

## Paramesti Darzi and Sri Jagannath

*Dinabandhu Pradhan*

Bhakta and Bhagawan are always one. The two are inseparable. A Bhakta lives his life with intense love and devotion to his Lord. His God is the end-all and be-all of his life. He has one goal in life. It is to merge in the endless divinity. A devotee is thus a divine seeker for his eternal union with his God. His heart is ever vibrant with heavenly love. No time or place is necessary to have "Sadhana" in Bhakti. Bhakti can be developed at any place and at any point of time. God is not simply in existence in a temple or at any holy place. He is present everywhere in the universe. He is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. A Bhakta never considers himself away from his God even if he is miles away from his main divine platform. God is satisfied with anything that a Bhakta offers Him in oblation. God acknowledges his Bhakta's offer with utmost satisfaction. This is the divine relationship between a devotee and his God. Paramesti Darzi endowed with divine virtues was one such ideal devotee to his God, Lord Jagannath.

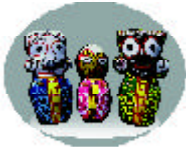
Paramesti Darzi belonged to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. He was a resident of Delhi. The term 'Darzi' means a tailor. Paramesti's father was a tailor of the then Badsaha of Delhi. He was a wizard in his profession. His son Paramesti Darzi inherited all the qualities of his father. Like his father, he was also a great devotee of Lord

Jagannath. Like a basil plant wafting out its fragrance from two leaves, Paramesti from his very childhood had displayed his talent in the profession of his father. He was a wizard in embroidery work. His 'Ista' was Lord Jagannath. He had learnt a lot about Jagannath philosophy from his father.

As Paramesti grew in age, he was married to a beautiful maiden named Bimala Devi. Soon Paramesti became a father of some children. He supported the livelihood of the family with what he earned from his profession.

Paramesti was well known as a devotee of Lord Jagannath. In his profession he was a very trustworthy person. His customers had great faith in him for his impeccable character. To look at him from outside, Paramesti was a worldly person. But in his heart of hearts, he was a "Gyana Sanyasi" by nature. In his everyday life, he read scriptures including the Geeta. His wife too was a devotee of Lord Jagannath. When, on any occasion, Paramesti heard about Lord Jagannath, he left his normal job and listened to His great glory with rapt attention.

One day, the Badsaha of Delhi called Paramesti to his palace hearing his name in embroidery work. The Badsaha sent information to Darzi that he was interested to see some of his outstanding performances. Any other person in



his place would have been very happy and thrilled to receive the invitation from the Badsaha. But Paramesti did not view the invitation of the Badsaha in that way. He took the invitation as a normal message. He simply informed the messenger that he would appear before the Badsaha on the appointed day.

Paramesti went to Badsaha's court on the appointed day with the best of the articles of his workmanship. The Badsaha scanned the articles. He was immensely pleased after seeing his achievements. He thanked Paramesti for his outstanding workmanship. While commending Paramesti for his excellent talent, the Badsaha said, "You are really unparalleled in embroidery work. I need to have a few of the items of your work in the court room. Please do for me two pillows studded with jewels. They should be beautiful and worth-seeing in my court.

Paramesti said, 'Jahanpana', I shall feel obliged to honour your order. But for that, there should be no time-limit. This is my earnest request to you. This does not mean that I shall take months to complete your work. I hope, Jahanpana will have no objection to my humble submission".

The Badsaha said, "Darzi, why do you lay this condition? Please tell me its implication".

Paramesti most humbly submitted, "Jahanpana, perfection is a super-human quality it is borne out of God's grace. Unless God wills, there can be no perfection in any work. Divine blessings are not mechanical. They trickle down from heaven. The Lord has to be kind enough for that. I shall seek God's blessings while doing your work. This is the only reason."

The Badsaha could not make out of any meaning from Paramesti's statement. At last he yielded to his request and okayed his submission.

Displaying his workmanship in the best possible way, he completed the two pillows as per the indent of the Badsaha. He had done the pillows with such expertise that anybody who saw his work was immensely pleased. Steeped in profound divine ecstasy, he thought to himself, "How could my work be so beautiful this time? This must have been the grace of my great Lord. The pillows look like heavenly art crafts meant for only divine indulgence. I see in them a sort of graceful elegance. Lord willing, He alone should have the two pillows for His 'Ratna Sinhasan'. I would have got my price, had the pillows been divinely accepted by my Lord. So thinking, Paramesti was lost in a state of transcendental reverie. His self was shrouded in the divine glory of his Lord.

In fact, that day was the day of Ratha Yatra at Puri. Paramesti lost control over his mind remembering the Car Festival of Sri Jagannath. The scene of the chariots being pulled by the devotees danced before his mind's eyes. Paramesti had visited Puri once in his life. He had seen the Car Festival. The roar of 'Haribol' of the devotees reverberated in his ears. Tears of devotion rolled down from the corners of his eyes. He felt as if he was present at Puri on that day. In the flow of his transcendental reverie it appeared to him that the covers of the pillows placed in the chariot of the Lord had been torn to pieces due to rough handling of the servitors in the jerking of the moving chariot. Shocked, he raised his two hands and muttered, "Prabhu, what do I see in your chariot? The covers of your pillows have been mutilated. Are you to go in this manner to Gundicha temple? At present, I have two beautiful pillows. Of course, they are meant for the Badsaha of Delhi. I can offer one pillow to you."

Thinking so, he raised his two hands holding one pillow and offered the same to the



Lord. Paramesti was then in a state of highest emotion. Soon he lost his conscientiousness and fell unconscious. Everything about the happening was the cosmic game of the Lord. The large-eyed Lord received the pillow from Paramesti by extending His gigantic hands.

After sometime, Paramesti came back to his senses. He was in a highly ecstatic mood. He looked at the place where he had kept the pillows. Lo and behold! One pillow was found missing. He was confirmed then that Jagannath Mahaprabhu had received the pillow from his hands. His joy knew no bounds at the divine happening. Emotionally, he danced in his room shouting 'Haribol, Haribol' at the pitch of his voice.

Two days after, the Badsaha sent for Paramesti Darzi with instructions to deliver the indented pillows at his court. In compliance, Paramesti appeared before the Badsaha on the appointed day. He appeared there with one pillow instead of two. When Paramesti showed the pillow, the Badsaha was immensely pleased. Others present in the court were also wonderstruck seeing the magnificence of his handicraft. The Badsaha next enquired about the other pillow. Paramesti did not hesitate to inform him that he had offered the other pillow to Jagannath Mahaprabhu. He also narrated the details of the miracle. Paramesti statement baffled the Badsaha and also all the courtiers. The Badsaha could not believe his ears hearing from Paramesti that Sri Jagannath at Puri had received the pillow from the latter's hands from Delhi. How could He extend his hands up to Delhi? Is it ever possible? This is simply unbelievable from the viewpoint of a common man's perception.

Parodying his emotional outburst, he commented, "what the hell are you blabbering before me, Paramesti? How dare you talk like a

madcap in the open court? Can anyone believe that your Jagannath at Puri could receive from your hands a pillow from Delhi? The Badsaha quivered in anger objecting to the versions of Paramesti. He questioned him again and again as to where he had kept the other pillow.

But Paramesti had only one answer to all his questions, "The Lord had received the pillow and the Badsaha could ascertain the truth of the matter from Puri." At last, the Badsaha suspected that Paramesti must have sold the pillow to some moneyed person and grabbed the sale proceeds for his personal benefit and he was lying to him in the name of the Lord Jagannath. The Badsaha lost his temper and ordered, "Arrest the man and throw him into the prison. He deserves severe punishment."

The orders of the Badsaha were immediately carried out. The hands and legs of Paramesti were tied with ropes. Soon he was dumped into a dark prison. But Paramesti was in no way affected by the punishment of the Badsaha. He knew well that he had not committed any crime. He had offered the pillow to Sri Jagannath Mahaprabhu and the Lord had received the pillow from him by extending His gigantic hands. He sang Bhajans and spent his time in the prison.

One day, there was a miraculous happening in the prison. It rained cats and dogs outside followed by a cyclonic storm and incessant lightnings. The vicious surrounding created elements of fear in the minds of the people. Paramesti had no reaction at the start of the occurrence. But in the passage of time, tears came to his eyes. It appeared to him that very soon some devastation was going to take place in the stately-home of the Badsaha. He sang Bhajans in the prison-cell at the pitch of his voice.



Soon he swooned and collapsed on the floor of the prison cell.

When he came to his senses, he found before him his Lord blessing him by raising His right palm. Paramesti saw that he had no ropes on his hands and legs. He was entirely a free man. The padlocks on the prison door were also open. There was heavenly effulgence all around. Paramesti could not believe his eyes. He was lost in a state of divine happiness enjoying the ambrosia of his Lord's benediction. After some time, the Lord disappeared in a gradual sinking order.

In the same night, the Badsaha had a peculiar dream. He saw a black man near his bed. He was with a big stick in this hand. In quick succession, he was assaulting him saying, "Wicked Badsaha, listen. You have imprisoned my devotee, Paramesti Darzi. You have a misconception that he had misappropriated your pillow. It is not so. The pillow is with me on my Ratnasinhasan. His only fault is that he offered it to me in devotion".

Seeing the dream, the Badsaha suddenly woke up. He saw all around but did not find anybody nearby. He was now confirmed that Lord Jagannath had appeared before him in dream. He quivered in fear. Somehow, he passed the rest of the night with great difficulty. In the

morning, he hurried to the prison with his minister. Lo! The prison doors were open. Paramesti was sitting alone in the prison cell. He had no ropes on his hands and legs. A halo of divine effulgence was emitting out from his face. In unusual ecstasy, he was singing Bhajans.

After a look at Paramesti, the Badsaha was lost in a state of divine exuberance. With folded hands, he apologized to Paramesti and set him free. He released Paramesti from the prison to the accompaniment of music with Harikirtan.

After release, Paramesti returned home. He was no longer in his worldly self. He was already one with his Lord in body, mind and spirit. In fact, that was his great goal in life.

Hey, Jagannath, there is no shore to the ocean of your divine bliss. It has no end. It is vast and boundless. You are the anchor of everybody's worldly life. Help us with your benediction so that we can cross the ocean of life and attain the ultimate goal of God realization.

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