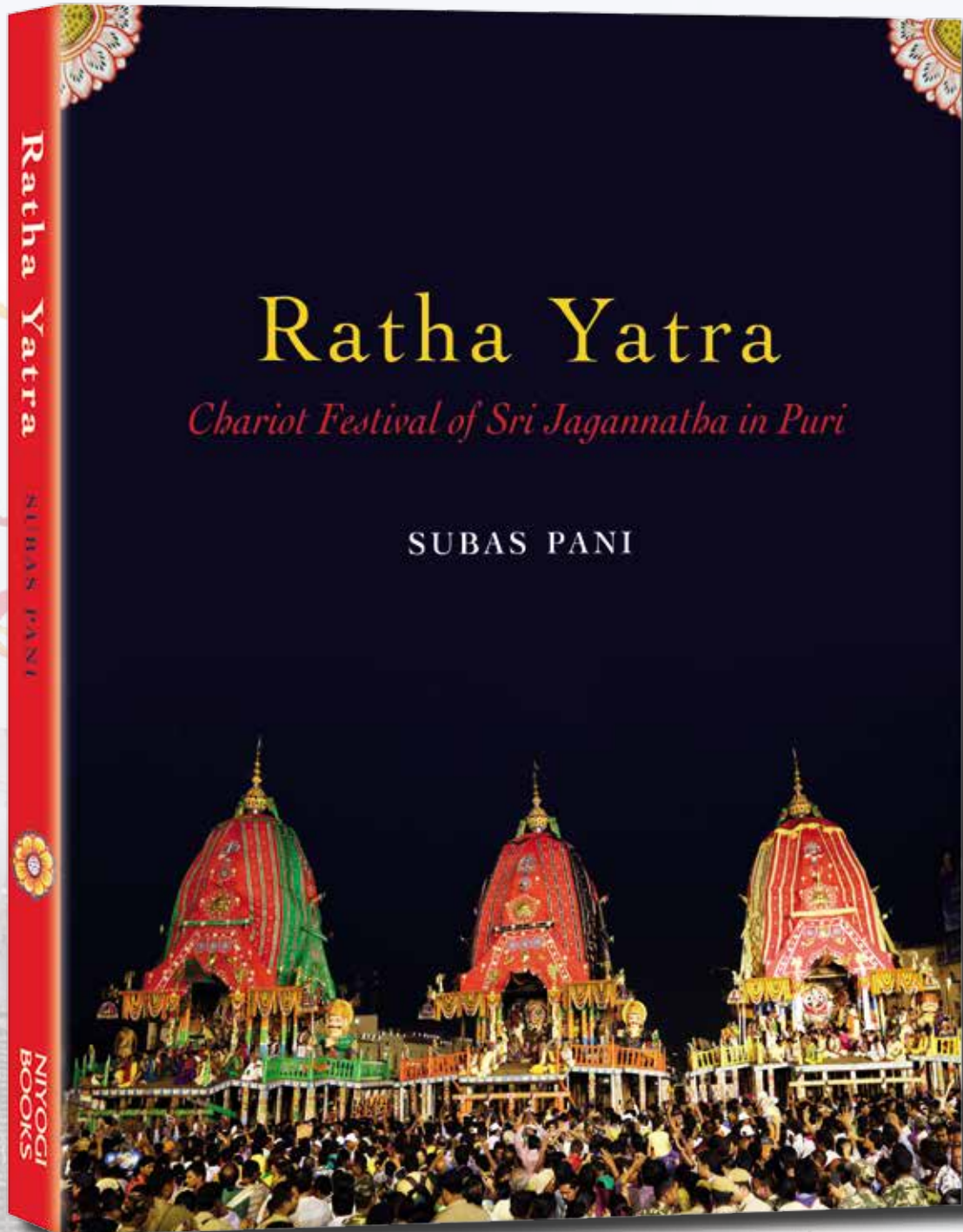


ISBN: 978-93-85285-56-1

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₹1,995 / £30 / \$45



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# Ratha Yatra

*Chariot Festival of Sri Jagannatha in Puri*

by  
**Subas Pani**

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₹1,995 / £30 / \$45

ISBN: 978-93-85285-56-1

Size: 280mm x 229mm

240pp, 150 Gsm art paper (matt)

All colour, 245 colour photographs

Hardback with dust jacket

**R**atha Yatra, the ancient annual festival of the chariot journey by Lord Jagannatha, the presiding deity of the great temple *Srimandira* at Puri, is one of the grandest spectacles on earth. Jagannatha along with siblings Balabhadra and Subhadra ride three colourful chariots in their annual sojourn to their garden house and birthplace Gundicha Temple where they stay for seven days before returning. *Ratha Yatra* is rooted in ancient traditions, myths and legends and embodies the most colourful elements of the classical and folk cultures of the Indian subcontinent and the Odisha region.

This book is a comprehensive account of *Ratha Yatra*, the great a socio-cultural and religious event and phenomenon unique in the entire world. It provides the background on the syncretic faith represented by Jagannatha, his origin and strong links with the heritage of aboriginal tribes and an account of the *Naba Kalebara* ceremonies, celebrating the periodic renewal of the bodies of the presiding deities, most recently held in 2015. Rich in detail, the book covers a wide span including the sacred geography of Puri, legends surrounding the temple, the unique architectural style of the temple complex, the elaborate preparatory summer festivals leading up to the main festival and the process of making the chariots. It brings alive every stage of the intricate rituals and ceremonies lasting almost two months, giving a complete portrayal of different phases of the festival.

**Focuses exclusively on Ratha Yatra, a succinct manifestation of the intangible heritage of India, alive and vibrant today at the great pilgrim town of Puri.**

**Based on extensive research and documentation of over a decade and a ringside view of the festival for over twenty-five years by the author.**

**Contains over 200 vibrant photographs, some from the archival collection of Sri Gitagovinda Prathistana, making the book a visual treat for readers.**



**Subas Pani** is an author, translator, composer and creative director. A retired civil servant with a PhD on Jayadeva's *Geetagovinda*, he has given running commentary on the Ratha Yatra for the national and international channels of Doordarshan, for more than two decades. His travel articles have appeared in *Swagat* and *Namaskar*. He has also authored two seminal works in Odia—*Sampoorna Geetagovinda* and *Daru Brahma: Sri Jagannatha Bhajana Sudhasindhu* and composed music for major compilations on the same theme.

