



Sri Ratna Bhandar in Sri Mandir

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Sri Jagannath Temple in Shrikshetra Puri is popularly known as 'Sri Mandir'. The most precious property of Sri Mandir is Sri 'Ratna Bhandar'. According to the rules and practices of Sri Mandir, the gold, jewels etc. offered to Sri Jagannath Mahaprabhu are to be stored in this Ratna Bhandar. This fabulous Treasury of the Jagannath Temple has been enriched by the contribution and donations offered by the devotees from all over the world. Sri Ratna Bhandar is situated on the northern side of the Jagamohan of Jagannath Temple.

According to 'Madala Panji' (Utkal University Publication-Page-31), King Anangabhimha Dev donated 2,50,000 'Madhas' of gold (1 Madha=1/2 Tola=5.8319 grams) for preparing Sri Jagannath's gold ornaments. The Suryavamsi rulers of Orissa offered valuable jewels and gold for Lord Jagannath. An inscription on the wall of Digvijay Dwar of Jagannath Temple records that Gajapati Kapilendra Dev offered huge quantity of gold and jewel ornaments and utensils to Sri Jagannath in 1466 A.D. Eminent Historian R.D. Banerjee in his "History of Orissa" (p-30) noted that many of the ornaments given to the God in 1466 A.D. were still in use in the year 1893.

After the demise of Gajapati Mukund Dev, his adopted son Lalmohan Dev (Bamanda Raja Sudhal Dev's grandson Mohini Mohan) was coronated as Gajapati Ramachandra Dev (IV) on 14.2.1926 and took over as Superintendent

of Sri Jagannath Temple and charge of the properties of the Temple. He gave receipts acknowledging the receipt of the items of valuable jewellery, cash etc. which were then in the Ratna Bhandar. The original lists of this with his acknowledgements have been kept in the Puri Collectorate Record Room in double-lock with the signature of Dayanidhi Das, the then Collector of Puri and attested by Rai Bahadur Lokanath Mishra and Mahant Gadadhar Ramanuj Das of Emar Math, two eminent persons of Puri town.

The Special Officer appointed under the Sri Jagannath Temple Act, 1952 states in Chapter-VI of his report that the articles mentioned in the list prepared in 1926, acknowledged by the then Raja of Puri and preserved in the Record Room of Puri Collectorate, are to be taken as the properties of Lord Jagannath in the Ratna Bhandar. The list which contains 837 items is published in Orissa Gazette (Extraordinary issued dated 3.9.1967).

The Ratna Bhandar in Sri Mandir has two chambers namely, the 'Bhitar Bhandar' (Inner Treasury) and 'Bahar Treasury' (Outer Treasury). The Record of Rights prepared under Puri Sri Jagannath Temple Act, 1952 contains a list of the valuable jewels and gold ornaments etc. of Lord Jagannath.

The list shows that there are 150 items of gold ornaments in the 'Bahar Bhandar' which include Suna Mukuta of Jagannath, Balabhadra



and Subhadra weighing 610, 434 and 275 Tolas (One Tola= 11.6638 grams) respectively; three gold necklaces (Haridakanthi Mali) weighing 120 Tolas each; Suna Sribhuja and Sri Payar of Jagannath and Balabhadra weighing 818 and 710 Tolas respectively and various other gold ornaments some of which are set with precious gem stones. The 'Bhitar Bhandar' has 180 items of jewellery including 74 items of pure gold ornaments some of which weigh more than 100 Tolas each, plates of gold, pearls, diamonds, corals etc. and 146 items of silver articles weighing more than 500 Tolas each.

Sri Jagannath Temple Act, 1954 (Orissa Act II of 1955) came into force on 27.10.1960. Sri Jagannath Temple Managing Committee headed by the Gajapati Maharaja, constituted in accordance with the provisions of this Act, took charge of the Temple on the same date. According to the provisions of the Act, the safe custody of the Ratna Bhandar is now vested with Sri Jagannath Temple Managing Committee. The Rule 5 of Sri Jagannath Temple Rules, 1960 prescribes that in no event any of the jewelleries shall be removed beyond the precincts of the Ratna Bhandar without specific orders of the State Government in that behalf and without full compliance with such conditions, if any that the Government may impose.

In accordance with the provisions of Sri Jagannath Temple Rules, 1960, the articles in Sri Ratna Bhandar are classified under three categories, viz, the articles that are kept in Bhitar Bhandar and never used (category-I); those that are used only on ceremonial or festive occasion (category-II); and those that are for daily use of the deities (category-III). One has to go through the Bahar Bhandar to enter into the Bhitar Bhandar.

The Rule 6 of the aforesaid Rules provides that the first category of articles shall remain under

double lock and sealed with the seal of the Managing Committee, the keys being deposited by the Administration in the Government Treasury. The locks may be opened only under special orders of the State Government and subject to such conditions and limitations as the State Government may by special order direct.

The second category shall, subject to the supervision and control of the Committee, be kept under double-lock the key to one of which shall be with the Administration and the other remaining with the Patjoshi Mahapatra. The locks shall, as occasion requires, be opened in the presence of the Administrator, Patajoshi Mahapatra, Deulakaran, Tadhau Karan and such other Members of the Committee as may be authorized from time to time in that behalf. On every such occasion the issue of these jewelleries shall be to the Bhandar Mekap on proper receipt attested by all the persons aforesaid. After the use of these jewelleries the Bhandar Mekap shall immediately return the same in the presence of the aforesaid persons and there upon the Administrator in the presence of Patajoshi Mahapatra redeposit the same in the Ratna Bhandar.

The third category of articles shall, subject to the control of the Committee, remain within the Ratna Bhandar under lock and key, the key remaining with the Bhandar Mekap who shall always remain accountable to the Administrator. The said articles for the purposes of their daily use of the deities shall be dealt with the manner laid down in the Record of Rights.

The second and third categories of articles shall be compared and verified periodically at least once in every six months by the Administrator and such other members of the Committee specially authorized by it in that behalf and the report of the Administrator shall be placed before the Committee for its consideration which shall forthwith submit its report to the State Government.



The verification of the Ratna Bhandar was taken up by the then Administrator L.Mishra in March 1962 which continued till August 1964. 602 items were checked. The verification report was placed before the Committee. In resolution No.28 dated 9.8.1966 it was decided that fresh verification should be done under the supervision of a Sub-Committee formed for the purpose.

In pursuance of the above resolution verification was again taken up in May 1967. Only 433 items were checked as revealed from Temple Administration Records. But no report on result of verification has been submitted to the Temple Managing Committee apparently because the work was incomplete.

No further verification of the Bhitari Bhandar (Inner Treasury) appears to have been made subsequently. Lists of articles in the Bahar Bhandar for daily use and occasional use were made during March'76 to July'76 and third lock was put on the Bahar Bhandar, the key of which was kept by the Administrator.

During Nilamani Routray Ministry the Orissa Government appointed a high-level committee on 7.4.1978 to go into the management of Sri Jagannath Temple and suggest measures for its improvement and better management. The then Governor Bhagabat Dayal Sharma was the Chairman of this Committee, Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingh Dev, Harekrushna Mahatab, Biswanath Das, Nityananda Kanungo, Radhanath Rath, Justice Harihar Mahapatra, Nandakishore Mishra and Ajodhya Das of Balaramkote Math were Members of this Committee. Bibhutibhusan Tripathy, I.A.S (Retd.) was its Secretary. The Committee presented its Report to the Chief Minister in the Raj Bhavan on 31.3.1979. At the instance of this Committee and under instruction of the State Govt. a complete inventory of jewellery gold and silver articles in the Ratna Bhandar was taken up in May 1978

and completed in July 1978. This has been included in the Committee's report. Regarding the implementation of the recommendations made in this Report, Justice Harihar Mahapatra, who was a Member of the Committee, has written in his Autobiography-Jiban O Jibika (published by Lark Books in 1987, Reprint-2004-page 471) that no action has yet been taken on the recommendations made in the Report and proper valuation of the jewelleries in the Ratna Bhandar could not be made except establishing a Hundi in the Temple.

A 'Hundi' has been established on 23.8.1983 in the Nata Mandap of Sri Mandir. Devotees are seen putting gold and jewels and cash into this Hundi. A statement published by Jagannath Temple Administration states that by October 2009, from the Hundi, 980.990 grams of gold and 50217.832 grams of silver have been collected. The devotees are also seen putting gold and silver jewellery into the Jharis Pindika placed on the Ratna Simhasan during 'Sahan Mela' Darshan and 'Parimanik' Darshan. Whether the gold and silver items collected from Hundi and Pindika are being kept in the Ratna Bhandar or somewhere else. Whether proper valuation of these are being made or not.

It appears from all these that proper valuation of the gold and jewels etc. in the Sri Ratna Bhandar of Sri Mandir has not yet been made. Judicious valuation of the precious materials in the Sri Ratna Bhandar is essential for its safe custody. Proper attention should be paid towards this and the steps taken for the safe custody of Sri Ratna Bhandar of Sri Jagannath Temple should be transparent. There should not be any suspicion in the minds of the devotees who are offering valuables for Sri Jagannath Mahaprabhu.

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