work well. We could say that it is a religious practice that does not seem to have travelled well, because it could have theoretically been adopted, but it has not been. We suppose there may simply be too many good reasons not to do so. In the end, we think most Hindus will agree that trying to force so many International festivals onto a single day is probably not the way to go. Probably a more effective approach, we are sure most would agree, would be to see what further days might be allowed, and to maximize the allowable days as much as possible. So that brings us to…

The Best Additional Days from *Śāstra*

To resolve this dispute, it appears to us that the best way to proceed is to look closely at the *śāstras* to see what alternative *Tithis* are permitted. More permissible festival dates are required for the International Ratha-yātrās, that much appears clear. And if we look at the most authoritative *śāstra* on the subject of Ratha-yātrā, the *Skanda Purāṇa*, it appears that two additional *Tithis* are indeed given as acceptable. This point was previously raised by one of the ISKCON Scholars, Arjuna Sakha Prabhu.

Here are the three relevant verses from *Skanda Purāṇa* 2.2.29.30-32 that this claim is based on (and please note that Ratha-yātrā was previously known as "Gundică Yātrā" presumably from the fact that the destination of the procession was the Gundică Temple). Here are those three verses, where none other than Lord Jagannātha Himself instructs King Indradyumna thusly:

> **"O King, perform the great Festive Procession called Gundică, just by merely talking of the glory of which man is freed from sin.**
>
> **"For the Great Festival called Gundicã, these times - on the fifth day of the month of Māgha and on the eighth day of the month of Caitra in the bright half- are verily considered suitable.**

> **"Especially conducive to Liberation is the second day of the month of Āṣāḍha, when it is in conjunction with the Puṣyā star. Even in the absence of that star, it should always be performed on that day for My pleasure."**

To sum up what these verses appear to be are saying, the first verse identifies the festival, the second verse appears to clearly identify two *Tithis* that are considered suitable for holding Ratha-yātrā, but then the third verse goes on to identify the best *Tithi* of all. In the end, it certainly appears that three specific days have been identified in the Skanda Purāṇa, and not only one day.

Overly-Defensive Purī Scholars

The Purī Scholars, however, do not accept that these two other possible *Tithis* have been approved of in *śāstra*, believe it or not. We have to say that we thought the Purī Scholars were being rather overly-defensive. If the statements are directly there in the *śāstras*, especially concerning matters of this kind, simply some alternative *Tithis* for holding a particular festival, we are quite certain that the policy is to simply accept the *śāstra* at face value. Relax! There is no need for convoluted explanations!

But there are indeed some convoluted explanations. So we are simply going to have to go through them as quickly as possible. There is no escape.

So here is what the Purī Scholars say about the alternative two *Tithis* which are given there in *Skanda Purāṇa* 2.2.29.31:

> "It is a misinterpretation of Shlokas 30-33 in Adhyaya 29 of Skanda-Purāṇa (Shree Purushottama-kshetra Mahatmyam) to conclude that three tithis have been prescribed for performance of Ratha-yātrā. An integrated and correct reading of Shlokas 30 to 34 will clarify that the fifth day of Māgha and the eighth day of Chaitra have been mentioned in Shloka 31 in the context of "Gundicha-Mahotsava" and not Gundicha-yātrā, that is, the holy Ratha-yātrā of the Lords to Gundicha-Mundupam."

The Purī Scholars appear to be splitting hairs here somewhat, but it is where they are going that is the real issue. The splitting hairs part is that they are saying that Guṇḍicā-Mahotsava is not Guṇḍicā-yātrā (Ratha-yātrā) … which is true! What the Guṇḍicā-"Mahotsava", or "Great Festival," appears to mean is the entire 9-day festival: the Guṇḍicā-yātrā (Ratha-yātrā) going out on the first day, and then seven days at the Guṇḍicā Temple, and then the yātrā coming back, which is known as the Bahuda-yātrā. So that is nine days total, which is known as "Guṇḍicā-Mahotsava," which is obviously not quite the same as only the outgoing Guṇḍicā-yātrā. "Mahotsava" is simply a general term for a big celebration of festival. So that is what the Purī Scholars are saying that Guṇḍicā-Mahotsava and Guṇḍicā-yātrā (Ratha-yātrā) are not the same thing.

However, both Guṇḍicā-Mahotsava and Guṇḍicā-yātrā do indeed both have the same start date. That is not a point mentioned by the Purī Scholars… and it seems like a point that they might be avoiding. Because if the two additional *Tithis* are good days to start the Guṇḍicā-Mahotsava, which appears to refer to the entire 9-day festival, then they are also good days to start the Ratha-yātrā, which is the first part of the 9-day festival.

But the Purī Scholars then go on to claim something absolutely unbelievable, which is that the Guṇḍicā-Mahotsava is a 2.5 month or 5-month period, which includes all the dealing with the wood, and building the chariots and so forth. It is difficult to believe that the Purī Scholars think that Hindus around the world are going to believe or accept such an absurd claim.

When we refer to some festival or other, we believe that we can say with close to absolute certainty, that we are simply referring to the days of the festival, and *not* to all the work that may have been going on for months in advance. It is just like if someone says they are going to the Ratha-yātrā Parade. Does anyone think that they mean some kind of preparatory event for the Ratha-yātrā Parade? Or if someone says they are going to a musical festival? Does anyone think they mean some preparatory event? Well, obviously not, we believe we can say with some certainty. So here is what the Purī scholars go on to say, talking about how Guṇḍicā-yātrā is different than Guṇḍicā-Mahotsava:

> "On the other hand, Gundicha-yātrā has been clearly mentioned in Shlokas 32 to 34 where Āṣāḍha Shukla-paksha Dvitiya tithi has been categorically fixed by the Supreme Lord Himself for performing the Gundicha-yātrā."

It is not clear why the Purī Scholars are insisting on this: Of course, we all know what the best day is already. That is not what is being debated here. By talking in that way, it just seems like the Purī Scholars are trying to rule out the other two acceptable days. It is like some sort of strange, irrational behavior! It makes no sense! The Purī Scholars then start getting into this ridiculous claim that "Mahotsava" refers to a months-long festival preparation period that includes blessing the wood for the carts and such activities:

> "It is relevant to state here that "Gundicha Mahotsava" mentioned in Shloka 30 is indicative of the various phases of the Great Festival spread over nearly two and half months every year which finally culminates in Gundicha-yātrā on Āṣāḍha Shukla-paksha Dvitiya tithi as mentioned in Shlokas 32 to 34."

Just to clarify when these three *Tithis* fall, so readers can get a sense of the timeframe: Ratha-yātrā in Purī will next year fall on July 5; and the closest of the two other allowed days is the eighth day of the month of Caitra, which falls on April 14 next year, around 2.5 months before the Ratha-yātrā; and then the fifth day of the month of Māgha will fall on February 11 next year, which is around five months before the Ratha-yātrā. The Purī Scholars only talk about 2.5

months of preparation being included in the term "Guṇḍicā-Mahotsava," which we think is absurd on its own. But then if we add in the other allowable day, the fifth day of the month of Māgha, which is included in their argument, we are then saying that "Guṇḍicā-Mahotsava" is a festival preparation period that lasts for five months!! Is anyone truly supposed to believe or accept that?! Alright… so this is where the Purī Scholars start saying how the two other days that have been allowed refer to certain days for dealing with the wood:

> "Shloka 30 mentions the fifth day of Māgha and the eighth day of Chaitra as auspicious days for carrying out certain important events of "Gundicha-Mahotsava" as a necessary prelude to the final event, that is, Gundicha-yātrā. Thus, on the fifth day of Māgha the ritual of "Ratha-katha anukula" (ritual on arrival at Purī of the selected timbers for construction of the Rathas) is performed; while on the eighth day of Chaitra "Adhibasa-pūjā for Ratha-katha chirata" (preliminary ritual for commencement of construction of the Rathas) is performed, as observed in Shreemandira since ancient times."

A Point of Universal Agreement among all Hindus!

We must seize a possible point of universal agreement among all Hindus when we can! We do believe that there will be universal agreement that using the alternative Ratha-yātrā dates for welcoming the wood for the carts, and for the preliminary construction ritual is very well-conceived. We are sure all Hindus will highly approve of those *Tithis* for handling the wood. Excellent choice of days for the wood-related rituals! **However, that does not change the fact that the two additional *Tithis* have been provided as additional possible days for holding Ratha-yātrā**. The three verses we looked at in the beginning of this section said nothing about wood-blessing rituals or anything like that. The verses certainly appear to be talking about the festival itself. Let us all get clear on that point.

In fact, we can even give a few other verses that use the word "Mahotsava," and we will see that every single one sounds like the actual festival, and not a single example sounds like a multi-month preparatory period for blessing wood or whatever. And we have looked at many, many verses in multiple *Purāṇas*. It is a general kind of word that is used a lot. Here is another verse which has that word, *Skanda Purāṇa* 2.2.35.11:

> **"Those who know the ancient tradition describe this procession as lasting nine days. It has three components, and for those who participate in it completely, the Mahāvedī-mahotsava bestows its fully complete fruit."**

This is why we were saying earlier that "Mahotsava" appears to be used to refer to the entire 9-day festival. The three components mentioned in this verse are the Ratha-yātrā outgoing

procession, the seven days at the Guṇḍicā Temple, and then the return yātrā, called the Bahuda-yātrā, on the ninth day. And do not worry about the word in front, "Mahavedi." It just means a great altar, or great stage. Sanskrit uses a lot of hyphenated words, and that is simply another way of referring to the great festival. This festival has a few ways it is referred to, like "Navadinātmaka," or the "9-day Festival," is another more specific name for it. But the important word we are looking at here is "Mahotsava," which appears to simply be a general word for a large festival or celebration. And everyone should be able to clearly see in this verse that the nine festival days themselves are indicated by the word, and not some months-long preparatory period.

We can give one more example from a completely different *Purāṇa*, from *Śiva Purāṇa* 2.2.33.38, wherein it states:

vāditrāṇi vineduśca vividhāni mahotsave

"Various musical instruments played during the joyous festival."

Again, the joyous playing of musical instruments is not something we would normally associate with wood-cutting, or wood-blessing, or chariot-building, or other preparatory events. Rather, the musical instruments would be associated with the main festival itself. There are many, many other verses from *śāstra* that we could give. And not a single example we have seen sounds like months of preparation. Every single example sounds like a general word for the festival itself.

Moving forward, the Purī Scholars then go on to make strange claims that are obviously false, but which follow from what they have been saying, like that only a single day has been permitted for Ratha-yātrā in the *Skanda Purāṇa*:

> On the other hand, Shlokas 32 to 34 make it clear beyond any shade of doubt that it is only on Āṣāḍha Shukla-paksha Dvitiya tithi that Gundicha (Ratha)-yātrā is to be performed.

Maybe the Purī Scholars were given stern orders to eliminate the other allowed dates… no matter what! They are saying it is "clear beyond any shade of doubt" that only one day has been allowed, and that the other two days are not allowed. But that is definitely not clear at all! There is factually quite a lot of doubt about what the Purī Scholars are saying. They then go on to make a complete waste-of-time argument that other *Purāṇas* also identify *Āṣāḍha Śuklā-pakṣa Dvitīyā* as the only or main day to perform Ratha-yātrā:

> This is the Divine Commandment of Lord Jagannātha Himself as stated in the aforesaid Shlokas of Skanda Purāṇa. This Divine Commandment of the Lord to perform Gundicha-yātrā on Āṣāḍha Shukla-paksha Dvitiya tithi has been reiterated by Maharshi Jaimini in Adhyaya 33 (Shlokas 34-55) of Skanda Purāṇa (Shree Purushottama-kshetra Mahatmyam) and acknowledged in several

> other sacred scriptures, including Brahma Purāṇa, Padma Purāṇa, Narada Purāṇa and Agama shastras, as noted.

We have had to say this already earlier, but there is no argument from us or the ISKCON Scholars that Śrī Jagannātha Purī Dhāma should perform their Ratha-yātrā on any other *Tithi*. Śrī Jagannātha Purī Dhāma should of course use the best *Tithi*. But this mentioning of the other *śāstras* seems like simply a waste of time, because those other śāstras do not have all the details about Jagannātha worship that the *Skanda Purāṇa* has.

Readers might have noticed that the Purī Scholars have their own special name for the section of the *Skanda Purāṇa* that deals with Jagannātha worship, calling it the "Shree Purushottama-kshetra Mahatmyam." We believe they have this special name because they consider it their most important and authoritative scripture. And the *Skanda Purāṇa* is indeed the scripture that has the most details about Jagannātha worship, Ratha-yātrās, other Yātrās, the Anavasara Seclusion Period, and much more. And the *Skanda Purāṇa* is where we are finding these two other allowable *Tithis*. So no one cares that some other *śāstras* are talking about *the main day* that Purī normally has the Ratha-yātrā. The main recommended day is not what we are talking about here. We are talking about the other two *Tithis* that have been allowed. And so what do the Purī Scholars finish off with? Well, what a shock, they finish by saying that we *cannot* apparently use those other two *Tithis*, even though the *Skanda Purāṇa* clearly says that we can:

> As a natural corollary it follows that it is not permissible to hold Ratha-yātrā (that is, Ratha-pulling) on the other two tithis, namely, fifth day of Māgha or eighth day of Chaitra mentioned in Shloka 31; nor is it permissible to perform Ratha-yātrā on any other tithi…. The sacred scriptures thus prescribe only one tithi for performance of Gundicha-yātrā, that is, Āṣāḍha Shukla-paksha Dvitiya.

So with all due respect to everyone in Purī, to the King of Purī and the Purī Scholars, we are not going to be able to accept what they are saying about the other two *Tithis* being unusable, and there only being one permissible *Tithi*. This is a very serious business that we are dealing with here, involving hundreds of Ratha-yātrās around the world, and we are going to need those two additional *Tithis*. The *śāstras* are for everyone, and so are those two alternative Ratha- yātrā days. And what we suggest is that the Purī Scholars and the King of Purī *grant* that two other *Tithis* have been authorized for the main Ratha-yātrā. Let us try to make some progress here! And if the *śāstras* clearly make some simple statement, let us please try to simply accept it, without all these convoluted, absurd arguments that the Purī Scholars are expecting us to accept!

What the Purī Scholars have written does not actually make any sense. The King of Purī must have put them up to this, and demanded that they eliminate the two alternative *Tithis*… no matter what! That is the only explanation we can think of for what the Purī Scholars have written on this subject.

Unreasonable Fear

The only reason that we can think of for why the King of Purī is so against allowing any other *Tithis* is that he must have some unreasonable fear about it. The King of Purī, or the Shree Jagannātha Temple Administration, or someone at the top has an unreasonable fear. But this letter that we have been quoting all this time, most of it is written by the Purī Scholars, but the quick 1-page introduction at the top, which has the main requests or demands, is from the King of Purī. So there seems to be good reason to suspect the unreasonable fear about these two alternative *Tithis* is coming from the King of Purī.

Give 'em an inch and they'll take a mile!

As for the cause of such unreasonable fear, it seems that an obvious suspect is, like the old adage goes: "Give 'em an inch and they'll take a mile!" There is also a similar expression in Hindi, "उँगली पकड़ते पकड़ते पहुँचा पकड़ लेना", which translates to something like: "While holding a finger, they end up grabbing the whole forearm!"

We are certain that practically everyone will agree these sayings might be highly applicable in this situation. But the main point that the King of Purī and everyone else must remember is that if the alternative *Tithis* are given right there in the *śāstra*, then there is no need to worry about them, and there is nothing to fear.

Possibly, the King of Purī may feel somewhat better about the alternative two *Tithis* if he is given an example of how Śrī Jagannātha Purī Dhāma itself might legitimately use them. Of course, Purī would not normally use the alternative *Tithis*, but always stick with the best *Tithi* of all. In fact, here we have maybe another point of Universal Agreement among all Hindus: that no matter what other possible *Tithis* might be permissible, Śrī Jagannātha Purī Dhāma should always use only the top recommended *Tithi*, *Āṣāḍha Śuklā-pakṣa Dvitīyā*. However, there could of course be some legitimate exceptions. It is just like the old saying goes: "Never say never."

The Lockdown Scenario

For example, we are certain everyone must remember the Pandemic Lockdowns very clearly. So let us just say that a more lethal pandemic occurs, and once again, many countries are locking down. From what we saw in the last pandemic, such lockdowns were not normally snap lockdowns with no time to prepare, but rather generally included some days of notice, like between 3 to 7 days of notice. So let us say that next year, in April, a new pandemic has arisen, and many other countries have already mandated lockdowns, and now India has come under rising pressure, and on April 8th it issues an announcement that a lockdown will take effect on April 15th. So everyone has one week to prepare.

Of course, the Jagannātha Temple Administration has many government contacts. So the first thing they would probably do in this situation is to make sure that the lockdown will apply to Purī Ratha-yātrā, which we mentioned earlier, will occur next year around three months later on

July 5th. So do the government people think the lockdown will last as long as three months, and will the lockdown apply to the Ratha-yātrā? Those would be the big questions, we believe.

Last pandemic, the government permitted the Ratha-yātrā parade in Purī. But this time, sorry, but they are not going to allow it. This new pandemic is much scarier… sorry. And yes, the government thinks the lockdown will still be in effect in three months time, on July 5th, the best *Tithi* for having Ratha-yātrā… sorry.

So this scenario raises an interesting question, because one of the alternative *Tithis*, the 8th day of the Month of Caitra, actually does fall right in the week's notice that the government is giving, falling on April 14th next year, which we mentioned earlier. So we said the lockdown is announced on April 8th, and it would take effect on April 15th, giving the Purī Temple six days until a potential replacement Ratha-yātrā date, right the day before the lockdown goes into effect.

Under this scenario, which we think most people would say is entirely realistic and reasonable, we could very easily imagine Purī Temple declaring that they are going to have a Snāna-yātrā Bathing Ceremony the next day, put the Deities into the Anavasara Seclusion Period for four days, and have the Ratha-yātrā on the next day, on the 8th day of the Month of Caitra, exactly one of the two alternative *Tithis* that has been directly given in *Skanda Purāṇa* 2.2.29.31.

Therefore, we have here a scenario that we believe the King of Purī would accept as a legitimate use of the alternative *Tithis*, and we believe all the Purī Authorities would accept it, and indeed, all Hindus everywhere! This is our third point of possible Universal Agreement among all Hindus: that it would be appropriate for Śrī Jagannātha Purī Dhāma to use one of these alternative *Tithis* under the lockdown scenario given.

The Already Satisfied Real-life Scenario

Another scenario, and one which already exists this time in real-life, is present with Bhaktivedanta Manor. As mentioned previously, Bhaktivedanta Manor already has its local Watford Ratha-yātrā on the exact *Tithi* requested by the King of Purī, and therefore the Manor has already satisfied Purī's request. However, as mentioned earlier, Bhaktivedanta Manor does also hold other Ratha-yātrās occasionally in surrounding cities, such as Luton and Slough… obviously on different dates. And these other Ratha-yātrās are simply following the line that Lords Jagannātha, Baladeva, Subhadrā like to get out. Therefore, we are sure that all Hindus would agree that Bhaktivedanta Manor using one of these two other possible *Tithis* for its other Ratha-yātrās, such as in Luton or Slough, is actually quite highly appropriate. That looks like maybe our fourth Point of Universal Agreement among Hindus! And of course, when we say Universal Agreement among all Hindus, we do of course include the King of Purī, and everyone there in Purī.

We could give more examples, but those two seem like they should be enough to induce the King of Purī to relax a little about these alternative *Tithis* which have been given. There is also an important principle to consider, which is that:

Principle #1: The *Tithis* given in *śāstra* are best used for their intended purpose.

For instance, we already know that the Purī Temple uses those alternative *Tithis* for rituals to bless the wood and the cart-building. That cannot be criticized. Rather the opposite. Everyone will support it! But, still, the verse does actually talk about the Mahotsava, the Great Festival, and not about blessing wood. So the fact that Bhaktivedanta Manor might be using one of these other two permissible days for one of its additional Ratha-yātrās seems very positive, we are certain all Hindus would agree. And it would be actually using the special *Tithi* for its intended purpose, as an alternative Ratha-yātrā day, and not only as a day for blessing wood. It is just like the famous axiom that ISKCON Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda used to always repeat: "**Utility is the principle.**" So that is a further important point for the King of Purī and everyone else to think about, and to hopefully help them relax about this matter.

This completes the explanation of the first opening, the two alternative *Tithis*, coming direct from *śāstra*, from the *Skanda Purāṇa*, the leading scriptural authority on Jagannātha worship. For the King of Purī and the Purī Scholars, we suggest they simply say, "We have been convinced. Never mind what we said before about the two additional *Tithis* being unusable. We have reconsidered this issue, and have now concluded that those other two *Tithis* given in in *Skanda Purāṇa* 2.2.29.31 are acceptable as alternative Ratha-yātrā dates."

And this was supposed to be the easy part! Just nice and straightforward direct from the *śāstras*! From this point on, it is not going to be quite so straightforward. The next opening is…

Opening #2: The 9-Day Auspicious Period

This 9-day auspicious period for the Ratha-yātrā appears quite interesting in that it definitely does *not* appear to have a solid basis in *śāstra*… but yet we believe everyone will accept this 9-day period in the end.

But of course a part of this does in fact come from *śāstra*, like the fact that the entire festival lasts nine days, and also the fact that all the nine days are auspicious. However, the *śāstras*, it appears, certainly *only* give the three *Tithis* we have just now been discussing for launching the Ratha-yātrā specifically. There is definitely not anything we have seen in the *śāstras* about a 9-day window for launching the Ratha-yātrā. On the contrary, the Ratha-yātrā certainly goes out on the first day! That is what the Purī Scholars were just saying! Here is what they said again:

> "On the other hand, Shlokas 32 to 34 make it clear beyond any shade of doubt that it is **only** on Āṣāḍha Shukla-paksha Dvitiya tithi that Gundicha (Ratha)-yātrā is to be performed."

There is definitely nothing about any 9-day window here. In fact, the Purī Scholars even cite their highest living spiritual authority, the Śaṅkarācārya of Purī, with respect to this matter, writing:

> "His Holiness Param Pujyapad Jagadguru Shankaracharya Shreemad Swami Nischalananda Saraswati Maharaj of Shree Goverdhan-Peeth (Puri) has declared his firm decision that Snana-yatra and Ratha-yatra of Lord Jagannatha all around the world should be performed only on the tithis prescribed in sacred scriptures" (p.82)

Again, he says nothing about any 9-day window. Yet we predict that even the Śaṅkarācārya of Purī accepts the 9-day window, even though it is not from *śāstra*, and seems to contradict what he has declared.

The Purī Scholars bring up the 9-day window a few times in their response, for example when they are responding about having the parade on Sundays. So ISKCON says that it is important to try to get the Ratha-yātrā on Sundays a lot of the time, which is absolutely true, we are sure most readers must know, because many people are working during the week, and also because it is often more acceptable to close large streets, such as 5th Avenue in New York, on a Sunday.

So in response, the Purī Scholars are saying, well here is this 9-day auspicious period, and there will always be at least one Sunday in a 9-day period, and so here you have your Sunday. It maybe seems difficult to believe that they say such a thing, but it is true. Here is what the Purī Scholars exactly wrote:

> "Ratha-yatra is a nine-day (*navadinātmaka*) festival prescribed in the scriptures commencing from Asadha Shukla-paksha Dvitiya *tithi*. At-least one Sunday will certainly fall within those nine days thereby making it possible to perform Ratha-yatra on a Sunday." (p.12)

So what is going on here? How can there be such a 9-day window to have the Ratha-yātrā when there is nothing about it in *śāstra*, and it seems to contradict the statements in *śāstras*?

The Neighbors

It ends up the answer to that question seems to lie with the various neighboring or nearby Jagannātha Temples. For example, in the nearby Ganjam District, there are a number of Jagannātha Temples that have their Ratha-yātrā one day later than Purī, temples such as the Marada Temple, Dharakote Temple, Kulada Temple, Badagada Temple, Khallikote Temple, and Surangi Temple. There is an online article by *The New Indian Express* about this subject which can be found right here, in case no one believes us.

So how is such a thing possible? The King of Purī has been getting on ISKCON's case for years now about not having Ratha-yātrās on the right *Tithi*, but yet there are temples in the King of Purī's own backyard that are not observing the correct *Tithi*?! This appears preposterous!

The answer seems to lie in the reason for those temples having their Ratha-yātrā one day late, which we believe we can provide objectively, because it is from that *New Indian Express* article. They report:

> "Though there is no religious explanation for the delay in pulling chariot, locals believe that as all devotees of the area visit Puri on Rath Yatra day, there are not enough people left to pull the chariot and hence, the nine-day festival is delayed by a day."

So there we have it! And the same explanation is given for some other temples as well, that the local devotees are all mostly going to the main Purī Ratha-yātrā, and so they must delay a little, and therefore they do the actual cart-pulling on *Tritiya*, the third lunar day, one day later. Although what these neighboring temples are doing may seem difficult to explain or defend, there is of course also…

The Trick

Probably some of the readers can guess what "the Trick" is. Although most of the Jagannātha devotees at these neighboring temples may go to Purī on the main Ratha-yātrā day, and although they may commence the pulling of the chariots on the next day, apparently all of those temples put the Deities on the carts on the correct *Tithi*, *Āṣāḍha Śuklā-pakṣa Dvitīyā,* which is also their official Ratha-yātrā date. So the pūjāris move the Deities to the chariots on the correct day in the morning, everyone goes to the main Purī Ratha-yātrā, and then all those neighboring temples pull the carts on the next day.

The thing about "the Trick" is that it is difficult to criticize, and the general policy is to accept it. But everyone knows that the carts are truly supposed to be pulled the day before.

Therefore, it appears to follow that some authority there in Śrī Jagannātha Purī Dhāma approved of the 9-day window at some time in the past. It may have been a past King of Purī, or a past Śaṅkarācārya of Purī, or the ruling ecclesiastical council, known as the Mukti Mandapa Sabha. Perhaps the special book they have there in Purī, called the *Mandala Panji*, which chronicles the events of the temple, and records the major rulings or decisions of the temple, has something about the source of such a decision in the past. Or perhaps the source is truly unknown. All that the Purī Scholars say, regarding the origin of the 9-day window, is that it is "well-established tradition," like for example, when the Purī scholars are talking about the early ISKCON Ratha-yātrās, and saying how they:

> "were all held either on Ashadha Shukla-paksha Dvitiya *tithi* or within the auspicious nine-day period commencing from that tithi as sanctioned by scriptures and well-established tradition."

We have *not* actually seen that the 9-day window is sanctioned by the scriptures, but it does seem like the sort of thing that could certainly come from well-established tradition. And of course, tradition is very, very respected. And "well-established" tradition is even more respected!

And for justifying that decision to allow the 9-day window, the Purī Scholars also reference the principle of "desa-kala-vibhagavit", or "time, place, and circumstance":

> "We wish to clarify here that our Sanatana Vaidika Dharma does allow for certain adjustments and adaptations in performance of our festivals on the basis of "desa-kala-vibhagavit" nyaya. Thus, for instance, even in Odisha at a few places, for one or the other reason, Ratha-yātrā is not held on Ashadha Shukla-paksha Dvitiya tithi but is performed within the nine-day period commencing from that tithi." (p.7)

This principle of "desa-kala-vibhagavit", or "time, place, and circumstance" is of course a very accepted principle in Hinduism, and it can cover quite a lot of territory… that is simply the reality. So here we see the principle invoked by the Purī Scholars to justify this 9-day Auspicious Period for pulling the chariots. And we expect, frankly, that Hindus throughout the world will approve of this use of the Desa-Kala-Vibhagavit Principle.

Complete Agreement

So to sum up, it does look to us like there will be complete agreement about accepting the 9-day Auspicious Window, complete agreement between ISKCON and the Purī Authorities, and complete agreement from all other Hindus as well. We expect every single Hindu is going to say:

> "Do not waste further time on this. If all of the local devotees are going to the Purī Ratha-yātrā, and there is no one to pull the carts, then it makes sense to delay the pulling by a day. And although it may not be directly there in *śāstra*s about pulling the carts on those other days, the nine days are directly there in *śāstra*, and also that the nine days are very auspicious. Additionally, there is also "The Trick," where the pūjāris are putting the Deities in the chariots on the correct *Tithi*, so that it is like there is not even any fault. This matter also uses the well-accepted Desa-Kala-Vibhagavit Principle, which is a very well-known principle. And then we are finding that the 9-Day Window is actually a 'well-established tradition,' which means that we definitely must accept it. And beyond that, even everyone in Purī accepts the 9 Days! The King of Purī accepts the 9 Days! The Sevaks accept the 9 Days! Everyone! So of course, all of the Hindus on the planet accept the 9-Day Auspicious Window for pulling the carts."

Remember what we said at the beginning, about the 9-Day Window for cart-pulling not being in *śāstras*, but that everyone would accept the window in the end? Now we just have to see about adding the 9-day Auspicious Period to the other two alternative days for having Ratha-yātrā.

Adding the 9-Day Auspicious Period to the Other 2 *Tithis*

It does not seem terribly difficult to add the Auspicious Period to those other two *Tithis*, the 8th Day of the Month of Caitra, and the 5th Day of the Month of Māgha, which we were discussing in the previous section.

The key point is that if Ratha-yātrā is held on one of those two alternative days given the *Skanda Purāṇa*, the overall festival is still a 9-Day Festival, and all of those 9 Days are surely still auspicious.

In other words, there is still a 9-Day Auspicious Period no matter which start day is used, which means that that we now have *three* 9-Day Auspicious Periods. The first period runs of course from *Āṣāḍha Śuklā-pakṣa Dvitīyā*, which will be on July 5th next year, and then the next eight days after July 5th as well. This 9-Day period is the one that everyone in Purī already agrees with.

And then we have the two other as well, running from April 14th, and also from February 11th. So 27 days total in a calendar year that can be considered as legitimate days for launching a Ratha-yātrā Parade. Well we did say we needed some more allowed days!

This completes the section on the 9-Day Auspicious Window for pulling the carts.

Opening #3: Auspicious Yātrā Days from the Brahma Purāṇa

For the next opening, back to the *śāstras* here, this time to the *Brahma Purāṇa*. The Purī Scholars were actually discussing this particular *Purāṇa* briefly, and they were saying how it is believed to be the first-written of the Major *Purāṇas*, the oldest of the *Purāṇas*.

So there is one chapter in the *Brahma Purāṇa*, Chapter 64, entitled "The Glorification of the Twelve Yātrās." And there are a few verses, Verses 3-4, that describe the best days to see Lords Jagannātha, Baladeva, Subhadrā. None other than Lord Brahmā, the Supreme Commander of the ISKCON Sampradāya, explains the auspicious days thusly:

> **"A man who undertakes pilgrimage in accordance with the injunctions, visits and bows to Kṛṣṇa, Saṃkarṣaṇa and Subhadrā at the time of Guṇḍikā, Utthānadvādaśī (twelfth day in the bright half of Kārttika), the full moon day in the month of Phālguna, and during equinoctial transit will acquire the fruit thereof separately. As long as the fourteen Indras reign he will stay in the world of Viṣṇu."**

The way that these other auspicious days are described, it sounds like they are good days, or the best days to take a journey to Śrī Jagannātha Purī Dhāma and to see the Deities there. But what

has happened beyond that, is that Purī Temple holds major celebrations on twelve special Yātrā Days, and they are considered the most important celebrations of the year.

We know many of the readers must have looked at the verses and said to themselves, “It seems like a few less than 12 special Yātrā Days.” Which is correct, there are not 12 special days given in those verses, but only four or five, remembering that the equinoctial transit includes two days, the days of the Spring Equinox and of the Fall Equinox. It is possible that there is a verse missing here that has been lost centuries ago.

However, on the official Festival Calendar of Śrī Jagannātha Purī Dhāma, there are indeed 12 Major Festivals, starting with Snāna-yātrā in June normally, and then Ratha-yātrā 15 days later of course, and then ten other major festivals as well. Here is when those festivals will fall in 2027, so readers can get a sense of the dates:

The 12 Principal Yātrās in 2027

No.	Yātrā	Traditional Tithi	2027 Date
1	Snāna Yātrā (Deva Snāna Pūrṇimā)	Jyeshtha Pūrṇimā	18 June
2	Ratha Yātrā (Śrī Gundicha Yātrā)	Ashadha Shukla Dvitiya	5 July
3	Sayana Yātrā (Deities placed in divine sleep)	Ashadha Shukla Ekadashi	14 July
4	Uttarayana Yātrā (special worship related to the sun’s course)	Makara Sankranti (solar transition)	14 January
5	Dakshinayana Yātrā (special worship related to the sun’s course)	Karkata Sankranti (solar transition)	17 July
6	Parsva Parivartana Yātrā (Deities are turned in their sleep)	Bhadrapada Shukla Ekadashi	11 September
7	Utthapana Yātrā (awakened from divine sleep)	Kartika Shukla Ekadashi	10 November
8	Pravarana Shashthi Yātrā (winter clothing is put on)	Margashirsha Shukla Shashthi	4 December

9	Pushyabhisheka Yātrā (special bathing festival)	Pausha Pūrṇimā	22 January
10	Dola Yātrā (swing festival)	Phalguna Pūrṇimā	22 March
11	Damanaka Bhanjana Yātrā (leaf gathering and offering festival)	Chaitra Shukla Chaturdashi	19 April
12	Akshaya Tritiya Yātrā (Chandana Yātrā boat festival begins)	Vaishakha Shukla Tritiya	8 May

And is this list of the 12 main Jagannātha Festivals the same as the "12 Yātrās" mentioned in the *Brahma Purāṇa*? That appears quite possible. So are the special yātrā days identified in Brahma Purāṇa 64.3-4 included in this list of 12 Major Purī Yātrās? They do appear to be… mostly… just about…

Of course, the first auspicious *yātrā* day mentioned in *Brahma Purāṇa* 64.3-4 is "**Guṇḍicā**," which is Ratha-yātrā, which is of course on the 12 Major Festivals list.

The next from Brahma Purāṇa is "**Utthānadvādaśī (twelfth day in the bright half of Kārttika)**," and it is actually the day before which is on the temple list, which is the festival of Utthapana Yātrā, and which is the day that Lords Jagannātha, Baladeva, Subhadrā awaken from their four-month cosmic slumber. However, both days are the first part of a larger 5-day festival known as "Pancuka," which are the final five days of Kārttika, and are considered to be the holiest days of Kārttika in fact. So while the exact day from the *Brahma Purāṇa* list is not on the current Purī 12-Festival List, the day before is indeed present, and both are part of a genuine larger 5-day festival at the end of Kārttika, namely Pancuka. This is why we were saying the two lists "just about" line up.

It may possibly interest ISKCON devotees to know that the day given in the *Brahma Purāṇa*, Utthānadvādaśī, is also known as Tulasi Vivāha, or the day that Śrīmatī Tulasī Devī married Lord Kṛṣṇa. Additionally, the Jagannātha Deities, on this day, don special golden crowns.

Moving forward, the second to last day given in Brahma Purāṇa was the "**the full moon day in the month of Phālguna**," which is indeed exactly on the current Purī Festivals list, and is celebrated as "Dola Yātrā," when there is a special Swing Festival.

Precession of the Equinoxes

And the last time period from the *Brahma Purāṇa* was "**equinoctial transit,**" which refers to the Spring Equinox and Fall Equinox, when day and night are exactly equal. The dates would be March 21st and September 23rd for 2027, India Time.

This part is perhaps a little bit complicated, but the Spring Equinox time, around March 21st, used to fall on Meṣa Saṅkrānti, which is the day the Sun enters into Aries, around 2000 years ago. And there is in fact a big festival in Purī on Meṣa Saṅkrānti, which is also Hanumān Jayantī. The only issue is that there is a peculiar phenomenon known as the "Precession of the Equinoxes," which is related to planetary wobble, and which moves the earth just slightly in relation to the zodiac signs. So the Sun currently enters Aries on April 14th, around three weeks later than the Spring Equinox. And Purī Temple does indeed have a big celebration, although it is not actually one of the twelve biggest festivals. So the point here is that there is a celebration on what used to be the Spring Equinox, but the celebration does not happen anymore on the scientifically accepted Spring Equinox, which is when day and night are equal.

With respect to this matter of the equinoxes, what we are sure will make sense to most Hindus is to simply accept the actual scientifically-accepted Equinox days as good days to see Lord Jagannātha, and therefore good days to have a Ratha-yātrā. That is what the Brahma Purāṇa verse does appear to say.

Putting together now whether the days from the Brahma Purāṇa match the 12 Major Festival Days on the Purī Temple Calendar, well… there is some sort of match, let us put it that way. Perhaps the easiest way to do this is to simply take all the days from both sources as good days to have a Ratha-yātrā. Of course, we are certain that all Hindus will accept the days from the *Brahma Purāṇa* as highly auspicious days to have a Yātrā, and as highly auspicious days to see Lord Jagannātha because it specifically says so in the verse. And as for the 12 Major Festivals held in Jagannātha Purī Dhāma itself, well we are certain all Hindus will accept those as great days for seeing lord Jagannātha as well! The only days that do not seem to be at all on the Festival Calendar are the Equinox days, and we are certain that all devotees of Lord Jagannātha will approve those as possible days for Ratha-yātrā, seeing as that part comes from the *Brahma Purāṇa*, the oldest of the *Purāṇas*. So what we are going to do now is take all of these days and add them to our calendar of permissible days to hold a Ratha-yātrā.

That just leaves the question about the 9-Day Auspicious Period again. However, as we all must know by now, Ratha-yātrā is part of a larger 9-Day Festival, and all of those 9 days are considered auspicious for actual cart-pulling, which has been accepted by the Purī Temple establishment as long-standing tradition. Therefore, we shall now add the additional eight days onto each of those dates and festivals that we have just now been talking about, which should open up quite a lot more days.

Opening #4: Corresponding Days

However, there is a blaring gap in the calendar, which is August, with not a single permissible day for Ratha-yātrā. And August is when the iconic Venice Beach Ratha-yātrā normally occurs. So is there some way that we can find some more days that will definitely include August?

It ends up there is, using the same *Tithi*, *Āṣāḍha Śuklā-pakṣa Dvitīyā*, the second Lunar Day after the New Moon. In one text known as the *Vimānārcanākalpa*, a Vaiṣṇava *Vaikhānasa Āgama* said to have been written by the Sage Marīci, from one of the oldest surviving Vaiṣṇava Schools, it gives these instructions for if one has missed the day for some festival:

> **"Delay of Festival Past Regular Season: If the seasonal festival is not performed in the designated month, resolve the final bath (avabhṛtha) on the corresponding day of another month and perform the festival."**

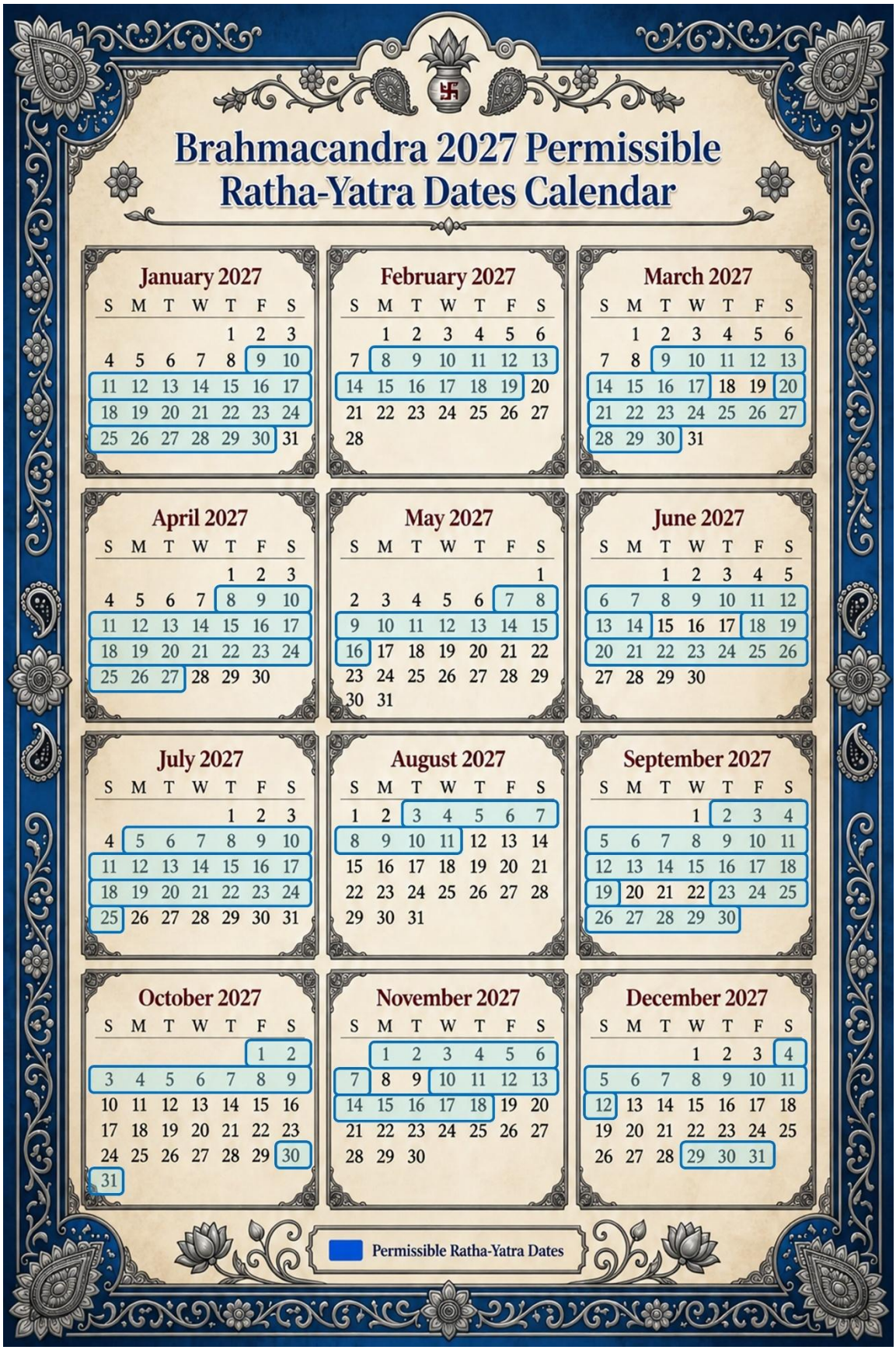
We can see clearly "**the corresponding day of another month**" has been mentioned, which presumably refers to the same *Tithi* in another month. So if we add in all the other instances of *Śuklā-pakṣa Dvitīyā Tithi* into the calendar, that adds another 12 allowable days for the Ratha-yātrā. Please note that these Vaiṣṇava *Vaikhānasa Āgamas* were also mentioned by one of the ISKCON Scholars, Śrīdhara Śrīnivasa Prabhu; and also cited by His Divine Grace Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī in his book on rituals, *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*.

Then, of course, there is the 9-Day Auspicious Period again, which will add on eight days to each of the initial days. So that will give us quite a few more allowable days, including a nice 9-Day Period in August, just like we said was needed. There are quite a few overlapping periods as well, but each month has at least one 9-Day Period, which should certainly be more workable, we are sure all would agree.

The Brahmacandra Ratha-yātrā Calendar

The foregoing gives us enough to fill out the calendar now. To start, we do of course have the two alternative Ratha-yātrā days given directly in the *Skanda Purāṇa*. Then, we have the five days given in the *Brahma Purāṇa*, of which the most significant additions are the scientifically accepted Spring and Fall Equinoxes. The other three days in the Brahma Purāṇa are shared with the current 12 Main Festivals of Jagannātha Purī Dhāma, except there was that little wrinkle with one day being part of a larger 5-Day Festival. In that particular case, taking the day from the *Brahma Purāṇa* would seem to make more sense, because that day is also Tulasī Vivāha, when Lord Kṛṣṇa married Śrīmatī Tulasī Devī. And besides that one exception, all the other days from the 12 Main Festivals of Jagannātha Purī Dhāma have been added in. And then we also have all of the corresponding days, which means all of the instances of *Śuklā-pakṣa Dvitīyā Tithi*, or the Second Lunar Day in the bright half of the month. And finally, we have of course the 9-Day Auspicious Period, which is accepted as well-established tradition by the Purī Authorities, and has been added on to each of the foregoing days.

The final calendar looks like this:


Brahmacandra 2027 Permissible Ratha-Yatra Dates Calendar
January 2027
S M T W T F S
1 2 3
4 5 6 7 8 9 10
11 12 13 14 15 16 17
18 19 20 21 22 23 24
25 26 27 28 29 30 31
February 2027
S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4 5 6
7 8 9 10 11 12 13
14 15 16 17 18 19 20
21 22 23 24 25 26 27
28
March 2027
S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4 5 6
7 8 9 10 11 12 13
14 15 16 17 18 19 20
21 22 23 24 25 26 27
28 29 30 31
April 2027
S M T W T F S
1 2 3
4 5 6 7 8 9 10
11 12 13 14 15 16 17
18 19 20 21 22 23 24
25 26 27 28 29 30
May 2027
S M T W T F S
1
2 3 4 5 6 7 8
9 10 11 12 13 14 15
16 17 18 19 20 21 22
23 24 25 26 27 28 29
30 31
June 2027
S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4 5
6 7 8 9 10 11 12
13 14 15 16 17 18 19
20 21 22 23 24 25 26
27 28 29 30
July 2027
S M T W T F S
1 2 3
4 5 6 7 8 9 10
11 12 13 14 15 16 17
18 19 20 21 22 23 24
25 26 27 28 29 30 31
August 2027
S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10 11 12 13 14
15 16 17 18 19 20 21
22 23 24 25 26 27 28
29 30 31
September 2027
S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4
5 6 7 8 9 10 11
12 13 14 15 16 17 18
19 20 21 22 23 24 25
26 27 28 29 30
October 2027
S M T W T F S
1 2
3 4 5 6 7 8 9
10 11 12 13 14 15 16
17 18 19 20 21 22 23
24 25 26 27 28 29 30
31
November 2027
S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4 5 6
7 8 9 10 11 12 13
14 15 16 17 18 19 20
21 22 23 24 25 26 27
28 29 30
December 2027
S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4
5 6 7 8 9 10 11
12 13 14 15 16 17 18
19 20 21 22 23 24 25
26 27 28 29 30 31
Permissible Ratha-Yatra Dates

One thing to note is that this calendar is for Eastern Standard Time, so other Time Zones may sometimes have a difference of a day. And it is not really a problem to produce the calendar for different time zones, just to save on any possible confusion.

Also, we can clearly see that there is a good selection of possible days, which is certainly what we wanted. The only small problem that remains is what happens when any ISKCON Temples cannot get their Ratha-yātrā onto one of these allowed auspicious days for some reason or other? To resolve such an issue, we can introduce a systematic remedy…

The Brahmacandra Homa Sacrifice

In other words, if an ISKCON Temple needs to have their Ratha-yātrā on a non-approved date, they can do so, but they should perform a small fire sacrifice, a small *homa*, to expiate any sin. We are simply being systematic here, and trying to resolve this matter permanently. ISKCON Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda did often recommend being systematic in our approach, as for example, during a morning walk in Los Angeles, on December 5, 1973, where he stated: "**Systematic management. Otherwise how it will be done?**" Therefore, we are certain that all would agree that it makes sense to systematically address beforehand what should happen if there is any violation of the calendar.

With respect to the nature of the fire sacrifice, we can turn once again to the *Vimānārcanākalpa*, the Vaiṣṇava *Vaikhānasa Āgama* said to have been written by the Sage Marīci, Chapter 68, Verse 4:

> **"Incorrect Timing of Final Bath: If one performs the final bathing ceremony (*avabhṛtha*) in a manner that violates the correct asterism (*nakṣatra*), count of days (*saṅkhyā*), or chronological sequence (*krama*) of the festival, offer oblations to the festival's presiding deity (*utsava-adhidaivatya*), and to the presiding deities of the lunar day (*tithi*), week-day (*vāra*), and asterism (*nakṣatra*) twice, and then feed the Brahmins."**

There are two reasons why this verse looks very useful to us, the first being the inclusion of the "**count of days**," which is related to the second Lunar Day, *Dvitīyā*, the top recommended day for performing Ratha-yātrā. Also, further down, the verse talks about oblations, and we can see specifically included oblations "**to the presiding deities of the lunar day (tithi).**" So this verse seems to fit very well what we are looking for, in terms of what to include in the sacrifice. This whole conflict between Purī and ISKCON has of course been about the *Tithi,* which everyone reading must very well know by now.

Incidentally, readers should know that there are not many instructions about expiatory rituals that specifically mention *Tithis*. This verse is the only one we have been able to locate thus far (although, of course, there may be others somewhere). That is not the only point though. Another very important point is that we believe all parties, both Purī and ISKCON, and other Hindus as

well, will approve of the specific oblations to the Presiding Deities of the concerned *Tithis* which are mentioned in this particular verse.

With respect to the Presiding Deities, the most important such deity must surely be the presiding deity over *Dvitīyā Tithi*, the Ratha-yātrā *Tithi* that Purī has been trying to get ISKCON to observe for the last several years. And the deity that presides over *Dvitīyā Tithi* is a very auspicious one, but also somewhat cursed as well. We speak of the Supreme Leader of the ISKCON Sampradāya! Of the Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya Sampradāya! Lord Brahmā! So some oblations should be thrown into the sacred fire specifically for Lord Brahmā, and perhaps some special *mantra* chanted as well.

The other deity who seems quite related is Candra Deva, the Moon God. Firstly, Candra Deva is the formal Lord of the 15th *Tithi*, the Full Moon *Tithi*, which was the *Tithi* involved with the Snāna-yātrā Celebrations we were discussing in the first part of this Peace Plan.

Beyond that though, the moon is also quite related to everything that is being discussed here, since it is all related to *Tithis*, or *Lunar* Days. Therefore, as far as any other deities that we might want to include in the oblations, Chandra Deva might be a good pick. And of course, the first oblation would be to Lords Jagannātha, Baladeva, Subhadrā, the Presiding Deities of the festival involved, as mentioned in the verse.

The foregoing is also the reason that this *yajña* has been named by us "The Brahmacandra Homa." Additionally, some might have noticed that the calendar is named "The Brahmacandra Calendar," and this entire plan is named "The Brahmacandra Purī-ISKCON Peace Plan." So the reason for all of those names is of course the relation of the Presiding Deities to the *Tithis* involved, Lords Brahmā and Candra.

Of course, the formal position that ISKCON and the GBC will tend to take with respect to any possible infractions concerning the *Tithi* is that they are purified and expiated by chanting the Mahā-Mantra, or by thinking of Lord Kṛṣṇa, or by attending Tulasī Pūjā, or by any other of the many spiritual practices performed by ISKCON Members. This position is confirmed by their Divine Graces Śrīla Sanatana Gosvami and Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 3.49–50:

"Among all types of atonement, austerity, charitable acts,
ritual activities, and vows, remembrance of Lord Kṛṣṇa is the
supreme form of atonement."

But the GBC can direct that all ISKCON Temples perform the Homa anyways… just to be on the safe side… and to keep everyone in Purī happy… and to keep any potential protestors happy… and of course we want the local ISKCON Brāhmaṇas to be up on their *Homas*!

Speaking of the Purī Authorities, we assume they will be quite pleased with this approach, since they do actually specifically mention performing such expiatory rites in their response. For instance, they quote *Naradiya Samhita* 25.393*:*

> **"If the Moola Vigrahas [large deities] are taken out of the temple on tithis not prescribed by scriptures, one has to perform atonement or expiation."**

So we are certain the Purī Authorities would approve of what we are doing here, since it is indeed atonement or expiation… by definition.

For filling out the sacrificial rite further, there is truly not a shortage of elements that could be added into it. For example, there could first be a Saṅkalpa Mantra, or declaration of intention to expiate; and then special Kṣamāprārthanā Prayers to the Jagannātha Deities asking for forgiveness; then the fire sacrifice can begin; then the *Tithi-śānti*, or oblations to the Presiding Deities of the *Tithis*, Lords Brahmā and Candra can be performed; any other oblations can be offered; and then prasād can be taken. And everyone should bathe when they get home, which would be the final bath. And of course more could be added into that easily enough.

The Vaiśvadeva Yajña

It may also be logical to add on another minor *yajña* of some kind, just so the focus is not overly on the fact that no permissible *Tithi* has been found for Ratha-yātrā. For instance, a nice one to add could be the *yajña* for all of the insects we kill, just in our daily lives, known as the Vaiśvadeva Yajña. This *yajña* involves throwing some small balls of food into the fire, and then also putting out some balls for the local insects to feast on. We could say "It is a Two-For-One!"

So to quickly review here, the first thing that ISKCON Temples will want to do is to try to get their Ratha-yātrās on one of the permitted days on the Brahmacandra Calendar, of which there are many days available. But if they cannot do that, for whatever reason, they can hold the Ratha-yātrā on a prohibited day, but they should please perform the just-described expiatory rituals we have just described. That is what the GBC would be formally mandating.

As for the timing of the homa (this subject comes up a lot!), probably the best day is the next full moon after Ratha-yātrā, but it could easily be a Sunday as well, or just as soon as Lord Jagannātha gets back from His getaway, on Bahuda-yātrā. The Deities should probably be back.

Putting this all together, we can easily imagine an ISKCON Temple President welcoming all the guests to a Brahmacandra Homa Sacrifice:

> "Welcome Prabhus! We are so happy to welcome you all. We here at ISKCON are making sure that none of our congregation members will be burning in hell for thousands of years for holding Ratha-yātrā on the wrong *Tithi*! Yes indeed! We are looking out for our congregation members!

> "But of course, we are completely covered already, because Lord Jagannātha is very merciful and forgives any minor transgressions. But just in case there is any little bit that is not covered, we have this special Brahmacandra Homa sacrifice as well. We cover all the angles here in ISKCON!
>
> "Additionally, we have a tradition of pairing this particular *homa* with the Vaiśvadeva Yajña, the special Ancient Yajña for all the insects we accidentally kill. We do not want to see our ISKCON Members reincarnating for thousands of insect lives only to be mercilessly crunched every time!
>
> But of course all such sins are cured by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. But we can imagine just how bored Lord Kṛṣṇa must be from constantly having to pardon us for all the insects we accidentally kill. So when we perform a very targeted yajña like this, we all know that it is especially effective against the specific target, in this case, the number insects we have killed, and it saves Lord Kṛṣṇa from having to bother about it, and He can spend more time cavorting around in the forest with the Gopis.
>
> So just in case chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa misses any insects we have killed, and in the interests of freeing up Lord Kṛṣṇa's time from constant pardoning devotees for insect-killing, we also will be performing the traditional Vaiśvadeva Yajña. We like our local ISKCON Brāhmaṇas to be on top of their fire yajñas! We have to give them some practice!
>
> "And we will be taking prasād at the end of course. Welcome everyone! Let us begin!"

That should suffice for now for describing the Expiatory Ritual, the Brahmacandra Homa Sacrifice. Obviously, more could be added to it easily enough, although it is not really meant to be a huge thing. But the insects expiation could draw a lot of people. And we are certain that the Purī Authorities will be pleased with this overall expiation plan, and also any potential Hindu protestors should be mollified as well.

The Presiding Deity of the *Tithi* Escape

This business about Lord Brahmā actually brings up an interesting point. Since Lord Brahmā is the Supreme Leader of the Sampradāya, would not he pardon ISKCON for any offenses related to his *Tithi*? It does seem like it would be up to him.

This is somewhat similar to what we were saying earlier about Lord Jagannātha possibly manipulating time, and changing whatever day the Ratha-yātrā is held on to *Āṣāḍha Śuklā-pakṣa Dvitīyā Tithi*.

Neither of those possibilities look very easy to prove, but they provide benefit of doubt. Like the King of Purī and any potential protestors should consider both of those possibilities… because there are thousands of ISKCON Ratha-yatras that have been put on, and they generally go off great. So some such explanation would appear to make a certain amount of sense.

No Sin before Criticism

That covers any future transgressions that may occur regarding the *Tithi*. But what about all of the past incorrect *Tithis*? Well of course ISKCON will not admit to there being any sin, or they will say it is absorbed by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, which is doubtless quite correct.

Additionally, this matter seems like it might be one of those where there is not considered to be any sin or any fault until there has been some criticism, and even then, there is still debate about whether there is any fault.

That is actually a situation that is discussed in the *śāstras*, with doubtless the most famous example in Hinduism being the criticism of Lord Rāma by the washerman. We are certain that all Hindus consider there to be no fault on Lord Rāma's part before the famous criticism by the washerman. And even *after* the criticism, probably many Hindus might say that Lord Rāma could have kept Śrīmatī Sita Devī with Him, without there being any fault. But as Lord Rāma explains to His brother Lakṣmaṇa, as related in *Padma Purāṇa*, Pātāla-khaṇḍa 58.35:

"**Although I know her to be sinless, I must separate from her due to public censure**."

Similarly, we doubt that many would attribute any sin to the GBC before any criticism was made, taking into account all the factors we were discussing earlier, such as manpower and so forth -- and many would probably not criticize them *afterwards* either. But there has obviously been some amount of public censure of the GBC and ISKCON, so there is therefore a justification for addressing that. Perhaps it *aught* to be addressed, let us put it that way, just like Lord Rāma felt that the public censure should be addressed, even though there was no fault on His or Śrīmatī Sita Devī's part.

Therefore, let us assume there was no fault on the GBC's part before there was any criticism about the Ratha-yātrā dates. And once the King of Purī started criticizing the date, which was some several years ago, some public censure may have been accumulated, which can be addressed with…

A Grand First Mahā Brahmacandra Homa Sacrifice

The vision with a “Mahā” Brahmacandra Homa is that it should be the first such *Homa*, and it should include all the GBC Members, and also the King of Purī and other Purī Authorities, and the *Homa* should cover any sins accumulated up to this time. Definitely any sins accumulated since the King of Purī started criticizing the Ratha-yātrā dates, and if there were any sins before that, then those as well.

For the actual *yajña* part, the description given earlier of the small, regular, *homa* should suffice. But this first “Grand Homa” might obviously be somewhat more extravagant than smaller *homas* down the line.

The natural location for such a Grand Homa seems like it would be Śrī Jagannātha Purī Dhāma, but theoretically ISKCON Māyāpura, with its new Yajñasala just recently completed, could also serve as the location.

This first Grand Homa should of course also have a pleasing formal reception, with exquisite prasād, and some *avant-garde* entertainment to please the King of Purī and all the other guests, we are certain all would agree. Perhaps an interpretive dance performance might work. Of course, we, your worthless dog-like servant, Aniruddha das, stand ready to organize said Avant-Garde Interpretive Dance Performance. We do not mean to brag or anything, but truly no one is in our league when it comes to organizing such *avant-garde* artistic entertainment. Do not worry about anything at all! At the command of the King of Purī and the GBC, we, your worthless servant, Aniruddha dās, will immediately organize the entire celebration!

As for prasād, of course the finest samosas in town would make a good start, and the finest chutney in town of course as well, plus the finest rāsmalais in town, and the best mango lāssi in town, and then we can just fill in a bit more from there. Just add some good sabji and rice, and of course some high-quality purīs, and we should be all set to go. What more is needed?

And for the *Avant-Garde* Interpretive Dance Performance, we would of course make sure to feature the most exquisitely beautiful female dancers. We must keep the King of Purī interested here! Why it will be just like described in *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* 125.9!

“In that joyful and prosperous city, beautiful women, graceful and exceedingly charming in form, performed a superb, graceful dance accompanied by songs and musical instruments."

Except that this planned Interpretive Dance performance is envisioned to be somewhat more *avant-garde* of course. And just in case anyone is concerned, we will ensure that the stunningly beautiful dancers are clothed appropriately. Very beautiful! And clothed appropriately!

That should suffice for the basic details of the planned Grand Homa and Grand Reception for the time being. If the plans are approved, we can get into more details.

Additional Goodwill Gestures

We can think of these additional goodwill gestures as some optional extras that could possibly be added on and made part of the Grand Homa and Reception. Like for example, ISKCON could commission a Brahmacandra Sculpture, of Lord Brahma with a full moon orbiting him, and present it as a gift to Purī Temple, and the unveiling of the sculpture could be one of the events that is part of the overall Grand Homa and Reception, possibly the day before.

Also, ISKCON could do something like make Jagannātha Purī Temple an "Honorary Foundational ISKCON Temple," and announce it at the Grand Reception.

And for Purī's part, they could do something like adopt ISKCON as their "Honorary International Division." Or adopt ISKCON Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda as an "Honorary Ācārya of Śrī Mandira."

Jagannātha Purī Temple actually has a history of partnering, in some way or another, with important missions, such as Śaṅkarācārya's Mission, and also Rāmanujācārya's Mission, and other Missions as well. And what with ISKCON throwing some 800 Ratha-yātrās every year throughout the world, and Śrī Jagannātha Mandira being the first and original Jagannātha Temple with the first Ratha-yātrā, it makes a certain kind of sense that there should be some kind of relationship. And we do not mean a conflictual relationship!

Actually, we can think of some appropriate and useful content for such a relationship… but we do not wish to get ahead of ourselves. It seems like we should first see if this conflict over the *Tithis* can be resolved peacefully.

The Joint Commission

For commissioning our worthless self to execute said Grand Homa and Grand Reception, a simple "**Make it so!**" should suffice from the King of Purī. And from the GBC, just a quick Formal Commission should work:

> **"We, the GBC, do hereby forthwith formally commission Aniruddha dās as an 'ISKCON Commander,' and as 'Brahmacandra Project Director.'**
>
> **Commander Aniruddha is hereby commissioned to organize a Grand Mahā Brahmacandra Homa Sacrifice and Grand Reception in Śrī Jagannātha Purī Dhāma! In conjunction with the King of Purī and other Purī Authorities!**
>
> **Should ISKCON Commander Aniruddha approach any ISKCON Members about anything whatsoever, please give him complete and total cooperation! He is engaged in a vitally important project directly serving the GBC! Bringing an end to years of horrible conflict!**

> **And make sure Commander Aniruddha has plenty of Laksmi! This is supposed to be a 'Grand' Homa! And a 'Grand' Reception! The King of Purī is going to be there! Please donate the maximum amount of Laksmi! We want the best samosas in town! Not the second best!**
>
> **"Just go to the website of the nonprofit Ocean of Milk Foundation, directed by Commander Aniruddha, and donate! The link is right here! Maximum donations please!"**

And please note that some kind of commission is needed from *both* parties in this case, a Joint Commission. Just like the old saying goes, "It takes two to tango."

That completes the plan for resolving the conflict over Ratha-yātrā dates, which was the biggest and most difficult issue. Now there just one further very quick issue to resolve...

Issue #3: The 15-Day Anavasara Seclusion Period

The Purī Scholars have also specifically requested that all ISKCON Temples observe the 15-day Anavasara Seclusion Period. This matter should hopefully be speedy to address, since we believe that most ISKCON Temples do already observe the Anavasara Seclusion Period. So all it seems would be required of the GBC with respect to this matter is to issue a directive instructing all ISKCON Temples with Jagannātha Deities to observe the Anavasara Seclusion Period to the best of their abilities.

The only obvious issue, it seems, is when the period is different than the stipulated 15 days… which could certainly happen, since the Ratha-yātrā parades take place at a variety of different times from when the Snāna-yātrā Bathing Ceremonies occur.

For a clear example, we can look again at the ISKCON Los Angeles Festival Schedule for 2026, which had their Snāna-yātrā scheduled for July 18, and then the Ratha-yātrā scheduled for August 1. So that is a little less than 15 days of seclusion, and more like 12 days.

However, there is an important point to mention here, which is that ISKCON Los Angeles had its Snāna-yātrā on the Full Moon Tithi, which is the correct Tithi, even if in the wrong month. We were discussing earlier how the *Vimānārcanākalpa* directs us to use "**corresponding days**" in a different month if we miss some event, and it looks like L.A. did do that in this case.

So which is more important in this case: having the Snāna Yātrā Bathing Ceremonies on the correct corresponding day, on the Full Moon, or having the Anavasara Seclusion Period be exactly 15 days?

One way to answer that question is to see if Śrī Jagannātha Mandira ever has any exception to the 15-day Seclusion Period, to see whether there is ever a different number of seclusion days.

And in fact there was such an exception just a few years ago in 2024, when there was apparently some adjustment related to the various astronomical and astrological almanacs that Purī Temple uses. It was reported by the New Indian Express that the Anavasara Period "**will span 13 days instead of the usual 15 this year, in accordance with the almanac**." That article can be found right here. And we gather there have been other occasional exceptions as well in prior years.

Therefore, what that means is that it is probably best *not* to insist on exactly 15 days of seclusion. But insisting on Snāna-yātrā Bathing Ceremonies being held on the Full Moon does seem quite reasonable, since that uses the "**corresponding days**."

So to put that all together, different ISKCON Temples around the world will of course be having their Ratha-yātrās on various days, with hopefully the vast majority using days which are approved on the Brahmacandra Calendar. Now for the Snāna-yātrā Bathing Ceremonies, Temples should go backwards from the Ratha-yātrā date to the previous Full Moon, which is a corresponding day, and that is when they should have their Snāna-yātrā Bathing Ceremonies. And whatever time period is between those two dates, those days should be the ones when the Jagannātha Deities are in seclusion.

To wrap this up here, simply with regard to the King of Purī's request that all ISKCON Temples observe an Anavasara Seclusion Period, we believe most ISKCON Temples are doing so already. But the GBC could go ahead and mandate that point anyways, in the interests of peacemaking.

With respect to the 15 days, that is of course accepted. But we believe most Hindus, including the Purī Authorities, will prefer that a corresponding Full Moon *Tithi* is used for the Snāna-yātrā Bathing Ceremonies. But if that is not the case, ISKCON could of course mandate a 15-Day Seclusion Period. But considering that even Purī changes the number of seclusion days sometimes, we believe most Hindus will prefer that Snāna-yātrā be on the correct corresponding day, and then simply to put the Jagannātha Deities into seclusion for all the intervening days.

That completes the resolution of what appeared to us to be the most important issues in this Purī-ISKCON Conflict. Now, in the interests of achieving a speedy resolution to this unfortunate conflict, let us provide official statements to both parties. We can start with…

The ISKCON GBC Brahmacandra Resolution

"It gives us, the Governing Body Commission of ISKCON, great pleasure to announce an end to the conflict with Śrī Jagannātha Mandira over Ratha-yātrā dates and some other related matters. We do now hereby resolve the following:

"All ISKCON Temples which hold Ratha-yātrā and Snāna-yātrā Festivals on dates other than *Āṣāḍha Śuklā-pakṣa Dvitīyā* and *Jyeṣṭhā Pūrṇimā*, are to henceforward add another formal festival day to their Temple Calendar, namely "Snāna-yātrā Appearance Day Celebrations," or it can also be called "The Appearance Day of Lords Jagannātha, Baladeva, Subhadrā," and it *must* be scheduled for *Jyeṣṭhā Pūrṇimā*, or the Full Moon of the Month of Jyeṣṭhā.

“Additionally, the GBC are releasing new guidance about which days are most suitable for holding Ratha-yātrā in the form of a special calendar, the “Brahmacandra Calendar.” This special calendar has a number of suitable Ratha-yātrā days directly from the *Skanda* and *Brahma Purāṇas*, and also a number of suitable days from the 12 Major Annual Festivals on the official Purī Festival Calendar, and also a number of Corresponding Lunar Days, and lastly a 9-Day Auspicious Period added on to those, which is accepted tradition, and was already accepted by all the Purī Authorities. This calendar highlights all the best days to hold a Ratha-yātrā, and it has been approved by the King of Purī and other Purī Authorities.

“If ISKCON Temples are unable to get their Ratha-yātrā onto one of the approved days, it is hereby mandated by the GBC that all such temples should shortly thereafter hold a special expiatory fire sacrifice called the Brahmacandra Homa, featuring oblations to the Presiding Deities of the respective Tithis, namely Lords Brahmā and Candra. This fire sacrifice should also be paired with the Vaiśvadeva Yajña, a *yajña* for expiating any sins for the insects we accidentally kill. These two sacrifices should be performed as soon as possible after the Jagannātha Deities return, preferably on Bahuda-yātrā, or the next full moon, or the next Sunday Feast.

“Lastly, with respect to the Anavasara Seclusion Period, it is hereby mandated that all ISKCON Temples with Jagannātha Deities must observe a Seclusion Period, and it must run from the time of the Snāna-yātrā Bathing Ceremonies, which must be held on the Full Moon before the Ratha-yātrā, until the day before the Ratha-yātrā Parade itself.

“Please note that the GBC does not accept that there are any sins for anything that ISKCON Temples have done with respect to timing Ratha-yātrās or related festivals. Putting on a Ratha-yātrā parade is a large and difficult task, and all of our ISKCON Temples and Members have been doing a great job putting on the parades. This kind of service is extremely blessed, and we do not believe that any sin can attach to it. And if any sin did attach to it, it would be covered by remembrance of Lord Kṛṣṇa, as stated by their Divine Graces Śrīla Sanatana Gosvami and Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 3.49–50:

"Among all types of atonement, austerity, charitable acts, ritual activities, and vows, remembrance of Lord Kṛṣṇa is the supreme form of atonement."

We here in ISKCON truly do remember Lord Kṛṣṇa quite a lot, and so we are certain that we are covered. However, one advantage of performing a special expiatory *homa* is that it saves Lord Kṛṣṇa having to deal with the matter, and we are also adding in an accompanying *yajña* to expiate killing of insects, which will free up even more of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s time and energy, even though they are both considered to be unlimited anyways.

“Also, we should specifically note that *Skanda Purāṇa* 2.2.37.8 does specifically say that:

“On whatever day the Lord is seen, He assuredly bestows liberation!"

“Therefore, we here in the GBC and ISKCON have complete confidence that all of our Ratha-yātrās, no matter what days they might have been held on, have been saving countless fallen souls!

“However, public perception and censure are somewhat of a separate matter unto themselves, as we can see from the example of Lord Rāma, and we would like to address any such censure in a decisive manner. The best way to accomplish that task is through expiatory *yajñas*, which are universally recognized by all Hindus, including the Purī authorities, and including any Indians who have been protesting at our ISKCON Ratha-yātrās.

“Therefore, we have approved, and in fact mandated that the Brahmacandra Expiatory Homa should now always be carried out by any ISKCON Temple that misses a permissible day for their Ratha-yātrā. And additionally, all of the GBC Members will shortly be personally attending a Grand Brahmacandra Homa Sacrifice in Śrī Jagannātha Purī Dhāma itself, which will also be attended by the King of Purī, to address any perceived failings or infractions from the past years, and to make peace with the Purī Authorities.

“In a way, we can view this matter in a positive light, because it has brought to our attention that many ISKCON Temples have not been celebrating the Appearance Day of Lords Jagannātha, Baladeva, Subhadrā. And additionally, we can view it as helping to raise our Deity Worship Standards by observing the correct Lunar Days, which are an important matter in Hinduism.

“We also want to emphasize that ISKCON does in fact view observing the correct Lunar Days as very important, and normally does observe them for most days, including many Appearance Days, and then also for days such as Ekādaśī. The Ratha-yātrās have only gone off the recommended Lunar Day because they are public parades, and there are permitting issues, manpower issues, trying to get the parades onto Sundays, not wanting to compete with neighboring Ratha-yātrās, and other concerns of this type, which are all certainly very legitimate.

“We, the GBC, are pleased that this matter has finally been satisfactorily resolved. It appears to us to be unseemly that fellow devotees of Lord Jagannātha should be fighting amongst themselves. Hopefully we will find fruitful avenues of cooperation with Śrī Jagannātha Mandira in the future.

“This is your GBC at work! Bringing peace and harmony among devotees of Lord Jagannātha! Making sure the correct Lunar days are observed! Keeping ISKCON *Brāhmaṇas* on top of their *Homas*! Covering all the angles! Pacifying angry protesters! Saving Lord Kṛṣṇa incredible amounts of time from having to pardon us for so many insects that we accidentally kill!

“Jaya Jagannātha! Jaya Baladeva! Jaya Subhadrā!”

… Alright, that should work for the GBC. And now for…

The Purī Śrīmandira Brahmacandra Declaration

“We, the Gajapati Mahārāja King of Purī, and the Shree Jagannātha Temple Administration (SSJT), hereby forthwith issue new guidance concerning the timing of Ratha-yātrā Parades around the world.

“The situation is that there are now believed to be some 800 Ratha-yātrās being held by ISKCON Temples every year, and there are a number of significant factors that militate against holding them all on only one day of the year. Such factors include manpower issues, permitting regulations, trying to get the parades onto Sundays, utilizing a centralized Festival of India to travel around and improve all the festivals greatly, and then also such factors as Youth Programs that travel around and attend the consecutive festivals.

“Taking all the foregoing into consideration, we, the Gajapati Mahārāja King of Purī, and the Shree Jagannātha Temple Administration, have decided to adopt a different approach, and have looked more closely into what other days in the year might be permissible to hold Ratha-yātrā Parades. In the end, we believe we have identified a number of acceptable days coming directly from the *śāstras*.

“At the top of the list, there are two alternative *Tithis* for performing Ratha-yātrā given directly in the *Skanda Purāṇa*, which are Māgha Śukla Pañcamī and Caitra Śukla Aṣṭamī. Even Jagannātha Purī Śrīmandira Temple could conceivably end up using one of these alternative days, if there was, for example, a very strict pandemic lockdown that was about to go into effect.

“Also, if we look at the example of Bhaktivedanta Manor, which holds its own local Ratha-yātrā on the correct *Tithi*, but also holds Ratha-yātrās in neighboring cities sometimes, we can see that these two alternative *Tithis* given in *Skanda Purāṇa* would be very useful for such a situation. So we here in Purī definitely support those two alternative days given directly in *Skanda Purāṇa*.

“Additionally, there are 4-5 days given in the *Brahma Purāṇa*, believed to be the first-written of the *Purāṇas*. Those days are said to be good for Yātrās, and good days to see the Deities. So we certainly accept those days from the *Brahma Purāṇa* as well.

“Beyond those, there are also the 12 Major Festival Days on the current Śrīmandira Festival Calendar, sometimes called the “12 Yātrās,” which we agree are also auspicious days to have a Yātrā or see the Deities.

“And then there are also some corresponding days which have been included, which means the same *Tithi*, *Dvitiya Tithi* during the bright half of the month, which is also certainly legitimate.

“And lastly, there is the Auspicious 9-Day Period, which has been accepted in Purī by long-standing tradition, and which has been added onto the foregoing days.

“So putting all the foregoing days together gives us our Brahmacandra Calendar of Permissible Days to Hold Ratha-yātrā, and this is our new guidance that we are putting out, that all Ratha-yātrās should preferably be held on days that are permitted on the special Brahmacandra Calendar.

“If it is not possible to hold the Ratha-yātrā on one of the permissible days, then a non-permissible day may be used, but also a Brahmacandra Homa should be carried out shortly thereafter, which should expiate any sin.

“Furthermore, there is planned to be a Grand Homa and Reception together with the ISKCON GBC to expiate any sins that might have accumulated over the years, which we are very satisfied with as a means for resolving those issues.

“Additionally, we are very pleased that ISKCON has completely agreed to our request to make sure the Appearance Day Snāna-yātrā is celebrated on the correct *Tithi, Jyeṣṭhā Pūrṇimā*.

“Also, ISKCON has mandated that all ISKCON Temples with Jagannātha Deities will observe the Anavasara Seclusion Period, just as we requested. Due to variations in the Ratha-yātrā day, there may not always be 15 days of seclusion, but the Snāna-yātrā Bathing Ceremonies will always be held on the corresponding day, on the Full Moon before Ratha-yātrā, which we do certainly approve of.

“We are pleased that all of these important matters have been satisfactorily resolved after some several years. And we wish to definitively state that there was no offense whatsoever intended towards ISKCON Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda. In fact, we are even considering making him an Honorary Jagannātha Purī Śrīmandira Ācārya.

“This concludes our statement on these matters. But we are of course looking forward to the best samosas in town at the Grand Homa and Reception! And of course the *Avant-Garde* Interpretive Dance Performance!

“Jaya! Jaya Baladeva! Jaya Subhadrā!”

… And that should work for the Purī Authorities. For the order, maybe ISKCON could go first, or perhaps both sides can agree to issuing their respective statements simultaneously.

Waking from a Dream

That completes these peace plans. If the King of Purī, or any of the Purī Scholars, or anyone on the SJTC Committee, or any of the GBC Members wishes to discuss anything at all, this Peace Plan is posted on the Ocean of Milk Foundation website, which can be found right here. Just scroll to the bottom to see the comment area. And of course, we can be contacted by email as well.

Cāṇakya Paṇḍita advises:

"One should accept nectar even from poison, gold even from an impure place, good conduct even from an enemy, and wise words even from a child."

Speaking of which, if we were too hard on the Purī Scholars or the King of Purī, a thousand apologies. They can punch us in the arm at the Grand Homa and Reception if we make it there. That is alright.

As for the day to send this plan in, that was of course, ho ho, quite an important question. One thing was for sure, it had to be one of these days that we are allowing for Ratha-yatras. So we have, we believe, one of the best days for sure, one of the days from the *Brahma Purāṇa*, the oldest of the *Purāṇas*, and that day is Utthānadvādaśī, the twelfth day in the bright half of Kārttika.

This is the one which was the second day of a 5-day festival. And the first day of the festival is Utthapana Yātrā, when the Jagannātha Deities are awakened from their 4-month divine slumber, which is one of the 12 Main Festivals.

On that note, we can easily imagine the GBC Members waking up as though from a dream and declaring: “In the name of all that is holy! Many of our temples have not been observing Lords Jagannātha, Baladeva, Subhadrā’s Appearance Day!!”

And we can also imagine the King of Purī and other Purī Authorities also waking as though from a dream and declaring: “Actually those two alternative Ratha-yatra days from the *Skanda Purāṇa* do not seem so bad anymore!”

That was yesterday, the first day of the 5-Day Festival. Today, the second day, is Tulasī Vivāha, or the day that Śrīmatī Tulasī Devī married Lord Kṛṣṇa, which we are certain that everyone in ISKCON will view as quite a positive omen, and probably everyone in Purī too.

People are going to be calling us “Aniruddha the Peacemaker!” It is difficult to believe, is it not?

On this Auspicious Day of Utthānadvādaśī (direct from the *Brahma Purāṇa*!),

In service to Lords Jagannātha, Baladeva, Subhadrā (and even Lords Brahmā and Candra!),

Your worthless dog-like servant,

Aniruddha dās.

___