

Why Krishna Appears as Jagannatha

The story of Neela Madhava

An ancient text, the *Skanda Purana*, tells the story of the appearance of Lord Jagannatha.

In a dream, King Indradyumna saw a beautiful deity called Neela Madhava. 'Neela' means 'blue and 'Madhava' is a name of Krishna which means 'Lord of Fortune' or 'the killer of the demon Madhu'. The King developed an instant attachment for the deity and send messengers all over his kingdom to find Neela Madhava. One of the messengers, a brahmana, returned successful. He found the deity in a remote tribal village, worshipped by a pig farmer (*savara*). But when the brahmana returned to the village along with the king, Nila Madhava was not there. King Indradyumna surrounded the village with his soldiers and arrested the farmer. But a voice from the sky proclaimed, "Release the *savara* and build a big temple for me on the top of the hill. I will be present there, not as Nila Madhava, but in a form made of Neem wood."

Then the Lord appeared in the sea disguised as a giant log floating toward the beach. King Indradyumna took the wood in his palace and called Vishvakarma, the best architect in the whole world to carve the deities. Vishvakarma agreed to the task, with the condition to remain undisturbed for twenty-one days. King Indradyumna consented, and the artist worked behind locked doors. Before the time period was up, however, the noise stopped, and King Indradyumna's intense curiosity prompted him to open the doors. As a result, the deities, Jagannatha, Subhadra and Balabhadra (also known as Baladeva or Balarama) remained unfinished.

That night, Jagannatha spoke to the king in a dream and reassured him that the unfinished forms wasn't his mistake. Rather he chose to appear in these forms to indicate that He can accept offerings without hands, and walk without feet. Now, devotees worship the same "unfinished" forms of Jagannatha, Baladeva, and Subhadra in Puri and around the world.

Krishna in Kuruksetra

Skanda Purana gives another account related to Krishna's appearance as Jagannatha.

Once, during a solar eclipse, Krishna, his brother Balarama and his sister Subhadra, along with other residents of Dwaraka visited the place of Kuruksetra. Knowing that Krishna would be there, Srimati Radharani, Krishna's parents and other residents of Vrindavana, went to meet Him.

While in Kuruksetra, the residents of Dwaraka listened to Krishna's adventures in Vrindavana. The narration of these adventures was extremely confidential because it described the intimate relationship between Krishna and his devotees. So Subhadra stood at the door to prevent anyone from entering. But Krishna and Balarama came to the door and stood on Subhadra's left and right sides. While listening to the narration of Krishna's intimate Vrindavana pastimes, Krishna and Balarama felt spiritual pleasure, and Their internal feelings were exhibited externally. Their eyes became dilated, Their heads compressed into Their bodies, and Their limbs retracted. Seeing these transformations in Krishna and Balarama, Subhadra also became ecstatic and assumed a similar form. Thus, by hearing about Krishna's pastimes in Vrindavana, Krishna and Balarama, with Subhadra in between, displayed their ecstatic forms of Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra.