

JAGANNATH FESTIVAL.

More than half a million Indians made pilgrimage to Puri, south of Calcutti, for the Jagannath Cart Festival, one of the holiest observances of the Hindu religion. The worshippers believe that a visit to Puri at this time will ensure an eternity of bliss in the hereafter. Three huge carts, 45 feet high, are dragged to the temple on the chief day of the festival, to the chanting of the holy mendicants, the Sadhus.

All who can afford it buy rosaries before the ritual moves towards its climax. More than 800 years ago, there was built to the memory of the Hindu Lord Jagannath, the temple renowned throughout India. The Lion Gate is opened, each year, on the appointed day, for priests to bring out the Sudarshan Chakar, the wooden leg with which the Hindu god Krishna used to destroy his enemies. And after that, to be placed on the great carts, they carry the three idols of the Jagannath Temple; first, the representation of Jagannath's sister, Subhadra. Hindus hold that to see the idols ensures admission to heavenly existence in the life beyond, and spares them the ordeal of another spell on earth. Next to come is borne the image of Balarama the Lord Jagannath's brother.

Only the priests are allowed to hoist the idols on the carts.

All the priests try to obtain one of the flowers which have decorated the idols. To possess one is an aid to salvation. Finally the representation of the Lord Jagannath himself appears from the Temple.

The first part of the ritual is now accomplished. The great carts, with the three idols, are to be hauled a mile and a half to the Garden of Pleasure. During the next eight days they will remain there, so that hundreds of thousands may pay homage. All who can press forward, try for the privilege of pulling on the ropes. For the time being, the world, with its joys and sorrows, is forgotten, in the religious ecstasy of the festival, and the carts slowly advance along the highway, said to be the widest street in India.

Western peoples can only marvel at the profound faith which moves devout millions in the timeless east.