



## The Legend Behind Mahaprasad and Nirmalya

*Tarakanta Mohanty*

Everybody knows that when the '*Prasad*', cooked in the temple of Lord Jagannath is offered to Goddess Bimala it becomes '*Mahaprasad*'. What is the eagerness of devotees of Lord Jagannath to get this Mahaprasad waiting hours long to get it in the temple of Puri ? By taking Mahaprasad, they feel that they have earned '*Punya*'. Even the dried Mahaprasad named as '*Nirmalya*' has its very demand. The people of Orissa preserve it to take even an iota of Nirmalya after performing daily Puja. Even in Orissa household it is required at the time of *Nirbandha* or (marriage negotiation). Even the bride and bridegrooms promise by holding Nirmalya that they will stick to this negotiation and not to betray each other. Moreover at the time of death, the Nirmalya and holy basil (*Tulsi*) with water is poured in the tongue and throat of the imminent deceased persons with the belief that by taking these items after their death their soul will remain in peace and there will be no '*Jamadanda*' (Punishment) of the Belzibup. This is primarily the Hindu conviction.



There is a legend behind Mahaprasad. It is in '*Tretaya*', that after beheading Ravana the ten-faced monster in Srilanka Lord Ramachandra, Laxman and others had just returned to Ayodha and the *Prajas* (subjects) were eulogising their heroic deeds. It was Urmila, the consort of Lord Laxman who was silently listening to the great happenings. All were unanimous that Laxmana was instrumental in killing Indrajit. All were discussing that Indrajit was so powerful and got boon that only that person

who has not taken food for fourteen years constantly and who has not slept for fourteen years uninterruptedly can kill Indrajit. There was a meeting inside the palace in the evening time to know the truth behind this matter. Lord Rama questioned to Laxman that, Oh Laxman you have not taken food for continuous fourteen years, and what happened to those food packets, which I had given you at Panchabati during our stay ? Laxman patiently replied, Oh Lord, I have kept all those fruits in hole of Sami Tree at Panchabati. In order to ascertain the authenticity Lord Rama said, Oh Hanuman you



go to Panchabati and bring back those food packets, which have been preserved in the hole of 'Sami Tree'. Lord Hanuman developed enigma on this matter. He thought, Lord is aware of my strength. He knows that I had brought the Gandhamardana in one hand, when Laxman was unconscious, the arrow of Indrajit. He became hesitant to bring those food packets, but at last he performed journey from Ayodhya to Sami Tree at Panchabati. Hanuman saw that those food packets have been kept intact but when he attempted to lift those food packets he could not lift and at last returned to Ayodhya and with humble words told his master, that he could not lift those food packets. Lord Rama could know that due to Hanumana's ego that he could not lift those food packets. At last Laxman said, Oh ! Respected brother, I will fetch those fruits from Panchabati. Laxman with his powerful arrow could bring back those food packets and all were accumulated in front of Lord Rama. Lord Rama was surprised and asked Hanuman to ascertain that whether the food items supplied to Laxmana for fourteen years have been kept intact or not ? Hanuman counted and informed that seven packets were not available. Lord Rama was eager to know from Laxman about those missing packets. Laxman most humbly replied, Oh my dear respected brother and Lord ! I am narrating the mystery behind it.

Laxman said that when you and I had listened the news of death of our dearest father, Dasaratha in the forest you had not supplied me, the food on that very day.

When we got the news that Ravana has kidnapped Sita from Panchabati on that day you did not supply the food packet. Then it was on third occasion when *Mahi Ravana* took both of us to *Patala* to offer sacrifice before Lankeswari on that day also we were in fast

and took no food.

On fourth occasion, when I became unconscious, due to arrow hitting of Indrajit I was not in a state to take food.

On the day when Indrajit was beheaded I had not taken food for fifth time. It was on the sixth occasion that when you beheaded Ravana you did not take any food. You had committed *Brahmahatya* as Ravana was a Brahmin and he was the son of Bissarba Rishi. Lastly, when there was national mourning due to death of Ravana in Sri Lanka on the next day we joined the mourning and left Lanka without taking any food.

Lord Rama was overwhelmed with the supreme sacrifice, dedication and renunciation of Laxman that Laxmana's *Bairagya* (renunciation) is *par excellence*. Then he praised the supreme *tyaga* (sacrifice) of Urmila, that how she spent fourteen years without Laxman.

'I had gone to fourteen years exile with my consort Sita. See such a wife who had made supreme sacrifice. She had eagerly waited the return of Laxman for fourteen years.'

'All praise goes to Urmila', Lord Rama told. 'In Ayodhya we have got three thrones, one for me, one for Sita and another throne for Laxman. I order to-day that the fourth throne will be installed for Urmila', said Rama.

Urmila with folded hands told Rama, that 'I have no desire for any throne. I may be given the opportunity to serve you. I have no aspiration.' Then Rama was pleased and told Urmila, to seek for the boon as she wants. Then humble Urmila with folded hands said that if you want to grant me any boon, then please grant that in the ages to come there will be neither any temple for me, nor I will be



worshipped on any throne. I want to become an incense stick by which I will give fragrance to you all. I will be at your lotus feet for ages to come as *Nivedita*.

Lord Rama was so pleased and overwhelmed with such devotion of Urmila that, he uttered, 'Oh Urmila' ! I grant you this boon that in the Iron Age (*Kalikala*) when I will be worshipped at Puri Temple, Goddess Laxmi will not be installed by my side. Laxman in *Tretaya* has become my younger brother and in *Kalikala* he will be elder brother Balabhadra. You will be *Mahaprasad* and by your fragrance you will spread the flavour and will be worshipped. Any Prasad which will be offered to me will be offered to Goddess Bimala and then it will be Mahaprasad and will be taken as Prasad by devotees. You will remain as Mahaprasad and *Nirmalya* for years

to come. Devotees will worship you and they will earn *Punya* for you, So *Tretaya's* Urmila is the *Bimala* in *Kalikala*. Glory to Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra and *Bimala*. Lord Rama further said, 'In *Kaliyuga*, you will be worshipped as *Annabrahma*'. Urmila further prayed, 'When you will be on *Ratna Singhasana* I will come in Bay of Bengal as a wave, the ripple (*Urmi*) to touch your golden feet. Lord Rama granting this boon and said 'Oh Urmila ! Your selfless love and sacrifice is unparalleled and *par excellence*; it will be immortalized forever.'

---

Tarakanta Mohanty is presently working as Deputy Director (Print Media)-cum-Deputy Secretary in the Information & Public Relations Department, Government of Orissa, Bhubaneswar.

