



Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deb

5. For the above reasons, the Ratha Yatra in Puri is of special significance and importance and should not be stopped, even if Ratha Yatra and other religious functions are not permitted elsewhere under COVID Lockdown Guidelines. A Constitutional Bench of Hon'ble Supreme Court in Raja Birakishore Deb v. State of Orissa (AIR 1964 SC 1501) has acknowledged the unique and special importance of Shri Jagannath Temple in Puri which "requires special treatment" by the State Government. The Government may therefore stop conduct of Ratha Yatras throughout the State; but the Ratha Yatra in Puri should be permitted, as a special case, by the State Government undertaking at the same time effective measures to ensure that there is no spread of COVID by conduct of the Yatra.
6. Param Pujiyapad Shreemad Jagadguru Shankaracharya Swami Nischalananda Saraswati Maharaj, who is revered as the supreme religious authority in the religious affairs of Shreemandira, has expressed his learned view in favour of Hon'ble Supreme Court reconsidering and modifying its Order of 18th June so as to enable conduct of Ratha Yatra in Puri. A copy of the opinion of Param Pujiyapad Shankaracharya Maharaj is attached hereto for your kind perusal.

Under the aforesaid circumstances and in the interest of countless devotees around the world, I request you re-consider this sensitive issue of stopping Ratha Yatra in Puri and to direct appropriate steps to be immediately taken by the State Government for approaching Hon'ble Supreme Court for a partial modification of its aforesaid Order dated 18th June 2020 so as to permit performance of Ratha Yatra only at Puri – the Moola-peetha of Lord Jagannath.

May Shree Shree Jagannatha Mahaprabhu shower His Grace upon you.

Yours

In the service of the Lord,

Dibyasingha

(Dibyasingha Deb)

Chairman,

Shree Jagannatha Temple Managing Committee

Puri