

## Angada Singh and Sri Jagannath

*Durga Madhab Dash*

Sri Jagannath is the all-merciful Lord. He is the ocean of profound divine love and fathomless compassion. One cannot guess when He crowns His devotees with mercy fulfilling their desires. Sri Jagannath is said to be the enigmatic Lord of the Universe. Scriptures say that He represents all religions. He is adored in myriad ways representing the various forms of gods in Hindu religion. The devotees of Sri Ram say that He is Sri Ram incarnate on earth. Vaishnavites say that He is worshipped in the wooden form as the incarnation of Lord Krishna. Buddhists describe Him as the Buddha, the enlightened Divine Form and the epitome of wisdom. Jains portray Him as Lord Mahavir. And so on.

The Lord's abode at Puri is known as Purusottam Kshetra.

It is one of the four pilgrim centres as per the spiritual diction of Hindu Mythology. His temple is known as the Grand Temple which is a mysterious shrine. Sri Jagannath is thus venerated

as the Sacred Divine Spirit related to all religions and all sects of the world. He is a multifaceted divine expression on earth.

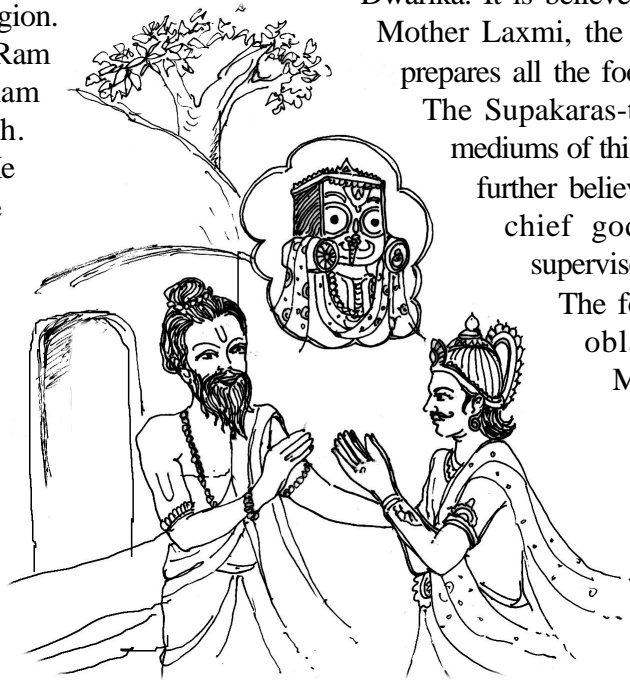
The offerings to the Lord are known as Mahaprasad. It is a unique divine practice. This system is not prevalent in the other three pilgrim centres namely Badrinath, Rameswaram and Dwarika. It is believed in this connection that Mother Laxmi, the consort of Sri Narayan prepares all the food in the Grand Temple.

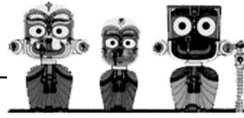
The Supakaras-the Cooks-are only the mediums of this divine performance. It is further believed that Ma Bimala, the chief goddess of the Temple, supervises all the food offerings.

The food offerings, after their oblation, are known as Mahaprasad.

There is a beautiful story in this regard. This would show that one Angada Singh, a very powerful general of the kingdom of Sainyagarh, became inclined to embrace

Jagannath Dharma as his own religion attracted by the divine miracles of Lord Jagannath, so much so that over the period of time, he became a Servitor of the Lord. The story runs as follows.





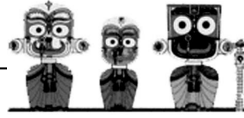
In the good old days, there was a kingdom in the north of India known as Sainyagarh. It was a powerful kingdom for its general, Angada Singh by name. One Din Salaha Singh was the king of the said kingdom. He ruled his subjects with the advice of his general. All the neighbouring rulers of his time were morally afraid of Angada Singh when they heard his name. Because of Angada Singh, others dared not attack Sainyagarh at any point of time. The king therefore loved Angada Singh as his own son.

Angada Singh was highly materialistic in his general behaviour. Puffed with the love and affection of the king, Angada Singh spent his time in worthless merriments. He was habituated to drinking and hunting. He considered himself very great in his outward dispensation and viewed God's great universe as a small earthen pot at his disposal. So the subjects of the kingdom pretended to respect him out of fear. They had no love for him from the core of their heart. Nobody ever knew that a person like him would have the blessings of Lord Jagannath over the period of time. Angada's life was therefore a great spiritual mystery.

As time passed by, Angada Singh married a simple and virtuous woman of his kingdom. Angada's wife was gracious in many ways. She was a devotee of Lord Jagannath. She loved the poor and the destitute. She patronized an orphanage. Everyday, Angada's wife performed some spiritual ritual or the other. Angada followed his wife's instructions in all spheres of his life. Both lived happily. Although Angada Singh was materialistic by nature, he was never averse to his wife's mode of living. Angada's wife had a strong belief that no man is born bad, sinful or immoral in life. Actually, the outward surroundings mould his character. We have many instances in our scriptures that subscribe to this spiritual truth. One such example which strikes one's attention

most is the life-style of Dasyu Ratnakar. The Dasyu was a killer of human beings. He eked out the livelihood of his family by robbing others in the deep forest. For that, he even did not mind taking the life of any human being who came on his way. One day wisdom dawned upon Ratnakar with the mediation of Rishi Narad. He became a virtuous person by repeating the name of Sri Ram. Later, he was known to the world as Rishi Valmiki. He became the author of the Ramayan, a very popular scripture of the Hindus. Angada Singh too had a similar influence in his life. He had the meditation of his beloved consort.

One day Angada Singh was out on some work as per the orders of his king. In accordance with the schedule of his programme, he was to return his home after four to five days. Angada took leave of his wife and set out for his destination. Angada's wife was naturally alone in the big palace. She therefore thought that in the absence of her husband, she would arrange some spiritual programme at her residence to spend her time. Thus she invited her Gurudev and organized a Satsang for three days. She invited her neighbours to the spiritual programme. The Stasang was organized in pomp and ceremony. On the occasion of the auspicious celebration, she fed the poor and the destitute of the capital. In the evening hours, the Guru delivered spiritual discourses. However, one day after, Angada Singh returned home by restricting his programme. At that time, the Guru was delivering a spiritual discourse. The return of Angada Singh contrary to his programme was a surprise to his wife. When Angada Singh entered the palace, he saw a big spiritual gathering. He became wild seeing the presence of so many common people at his residence. Everything around pricked his ego. In a huff, he proceeded straight to his room and scolded the servants indirectly aiming at his wife. The Guru came to know Angada's reaction. In



haste, he concluded the spiritual programme and left for his Ashram. Following him, all others dispersed to their respective places. The turn of the event shocked Angada's wife very much. She was complacent about her husband's change in the usual behaviour. She had a feeling that her husband had become spiritual-minded over the period of time. But it was not so. Angada's wife could not withstand her Guru's sudden departure from her place. Soon she swooned at the place where she was standing. Angada Singh got the information, ran to his wife and sprinkled water on her face. After some time, his wife regained consciousness and looked at the disturbed face of her husband who was full of remorse.

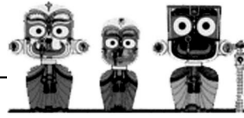
Angada Singh expressed his repentance for his unsavory behavior and apologized to his wife for the disastrous happening. Controlling her tears, his wife said, "My dear! You have committed a great sin today. You disrespected Gurudev Maharaj and hurt his feelings. Guru is God. He is the living God of his disciple. By displeasing your Gurudev today, you have displeased your living God. For attainment of your sin, you should now go to his Ashram and apologize for your misdeed. And at the same time, you should take a vow that you would not be succumbed to this sort of behaviour in future. Angada Singh did all that his wife advised him to do.

Man is the slave of time. He is the victim of circumstance. Over the period of time, an emperor may become a beggar or a beggar an emperor. There are many examples in scriptures which subscribe to this truth. Angada Singh who was an angry man of his time turned out to be a saintly person as time passed by. A big change came over his life due to the tiring efforts of his wife. A ferocious animal in Angada Singh actually became devoted to god under the advice of his Gurudev. At this, the joy of his wife knew no

bounds. She felt as if she had achieved everything in her life. Gradually, all austerities started in the life of Angada Singh. Nonetheless, he performed his duties as a very good general of the state. He performed Rajakarma like Arjuna with a spirit of total surrender at the lotus feet of the Lord. He listened to scriptures from his Gurudev with rapt attention. He embraced Lord Jagannath as his tutelary deity. He repeated the Mantras of Lord Jagannath everyday as initiated by his Gurudev.

One day king Din Salaha Singh informed Angada Singh that the emperor of Delhi was making preparations to attack their kingdom for reasons best known to him. He told Angada Singh to remain in readiness to fight a battle with the emperor's army when necessary or else the sovereignty of the kingdom would be at great stake. Angada Singh by then had made a programme to go on a pilgrimage to Puri with his wife. With the information of the king, he cancelled his programme and remained alert in the capital of his kingdom. Angada Singh assured his king that victory would be on their side if there was a battle with the emperor of Delhi. Angada Singh had utmost confidence in himself this time. He was fortified with the spiritual strength of the Lord. He had the blessings of Lord Jagannath in all his plans and preparations.

The emperor of Delhi, as per his programme, waged the battle against the kingdom of the Sainyagarh. The Subedar of the emperor was leading the emperor's army that was steady in the mission. However a miracle happened while the emperor's army was marching towards Sainyagarh. The Subedar received a message from the emperor that he was soon to divert a portion of the army to Delhi for some other reason not known to the Subedar. The Subedar was to reluctantly carry out the orders of the emperor. Despite a good portion of the emperor's army



thus withdrawn to Delhi, the Subedar had still strong confidence in his people. The battle was fought on the outskirts of the territory of Din Salaha Singh. Angada Singh however won the battle. The emperor's army was crushed to its last soldier. The Subedar was beheaded. At last the crown of the Subedar rolled on the ground. Angada Singh, found to his surprise that the Subedar's crown was an expensive royal insignia. It was studded with rare gems with a very nice piece of diamond at the centre of the crown. Angada Singh was attracted to the diamond of the crown. He took it out from the crown with the help of a sharp weapon and wished to present it to Lord Jagannath.

Next he appeared before Din Salaha Singh and formally conveyed the news about his victory in the battle. Thereafter, he presented the crown of the Subedar to Din Salaha Singh as a token of his rare achievement in the battle. He also informed the king that from thence onwards, he would retire from the royal assignment and live in Puri as a servitor of the Lord. Hearing the news about Angada Singh's decision to retire from the royal army, Din Salaha Singh was very much disturbed in his mind. By then, he had got information from the royal spies that Angada Singh had taken out from the crown of the Subedar the costly piece of the diamond. He incidentally asked his general, "Angada! I hear, you have taken out the expensive diamond from Subedar's crown. You have no right over it. Please return the diamond to the Royal Exchequer."

Angada couldn't believe his ears. He was surprised at the unkind words of Din Salaha Singh. Immensely hurt, he said to the king "Revered Sir, yes, I have taken out the diamond but it is not to my personal benefit. I wish to offer it to Lord Jagannath who, you know very well, is the presiding deity of my heart. The Lord has actually brought victory to our side."

Din Salaha Singh had no wisdom to understand the heart of Angada Singh. He had no devotion to the Lord. He was not happy to mark the note of obstinacy in the behaviour of his general. He knew very well that by showing his red eyes, he was not in a position to control his general. Angada Singh was extraordinarily powerful. So he decided to gently to cut his throat through dubious ways in a well-hatched conspiracy.

After some days, Din Salaha Singh called Angada's sister to his palace and said to her, "Look, oh you! I make it clear at the outset that your brother has at last come out a traitor. I want you to take his life away by giving him poison in his food which you are serving him every day. In lieu thereof, I shall give you plenty of wealth. If you refuse to carry out my order, I shall behead you right now and here."

Hearing the impious words of the king, Angada's sister was flabbergasted for a while. Out of fear, she had to agree to what the king had said at that moment as she had no other way to save her life. However, she was terribly upset in her mind.

Angada Singh always liked the food prepared by her sister. That night too, he sat down as usual to take his dinner. As per the daily practice, he first offered his food to Lord Jagannath. Next when he was about to raise his hand to his mouth, his sister shrieked at the pitch of her voice and blurted out how she had mixed poison in his food at the instance of the king. Angada visualized the entire scenario. He did not say anything to his sister. He knew very well that she was innocent in her behaviour. He simply said to her sister, "My dear, everything that has happened is the cosmic game of my Lord. He watches me right here whether I am taking the food myself which is already offered to Him. Hey Prabhu, since you have received the Prasad in my oblation, I shall take the same whatever be



the after-consequence in this regard.” And so saying, he started taking the food offered by her sister. His wife and his sister were observing his actions. Angada told his wife, “My dear, are you really worried? You should not, because I am taking the Mahaprasad of Lord Jagannath. This is not like any other ordinary food. This is the ambrosia of heaven.”

Angada Singh did not have in him the effect of the poison. Rather after consuming the food, he had a mark of spiritual resplendence on his face. The cosmic game of the Lord is beyond everybody’s comprehension. One has to have indomitable faith in him to understand the implications of his divine sports. At last, Angada Singh made up his mind to renounce the material world and settle down at Puri. Next morning, he set out in his journey. He carried the diamond in his possession to offer it to Lord. Din Salaha Singh came to know of this from his spy. Without the knowledge of anybody, he ordered his trusted soldiers to kill Angada Singh on the way and snatch the diamond from his possession.

Angada Singh was on his way to Puri. Two days’ after the soldiers rode on their horses and caught Angada Singh in the deep forest while he was sitting in meditation. The soldiers shook him from meditation and demanded the diamond at the points of their swords. Angada was at first baffled. He had no sword to fight with the soldiers. He prayed to God saying, “Hey Prabhu ! You are the Lord of the helpless. I am in a helpless situation now. I have mentally offered the diamond to you. How can I now hand over it to Din Salaha Singh ? You are the omnipresent Lord. You are present here at the moment. Take this diamond which I am throwing into the nearby pond.” So saying, he threw the diamond into the pond near which he was sitting.

The soldiers were surprised at the behaviour of Angada Singh. They never thought that Angada Singh would throw the diamond in

the pond. Helpless they returned to the kingdom and narrated to the king the details of the entire happening. Din Salaha Singh at last kept quiet.

That day, in dream, Lord Jagannath appeared and said to Angada Singh, “Angada, you had thrown the diamond into the pond; is not it ? However I have received the same and the diamond is now set in the middle of the locket of the necklace I am wearing. You come to the temple and see it for yourself.” The dream broke the slumber of Angada Singh. He got up overwhelmed in divine ecstasy. In the next morning, he resumed his journey to Puri.

After some days, Angada Singh reached Puri. He went inside the temple and standing behind Garuda pillar, he had the Darshan of the deities seated on the divine throne. He saw the diamond nicely fixed in the middle of the locket of the necklace which the Lord was wearing. He felt as if Prabhu was smiling at him extending his powerful hands to receive him on his lap.

From that day onwards, Angada Singh lived in Puri. He spent his time singing the Bhajans of the Lord and repeating His Name. The glory of Angada Singh began to spread far and wide in the country. Din Salaha Singh got information about the spiritual achievements of Angada Singh. One day he came to Puri and took him to Sainyagarh where he lived for the rest of his life. The king became his disciple.

The cosmic sports of the Lord are beyond our comprehension. The Lord is indescribable in words. His Lilas are miraculous and one cannot ascribe any reasoning to them. One should be His blind follower to attain Moksha in life.