



IN THE HIGH COURT OF ORISSA AT CUTTACK

W.P.(C) No. 21986 of 2026

Mahesh Kumar Sahu and others* *Petitioners

Mr. Manoj Kumar Mishra, Senior Advocate along with
Mr. Sambit Kumar Patri, Advocate

-versus-

State of Odisha and others* *Opposite Parties

Mr. Debasish Tripathy, AGA,
Mr. Prasanna Kumar Parhi, Deputy Solicitor General of India
along with Mr. Asutosh Mohanty,
Central Government Counsel for O.P. No.3,
Mr. Gautam Mukherjee, Senior Advocate along with
Mr. Sidhant Dwibedi and
Mr. Supratik Acharya, Advocates for O.P.6

**CORAM:
HON'BLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE
AND
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE MURAHARI SRI RAMAN**

**ORDER
15.07.2026**

Order No.

W.P.(C) No. 21986 of 2026 & I.A. No. 13262 of 2026

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1. This writ petition was not on board today. On being mentioned, the same was published in Special List and was taken up for hearing along with W.P.(C) No.21693 of 2026, which was on board.
 2. Issue notice both in the writ petition as well as in I.A. Heard learned counsel for the respective parties.
 3. Mr. Debasish Tripathy, learned Additional Government Advocate appears opposite parties No.1 and 2. Mr. Prasanna Kumar Parhi, learned Deputy Solicitor General of India along with Mr.



Asutosh Mohanty, learned Central Government Counsel appears for opposite party No.3. Mr. Gautam Mukherjee, learned Senior Advocate appears for opposite party No.6 and they waive the service of notice as they have already been served with copies of the writ petition and also the I.A.

4. Let the notice be issued to opposite parties No.4 and 5 by speed post with A.D., making it returnable before the next date, requisites for which shall be filed within three working days.

5. The instant Public Interest Litigation is filed at the behest of the petitioners seeking relief in the form of writ of mandamus directing Central Board of Film Certification to revoke the Certificate No. DIL/1/12026-CUT and to restrain the opposite parties not to allow public exhibition/screening and release of the animated film “Mahaprabhu Jagannath” within the State of Odisha.

6. It is highlighted in the instant Public Interest Litigation that on 06.06.2026 Ele Animations Pvt. Ltd. published the teaser in the You Tube channel announcing the release of an animated film titled “Mahaprabhu Jagannath” on 10th July, 2026. Subsequently, there was a wide spread dissention on the title as well as the content of the said film across the people of the State of Odisha including the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration, which compelled the producer to exhibit the said film in the auditorium in presence of the Temple Administration as well as Gajapati Maharaja, Puri, where several objections were raised to the depiction of certain incidents which are opposed to the established religious traditions, the spiritual history and the practice prevalent since ages. The Indian Express released an article narrating the screening of the said animated film and the



objection being raised from the viewers present thereat and it was assured by the producer to make necessary changes which shall be in commensurate with the well established religious belief, tradition and cultural aspect.

7. Out of the blue, the producer without making the substantial and/or necessary changes, not only in the narratives, but also the depiction in animated form announced the release of the said film on 17th July, 2026. The petitioner has succinctly highlighted the objectionable portion of the said animated film, where the fictional childhood or the personal adventure of Lord Jagannath has been portrayed, which is not in tune with the religious texts of the Skandha Purana and the Brahma Purana. The animated actor playing the role of Lord Jagannath was also shown to be speaking and behaving in an invented manner, which are not in conformity with the devotional literature and the temple traditions and the cultures practiced and/or professed since the advent of the establishment of the Lord Jagannath Temple. The fictional battle and/or the adventural sequences relating to Lord Jagannath have also been included within the said picture, which not only tarnishes the belief of the devotees of Lord Jagannath, but also may invite a large scale of commotion amongst them.

8. On the other hand the producer arduously takes a stand that at the first screening of the animated film, there was a disclaimer that it is simply a fictional story having no nexus with the reality, nor is there any attempt made to destroy the belief of the devotees, and it would not corrode the fabric of the religious belief of the tradition, which the devotees perceive towards Lord Jagannath. It is also contended that Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution encompasses



within its fold the freedom of expression and speech and, therefore, every citizen of the country is entitled to percolate his ideas and/or thoughts. There cannot be invasion over the fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution of India. Lastly it is contended that the petitioner has come at the fag end with the sinister motive to stop the release of the said animated film and considerable amount of money has already been invested in this regard.

9. There are multiple mediums of expression of the thoughts, ideas and the realities of life viz. printed media, newspapers, printed articles, audio system and by releasing a movie to be screened in the theatre for the viewers. The moment it is expressed in the form of a movie, it has to be judged on the point of an overall impact on the public. Though they are primarily aiming for an amusement, but at times they create a massive impact in the minds of the viewers and/or the public, more particularly when it is intricately related to a religious belief and/or endowment as a devotee to the feet of God.

10. While taking shelter under the freedom of expression and/or speech as guaranteed under Article 19 of the Constitution of India, a balance has to be created between such rights and the restrictions imposed under Article 19(2) of the Constitution of India. Even if the movie enjoins the guarantee of the freedom of expression and/or speech, but it impacted the thoughts and the action of the common people and, therefore should ensure high degree of attention and retention. At times it creates an immediate influence and at times may shatter the sentiments, the emotions and the religious belief, which cannot be allowed, if it results in unrest in the peaceful society. The motive to release the film may also be one of the facet to be borne in



mind at a particular point of time, which may invite an immediate and prompt reaction having cascading effect, that would corrode the fabric resultantly affecting the peace in the society.

11. The opposite party no.6 intended to release the said movie without bringing any change as suggested while screening the said film in presence of Gajapati Maharaja and the members of the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration when Rath Yatra (Car/Chariot Festival) is commencing from 16th July, 2026 where there will be a large conglomeration of the devotees at the spot and, therefore, we feel that screening of the said film on 17th July, 2026 shall be counterproductive. We have succinctly highlighted the objectionable content of the said animated film vividly and lucidly narrated in the instant public Interest Litigation, which needs to be determined in a threadbare manner after the exchange of the affidavits.

12. We, therefore, restrain opposite party no.6— Ele Animations Pvt. Ltd. from releasing the animated film titled “Mahaprabhu Jagannath” on 17th July, 2026 or thereafter without leave of the Court or until the next date, whichever is earlier.

13. List this matter on 5th August, 2026 along with W.P.(C) No.21693 of 2026.

(Harish Tandon)
Chief Justice

(M.S. Raman)
Judge