

Retrospect and Prospect of Temple Administration

Soumendra Mudali

Out of the four abodes (Dhammas) of Lord Vishnu, Puri the abode of Lord Jagannath, (reincarnation of Lord Vishnu) is the synthesis of peace, devotion, integrity, harmony, traditions and beliefs of all categories of devotees, who come to Him. From ages this great tradition has taught us the values of socializing process, cultural life style and religious thought processes. Lord Jagannath is the living deity of all Hindus. It is therefore the nature and aim of all those who are associated in His services to establish an ideal in their behaviour and manners, to fascinate all.

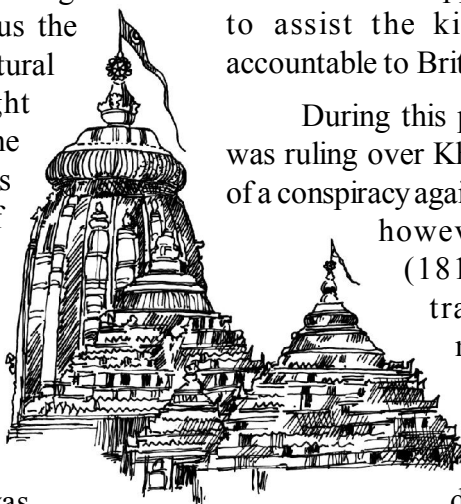
Streamlining the Administration of Jagannath Temple, an Amendment Bill was passed in 1955 to improve the financial condition. In 1590 Mughal Empire selected the king of Khurda Sri Ram Ch. Dev as the Superintendent of Temple, till 18th century the succession continued. The temple of the Lord was taken to possession by the British on 18th September, 1803. The English Govt. appointed Parichhas to regulate the daily rites of the temple. According to the Regulation 4 of 1806 the management of the temple was vested to a

corporate body of 3 scholars appointed by the British Government. However this assembly was abolished and once again the management was transferred to the king. The king's administrative activities were controlled by the Government on appointment of three servants to assist the king, who were directly accountable to British Government.

During this period king Mukunda Dev was ruling over Khurda. He became the prey of a conspiracy against the British Government, however he was acquitted in (1819) and once again transferred the charge of management of the temple, mostly to see the timely performances of daily rituals and maintaining discipline among the servitors.

In the post independent period government put emphasis on the temple management and increment of revenue. King Birakishore Dev, the father of the present king Sri Dibya Singh Dev occupied the throne on 11.11.1956.

The process of administrative deterioration started since the time of king



Rama Chandra Dev. There were great deviations in the daily rituals, frequent altercations among different sects of servitors regarding their rights, privileges and dues, which resulted in non-cooperation to serving the Lords. Withdrawal from the field to duty was felt to be the main weapon to establish their rights. Taking all these problems into view, the State Government decided to prepare a "Record of Rights". In 1952, the services of all sects of servitors, their duties, rights and privileges were defined and presented in a consolidated form. Despite this there was administrative set back, which did not bring about expected results in the smooth administration of the temple. The mismanagement was not only due to the inter personal conflicts among the servitors, but more due to the detachment of the king from the management as the superintendent of the temple. For timely performance of rituals and to bring the servitors under the disciplinary track, the Jagannath Temple Act 1955 was passed. In this Act provision for forming a Managing Committee, a group of four members from the servitor community were taken as members. But all executive powers were vested with the Administrator, an officer appointed by the Government. All these efforts to improve the administrative efficiency of Jagannath temple, were futile, rather it opened avenues for litigation. The servitors became more conscious about demanding their rights without doing their duties, which is their prime responsibility. They became more organised through their Nijogas, (organized sects of servitors) to put the administration in difficult situations, rather they wanted to exploit the administration for minor demands.

The notable among the successful administrators is Late Paramananda Tripathy,

who did some remarkable achievements in the administrative set up, by introducing positive incentives to servitors, bus services, revenue collections by appointing educated servitor class youths in different spheres of Temple Administration. The writer had the opportunity to serve as the first Curator of the present museum, Niladrivihar inside the temple premises in 1969. Timely routine performance of daily rituals, renovation of sacred tanks, e.g. Swetaganga, Markandiya, Narendra and Indradyumna tanks, plantation and beautification of Sree Mandir gardens and interior of Gundicha temple need to be mentioned.

In course of time anarchy in temple management reached its peak, by withdrawal from the services of the Lords as a threat to exploit the administration in the establishment of illegitimate claims, demanding high bonus at the time of important festivals, misbehaviour to devotees, moneytary exploitation to pilgrims to go beyond the Record of Rights became the main cause of discontentment among Gajapati, the officers of temple management and it went beyond the threshold of tolerance.

Gajapati king as the Chairman of the Managing Committee having been extremely perplexed with the deteriorating situation of Temple Administration went door to door in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack to beg help from conscious and efficient retired officers to bring about a reform in the Temple Administration. His effort continued for about a decade. Ultimately king cameout successful to convince the government to implement certain reformatory measures and submitted the proposal on 26.6.2000.

In the pannel of reformatory proposal the Gajapati king is the chairman, Additional Chief Secretary as the Vice Chairman, Chief Administrator, not below the rank of Commissioner as the Secretary, who is the Chief Executive Officer. Besides, Administrators for Development of Niti, Security of Temple and Deputy Administrator for Development and works, Assistant Administrators for works, Revenue, Establishment and Miscellaneous, Finance, Publicity and Cultural, Tourist and Public Relations Officers and Junior Engineers find place in the reformation.

As the first Chief Administrator Sri Suresh Ch. Mohapatra, IAS was directed to take charge on 24.2.2005. He has a name and fame as an efficient administrator.

In the initial stage without spending a single pie from the temple fund he led a batch of conscious servitors to Tirupati to observe their pattern of administration and to implement in Jagannath Temple, which ever will be viable. He has appointed a few qualified sevak youths as Temple Security Staff, Charcha staff and few have the opportunity in getting attached to temple office.

The Chief Administrator has many more plans and proposals regarding improvement of the standard of Mohaprasad, renovation of Anand Bazar, where Mohaprasad is sold and served among devotees. The most vital aspect is the security of the temple of which atleast 4

close circuit cameras are installed at 4 main entrance gates and there is proposal for installation of close circuit cameras inside the temple premises and Garva Gruha, to know and regulate the behaviour of servitors, devotees and antisocials. He has many constructive and time demanding proposals to be implemented soon, but without understanding its importance, some selfish illiterate, politically oriented people put unnecessary hindrances.

Due to alarming increase in number of devotees during free Darsan (Sahana Mela), in the morning carbon dioxide is heavily deposited in Garva Gruha, which creates a choking breathing sensation and ultimately many fall fainting. Proposal has been placed by the writer to make arrangement for the exhaust of cabondioxide inside the Garva Gruha.

By crowding of so many high level officers in the office of the Temple Administration it is very much taxing on the temple budget. However, there should be remarkable results in the timely performance of rituals, which conscious individuals are waiting for.

Soumendra Mudali is a servitor of Lord Jagannath Mudali Lane, West Gate of Temple, Puri.

