



A Votive Offering to Lord Jagannath

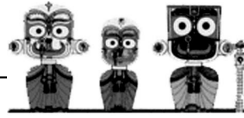
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There are a lot of legends on Lord Jagannath and his devotees existing since time immemorial either in print or in palm leaves. Yet a lot of them continue to exist in the form of story telling from generation to generation and not found place in black and white. The present piece is neither a legend nor a fiction but a historical fact probably not known widely. This happened when this country was under the suzerainty of Muslim Emperor, a Badshah.

There was a tailor in Delhi, the capital of the Empire. The name of the tailor was Siputi. Siputi was a skillful and a creative tailor. As such his name spread far and wide. One day Badshah having heard his professional reputation called Siputi to the palace. Siputi arrived at the Royal palace in obedience to the royal call. Badshah ordered two round pillows to be used over the royal throne. The tailor was also supplied with the required materials like costly velvet cloth, gold, diamond and pearls from the royal store so that the pillows should befit the enviable throne of Badshah. Siputi was instructed to deliver the pillows within a reasonable time frame.

Siputi, on receipt of the order from Badshah engaged himself in the work day in and day out in order that the pillows to be handed over in time. Forgetting his household chores he

completed the work. On completion of the work Siputi had a last look of the finished product for which he had toiled hard and prepared with all his artistic imagination and creative idea utilizing the best of the materials like pearls, gems and diamonds which he had received from the royal store for the purpose. Siputi became spell bound to see the exhilarating and exquisite of the work. He heaved a sigh of satisfaction which was by far the best of the works he had ever done so far. Incidentally that was an auspicious day of car festival of Lord Jagannath and the time was late afternoon. That reminded Siputi about the outing of the Lord last year which he had witnessed after covering the distance from Delhi to Puri (then it was a difficult proposition in view of lack of communication facility). Every moment of the event flashed before him and he became exceptionally emotional for a moment and engrossed to recapitulate the same. He knelt down then and there and prayed that poverty deprived him to go and have a Darshan and to touch that sacred rope of the car. Spontaneously an idea came to his mind. He looked intensely to both the pillows which appeared to him very extraordinary and such a thing was meant for an extraordinary God rather than for an ordinary human being. With this thought in mind he held one of the pillows in both the hands and offered it to his God, Lord Sri



Jagannath and intoned “O my Lord, almighty today is a great day for you as you must be travelling in your car along with your uncountable devotees. Please accept this pillow as a mark of my devotion to your Majesty the way you had accepted a cocoanut from your dear devotee, Dasia from a distance.” Siputi became so emotional that tears rolled down from his eyes. And Lo! Behold! a stretched hand out of nowhere took away the pillow. Siputi himself could not believe it. His tears of sorrow turned to be tears of joy. Indeed his happiness knew no bound. Again he prayed and submitted his gratitude to the God, Sri Jagannath for accepting the votive offering and having heard his prayer.

The pleasure and happiness of Siputi did not last long. The next moment Siputi heard the knocking of the doors and shrilled voice of some people outside. He opened the door and as anticipated found the Sepoy of the palace sent by the Badshah to collect the pillows which were overdue for delivery by the time. Siputi became dumfounded when the Sepoys asked him to come to the palace with the pillows. He could not decide what to do. He closed his eyes and had a Darshan of benevolent and compassionate lord Jagannath to overcome impending danger or consequences whatsoever. He went to the palace with the rest pillow in the hand.

Siputi arrived at the palace (Darbar) while Badshah was busy with his officials on some important problems. The moment Badshah saw Siputi, living the discussion halfway, enquired about the pillows. Siputi submitted plainly that the pair of clothes where finished but he had brought only one. Badshah wanted to know about the other. Siputi told that he offered it to his god Lord Jagannath, who accepted it too such an argument was not at all acceptable for Badshah and he was the last person to believe this version of an ordinary tailor. First of all he wanted to know who Shri

Jagannath was. Siputi didn't hesitate to explain about his revered Lord Jagannath worshipped in the great temple of Puri. Badshah still didn't trust the tailor and now he threatened him to tell the truth about the pillow, if not, be ready to face the consequence. Unperturbed an unprovoked Siputi repeated his version that a hand came out of nowhere and took out the pillow the moment he offered it. He was the only witness of this scene. Little by little overtaken completely with anger Badshah had a villainy laugh and said “what”! I've heard that your Jagannath has neither hands nor legs. How could he come to Delhi and took away the pillow in his hand and who the hell will believe it.”

This was too much for Siputi to bear with. Confidently but softly he reiterated “Hoozor! It is not good to say ill of my God. My God and your Allah are same, only the format is different. You are going to mosque and I am going to temple for the same purpose in life. God is omnipresent. They do not need legs to walk or hands to work. As such it is not desirable to laugh away with such offending language.” This was too much for the royal blood or Badshah to bear with such language from an ordinary subject and screamed “how dare you talk like this”, and asked his sepoys put Siputi in the prison fettered and handcuffed. The sepoys of the royal palace rushed and obeyed the master's order without delay. “Hoozor punish me but don't talk ill of my god Shree Jagannath”. The sepoys didn't allow him to talk a word more and dragged him to the dark prison.

Time rolled on hour by hour and tears rolled down from the eyes of poor Siputi inside the dark prison. But he did not repent for his deed. From the core of his heart he offered prayer devotionally that he was not at all sorry for the punishment meted to him by the cruel Badshah. But he was surely sorry for the ignorance of the divine power of the God. He should be made to



learn a lesson on this score. The invocation of fettered Siputi inside the dark prison in Delhi vibrated his God on the car at Puri. Shree Jagannath is very fond of his devotee. As such the punishment of his devotee was painful for Him and rushed to rescue Siputi, the devotee inside the prison. The dark prison veered into bright cell and the entire prison was scented with camphor and incense aroma. Siputi had a clear sight of a cherubic figure of non other than Sree Jagannath right in front of him. Siputi became emotional and spellbound in presence of the ever longing Almighty. With tearful eyes Siputi knelt down immediately and said, "O my Lord! I am ready to accept any punishment meted out to me but I can't bear any thing ill of you the way Badsah did. Badshah should understand the superpower of the God which is beyond the imagination of an ordinary human being". At this moment Siputi observed that Lord was smiling at his peril. He remained silent for a moment. Siputi felt ashamed at such a situation as if he is offended by his revered God. But next moment he observed that he is free of his chains and handcuffs and prison doors were wide open. Now Siputi could realize the mystery behind the smile of his God. At this moment Siputi heard a voice that he is now free and can go away as per his will. But he prayed and thanked Lord Jagannath for making him free. But he did not want to go away as a fugitive. The Badshah should realize the power of the God and come himself to release him from the prison. The next moment he heard a voice "tathastu"(Ok) and the cherubic figure vanished in the oblivion. The darkness again reigned inside the prison and there was no more aroma of the camphor or the incense.

Badshah was in deep sleep in his royal bedroom. He dreamt that some person too dark in color and with bulging and big eyes and having a cane in one hand, said "O King ,how did you

dare to imprison my Devotee ? He is there without food and water in the dark prison. You deserve punishment of your offence" and struck with the cane. The Badshah got up and for a moment he could not understand the mystery of the dream or its significance. Next moment he found deep red impression of caning of his body which were painful too. Then he realized that what he dreamt was not a simple dream but something real. This made him to shiver like bamboo leaves in anticipation of a danger ahead. Now he could not sleep and tried to memorise his mistake of offending the God of Siputi.

Early in the morning next day Badsah along with his minister proceeded to the prison. To his astonishment he found the door of the prison were wide open. The fetter and the handcuffs of the security were also free. He looked at Siputi. Bright rays were emanating from the face of Siputi and with closed eyes he was uttering repeatedly "Jay Jagannath". Badshah felt guilty with his ill behaviours and knelt down before Siputi. He requested him to pardon. Siputi was completely engrossed in prayer. Now he opened his eyes and listening the voice of Badshah and found him folded hands right before him. Siputi immediately held the hands and told "Hoozor! I am your subject and you are the Emperor of this land. As such this is not right to beg me apology. You may beg apology to my God. He can pardon you with his affectionate nature and kindness to persons of any sect, who repent for the past deeds."

The Badshah not only released Siputi, but also rewarded him with royal honour. From then on Siputi completely absorbed himself uttering "Sri Jagannath" till he breathed his last.

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