

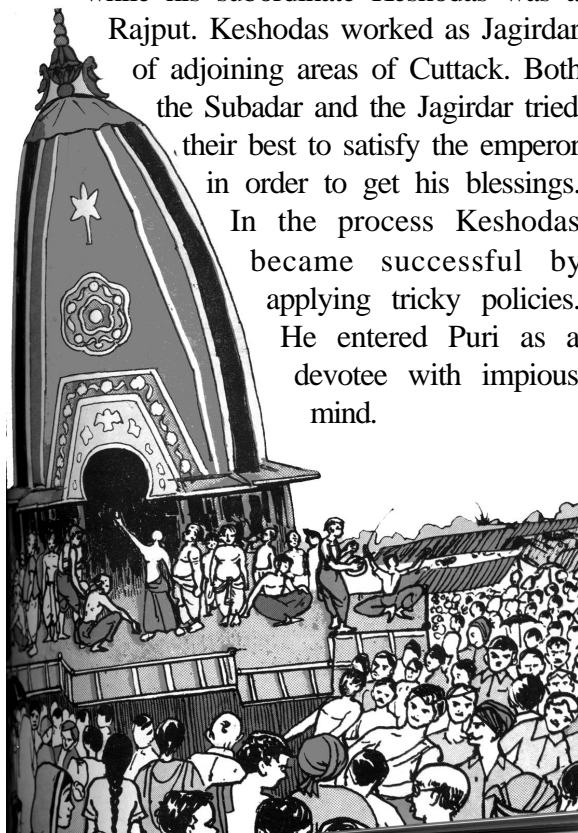
Burning Cars

Dr. Saroj Kumar Panda

This event took place during Car festival at Puri in the year 1609 when Jahangir was the Mughal emperor. In fact Odisha being separated from Bengal became an independent Subah in 1607 A.D. Thereafter the Mughal Subadar appointed for Odisha stayed at

Cuttack. Hasim Khan was the first Subadar while his subordinate Keshodas was a Rajput. Keshodas worked as Jagirdar of adjoining areas of Cuttack. Both the Subadar and the Jagirdar tried their best to satisfy the emperor

in order to get his blessings. In the process Keshodas became successful by applying tricky policies. He entered Puri as a devotee with impious mind.



Before coming to Puri, Keshodas had sent a message for visit and *darshan* of Lord Jagannath. Rajputs are normally devoted to Jagannath. Therefore listening the news of arrival of Keshodas, the temple priests hoped for profit and well-being of the temple. The Jagirdar from the beginning exhibited his self applause by donating lavishly in Srimandir. But later he alongwith Rajput soldiers in disguise displayed their treachery by possessing Srimandir.

By that time the Trinity were in Gundicha Temple. Attention of all was focussed there. Keshodas alongwith his soldiers reached at Gundicha Temple and found a large crowd. The treasury house was closed. Finding no alternatives he plundered all the accessories (made in silver and gold) fitted with *Ratnasinghasana*. When the temple servitors opposed they had to meet with obscene oppression.

The news of sudden invasion and plunder of Srimandir reached Khurda. The then Bhoi ruler Purusottam Dev (son of Ramachandra Dev, the founder of Bhoi dynasty) advanced towards Puri alongwith ten thousand cavalry, three to four thousand infantry (Paikas) and many chariots. All gathered around Gundicha temple and blocked



its doors. Many of them dragged the Cars upto the boundary wall of the temple and ascended upon those. There was a fierce fighting between the Paikas and the Rajputs in which the latter were decisively defeated, many of them died. There was panic among the Rajputs. But all of a sudden Keshodas had resorted to an unique trick.

The Rajputs pulled the bamboos attached to thatched roof and partition inside temple compound. They also pulled the clothes and canopies from the premises and collected oil and ghee. They prepared torches and set fire on those. The Rajputs threw those burning bamboos from inside the Gundicha Temple premises towards the compound wall. The three cars were guarded by the Paika soldiers. The three chariots - Nandighosha, Taladhwaja and Darpadalana were set on fire as a result of the Rajput soldiers' notorious act. The chariots were burning while the Paikas in order to save their lives jumped from there. Many of the Paikas died during the encounter. It was an extreme example of cruelty by a Hindu against the Hindus. For this anti-Hindu move, Keshodas was designated as 'Keshodas Maru'.

It is known from both the *Madalapanji* and the account of Mirjanath that after burning of three chariots, the devotees took the trinity in *palanquin* and left at Srimandir. Due to in human act of Keshodas Maru, the preparation of *Srimahaprasad* at Srimandir was stopped for eight months. Instead of cooked food only dry foods were offered to the Lords during this period.

After invasion and plunder of Srimandira, Keshodas had developed intimacy with Jahangir for which he was promoted to the rank of Mansubadar with fifteen hundred soldiers under his command. This has been recorded in 'Tujuk-i-Jahangir'. In Indian history the Rajputs are glorified for their patriotism, idealism and sacrifice but in Odishan soil, Keshodas had portrayed his anti-Hindu and treacherous character.

Dr. Saroj Kumar Panda, Principal-cum-Secretary,
Gadibrahma Degree College, Delang, Puri.

