



Dasia Bauri

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Humble mind and self confidence are the two wings that make a man nearer to God. This is not possible by endless Sadhana, Fasting, Yoga or Pranayam. To realise God it is necessary to surrender before the Lord with an air of self-confidence. Irrespective of the caste or creed, irrespective of the position in which you are placed, one may be high or low, rich or poor, wise or foolish, one should draw upon the inner springs of Bhakti towards the Almighty whereby God will pull the devotee to his fold finally resulting in a communion. This happens irrespective of the caste, religion or class to which he belongs.

Two miles away from Puri in the village Bali stands the cottage of Das Bauri. Das is Khadal by caste. This caste is treated alike the Sabara caste though with contempt. He was childless. He and his wife eked out their livelihood by weaving clothes. During festivals when Bhajan is chanted, Holy Puranas are read, young Dasia hears them with rapt attention, eventhough unable to understand the contents of those recitals. The only thing he understands was *harinam* or exultations to God as the only prop in this world consisting of happiness and sufferings. If one treats the happiness and sufferings alike and devotes his full time by Harikirtan, one can attain salvation. He does not understand what salvation is. Hinduism proclaims 'Rebirth' or birth after death known as 'Poonarjanma' which is a mystery no the devotees of other religions.

This life is full of miseries. If one takes 'Harinam' as a malady to all the sufferings one will not be reborn after death and hence to further miseries. This is the gist which Dasia



understands about Mukti or Moksha. He thinks that God has given him rebirth as a human being for committing sin in the past life by being born in the lowest caste. If he earns 'Punya' by good deeds then only he may be reborn in the later life in a higher caste. Then only he will attain salvation - this is the essence of the consolation which Dasia gets from 'Hari Sankirtan' or chanting of Harinama.

It was the day of Ratha Yatra or Car Festival at Puri, and innumerable people surrounding the village Bali and nearby areas were proceeding towards Puri to have Darshan of Lord Jagannath. Suddenly it came to the mind of Dasia that he will visit Puri to have Darshan of Lord Jagannath and he too accompanied the villagers. From a distance, he had a glance of Lord Jagannath on the Chariot. The radiant face of the Lord with black hue surrounding the idol, the enchanting red coloured lips and the white wheel encircling the valiant big eyeballs and the glittering black cornea inside made him spellbound in a spiritual trance and tears at once came rolling down his cheeks. He then fell flat on the ground fully surrendering himself before the Lord, adorning the Chariot.

With folded hands Dasia prayed "O' Lord ! I am the greatest sinner, please offer me salvation." He realised that Lord Jagannath is the only truth and all other things are mere falsehood. This belief was ingrained in Dasia and he returned to his village with a sense of satisfaction.

Customarily his wife had to give holy feeding to her husband who has returned fresh after having holy visit to Puri. What is the food

after all. It is 'Peja' or rice gruel and a little 'Saaga' (greens). In a new earthen pot she cooked some *aru* rice, and kept a little 'Saaga' over it. Dasia saw in the 'Peja' or 'Saaga' the reflection of the face of the Lord with two big round eyes with the glittering cornea. Suddenly he stood up and cried "O' Lord Jagannath ! Jagannath !" In the entire house he roamed about restlessly and shouted 'I will not take this ! I will not take this ! His wife thought some enemy in Puri has commanded a demon or devil to devour her husband. She called the villagers for help. On being questioned by the villagers Dasia retorted in resounding voice "This is the white circle surrounding the black big round of the Lord Jagannath. How shall I eat up ?" The villagers finally understood the entire thing and asked his wife to separate the 'Saaga' from the 'Peja' and his wife did the same. Thereafter Dasia took his food in utter delight. The villagers had an idea about the Bhakti (devotion) of Dasia towards Lord Jagannath. Thereupon the villagers renamed Dasia as 'Baligaon Dasa'.

Returning from the Car Festival and having Darshan of Lord Jagannath on the holy chariot, Dasia was reminded of 'Chakadola' or the round face of the Lord with the glittering eyeballs inside, and sounds of the Ghantas. Whatever work he did, wherever he moved, Dasia had the vision of the Lord, "white circle surrounding the big eyeballs in the form of Lord Jagannath." Visibly moved he enquired of Lord Jagannath 'Should he not be blessed with his vision ? There is a saying that 'whatever the mind feels, this comes to happen or pass as a matter of co-incidence. The writings of Bhagavata at last became a reality.



Once Lord Jagannath gave Darshan to Baligaon Dasa in a dream. Giving consolation, Jagannath told Dasia "Do not think yourself low simply because you are born in a lower caste, I treat all alike. Above all Bhakti attracts me most. I always remain with my Bhakta or devotees. I am in them and they are in me. Alright! ask me any favour that you desire most." Dasa told "Prabhu, I am not begging any thing special. I only want your Darshan and wish that my mind be with you always. Another favour, whenever I would offer the same physically and eat and whenever I desire, you will give me your Darshan". Lord Jagannath nodded His head before Bhakta Dasia and told "Your desire would be fulfilled" and thereafter disappeared.

There was no limit to the delight of Baligaon Dasa. He did not feel proud at all for the boon given by Lord Jagannath. He lived the simple life as usual. Always he chanted the names of Lord Jagannath. Even he took the name of the Lord at the time of weaving. After weaving a piece of cloth he went to the village to sell it. While showing the cloth to a Brahmin, accidentally he caught sight of a coconut tree with a coconut over it. He thought to offer the coconut to the Lord. He wanted to take the coconut in exchange of the cloth. The greedy Brahmin seeing the devotion of Dasia towards the Lord told him that the price of coconut equals with the price of the cloth. Dasa never thought for a moment at Brahmin's words. He wanted money to purchase rice for the day's cooking. He came home, freshened up himself by taking bath and went to the Brahmin and fetched the coconut. On his way he found a Brahmin proceeding towards Puri with offerings

like jackfruit, mango, banana and cheese. Dasia was delighted at the sight and his spirits went higher up. He could not go to Puri then. Giving the coconut to the Brahmin devotee he told "Listen please, after offering your Manohi (offerings) to the Lord give this coconut and tell Him that Baligaon Dasa had sent this for Him. If he stretches his palm to accept the same, give the coconut or else get back my coconut, please". The Brahmin laughed in utter dismay and thought "it is useless to argue with this mad fellow; let me take this, I shall get it back." Agreeing he took the coconut. Dasia experienced greater delight and waited in excitement to find out if Lord Jagannath took the coconut in His hands. The Brahmin reached Puri and gave his offerings to the Sevaka for Manohi before the Lord. He took the Prasad after Manohi. While he stood up he was reminded of the request of Baligaon Dasa. Holding the coconut near the Garuda Pillar inside the temple he called Jagannath with a sense of devotion "O, Lord! Baligaon Dasa had sent this coconut for you. If you desire please take in your own hands or else he has asked me to take it back." The Brahmin being unable to realise the mystery spoke out these words very lightly. The poor Brahmin was stunned to find a bright big hand approaching towards him and disappeared in a moment after taking the coconut from his hands. Bewildered at the spectacle the Brahmin forgot the name of Lord Jagannath and was praying 'Baligaon Dasa' in his mind. Thanks to the Bhakti of Dasia! Thanks to his soul! By this time the Bhakti of Baligaon Dasa had spread far and wide, yet he is poor and by caste the lowliest, besides being illiterate. Hence his



Bhakti has not been accepted by the Pandas and Sevakas of the temple.

Once Dasia collected sweet ripe mangoes and proceeded towards Puri to handover the same to Lord Jagannath. On reaching the Lion's gate or 'Simhadwara' he was surrounded by the Pandas, who wished to take them to offer the same before Lord Jagannath. The Pandas became aggressive and vied with each other to take the same. Dasia laughed at this and told "I will not give these mangoes to any one of you. I will hand over the same to Lord Jagannath and he will eat the same before me. You will see it for yourself." The Pandas laughed at Dasia for his brave words and followed him up to take the same for Manohi as Sevaka. Dasia looking at the Nilachakra on the top of the temple with utter devotion cried "O" Prabhu ! I have brought the ripe mangoes for you. Please come and accept this from Dasia." The crowd consisting of Sevakas and other visitors were bewildered to find an unseen hand taking mango one after the other from the basket and the basket was soon empty. "Where are the mangoes ? Where are the mangoes ? The crowd raised the voice. Dasia told them "See, Lord Jagannath Himself if eating the mangoes."

With disbelief, half-belief a few of the Sevakas, went towards the Ratna Simhasana of the Lord. To their utter surprise they found remnants such as mango peels and mango stones strewn here and there and they were spellbound, their vision stopped for a moment. They immediately ran back with 'Dhandamal' and adorned the neck of Dasia and thanked Dasia for being able to physically conquer the heart of Lord Jagannath through his unmatched devotion. The name of Baligaon Dasa finally was a reality and his name was chronicled in the galaxy of Bhaktas or devotees.

It is said that after hearing the prayer of Baligaon Dasa, Lord Jagannath was so pleased with Dasia that he favoured him to have a glimpse of all his incarnations or Avatara. Dasia never wished for money or wealth neither any favour for enjoyment nor any earthly pleasure. He had Bhakti and he was a Bhakta par excellence. Thereby he was included in the family of the dear and near ones of the Lord Jagannath. His name is being remembered ever since and it finds place in the Oriya Purana 'Dadhyata Bhakti'.

N.B. : Reprinted from Orissa Review, July, 1996.

