Patkhandha Deity of Jarasingha: Hope for Mentally Retarded and Issueless couples

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Patkhandha Jatra is a popular Jatra of Jarasingha in Bolangir district. Jarasingha is a village situated on the bank of Sungad, which is a local stream. Previously, Jarasingha was under the Patna kingdom. There was a Kandha Zamindar in Jarasingha. The reigning deity of this village is Budhi-Aai. Every year, a festival is organized in honor of the deity on the full moon day of Asadha (June-July). But, the festival celebrated in honor of Patakhandha deity is very popular. It is celebrated in the month of Aswina (September-October). It begins on the second day of bright fortnight of Aswina and ends on the full moon day of Aswina. People believe that, Patakhandha cures the mentally retarded persons and blesses the issueless couples to have children. So, the deity is famous.

As per the myth, a Kandha couple was staying in a small shed in a remote village near San-Khemundi of Ganjam district. Daily, they used to gather fruits, leaves and firewood from the jungles for their living. Once, the Kandha man had borrowed some money from one money-lender. After some days, the Sahukar came to him to collect money. At that time, the Kandha couple had been to jungles. The Sahukar waited them in front of their hut. He noticed a basket full of living fishes hanging from the roof of the hut. Below the basket there was a Panki i.e. local made knife. He observed that, a fish automatically jumped from the Khalei on the Panki and the sharp Pankhi cut the fish into two pieces. It was surprising for the Sahukar. He saw this amazing sight. He realized that, the Pankhi might have some miraculous power.

In the evening, the Kandha couple returned from the jungle. the Sahukar said that, if the Kandha couple could give him their Pankhi, then he would waive the loan they had taken from him. The Kandha couple handed over the Pankhi to the Sahukar. At night, the Sahukar saw a dream. Patakhandha Devta appeared and told him that he was in the form of that Pankhi. The deity asked the Sahukar to carry the Pankhi with him. Next morning, the Sahukar took the Pankhi with him and reached on the bank of the river Sungad. He kept the Pankhi on a clean and safe place under a tree and went to have a bath. When he returned, he did not find the Pankhi. He searched a lot but it was in vain. He thought that, it was the wish of the deity.

That night, Patakhandha Devta appeared in the dream of the Kandha Zamindar of the village situated on the bank of the river Sungad and introduced himself. The deity asked him to worship him. The Kandha Zamindar said that, the presiding deity of the village is Budhi-Aai. Without her permission, he cannot worship him. So, Patakhandha Devta met Budhi-Aai and expressed his desire. Budhi-Aai told him that, she is the Samanta Devi of Pataneswari of Patnagarh. She is the sovereign deity of this whole kingdom. Jarasingha is under her kingdom. If she permits, then you can stay at Jarasingha.

Patakhandha Devta approached Pataneswari Devi and sought her kind permission. Pataneswari told him, “It is alright. You will also remain as my Samanta in Jarasingha. People will offer you special puja after the completion of my Yatra in the month of Aswina (September-October) every year. Sindura from my temple and Pata-Kana from Samaleswari temple will be provided to you. Then, you will get my power. Since then, Patakhandha Devta has been residing in the hole of a Mahul tree (Madhuca indica) in ‘De-Jhar’. ‘De’ means deity and ‘Jhar’ refers to jungle. So, ‘De-Jhar’ denotes ‘jungle of deity’ or ‘the jungle where deities reside’. If the tree dies due to some reasons or other, then the
deity is transferred to another Mahul tree. Significantly, Patakhanda Devta resides only in the Mahul tree.

There is another historical legend associated with the origin of Patakhanda Devta. It is said that, the fort of Bastar was besieged by the soldiers of Patnagarh. Then, an old lady used to visit the camp of the soldiers and selling Mudhi (prepared from rice) to the soldiers. Everyday, some soldiers were dying after having that Mudhi. The king of Bastar invited two Gunias (Black Magicians) named Hira and Madan from Patnagarh to know the reason. Hira and Madan knew that, an old lady was coming to the camp to sell Mudhi. She was Bastaren herself, the presiding deity of Bastar. She was coming in disguise to weaken the strength of Patna king. Hira and Madan suggested the king to win over the deity first if wanted to win over Bastar. They requested the king to worship Bastaren Devi and please her. Accordingly, Patna Raja worshipped the deity and satisfied her. He assured the deity that, after his victory over Bastar, he will make all arrangements for her worship all over his kingdom.

It is said that thereafter, the puja of Bastaren Devi has been prevalent in all village of Patna kingdom. During this war, Patna Raja had requested Pataneswari Devi to bless him. The deity presented him a Khanda i.e. sword, which helped the king to win over Bastar kingdom. In this warfare, the Kandha Zamindars and his subjects of Jarasingha had extended their cooperation, which finally led to victory of Patnagarh. When the king returned from Bastar, he presented the Khanda to the Kandha Zamindar of Jarasingha. Then, Pataneswari Devi permitted the Kandha Zamindar to worship the Khanda. This is why the Patakhanda puja is also known as Bira-Puja to commemorate the victory of Patnagarh over Bastar.

Now three small pieces of iron plates are worshipped as Patakhanda Devta. If these three pieces are jointed together, it would not look like a Khanda i.e. sword. Rather, it will take the shape of a Pankhi, a locally made knife used for cutting vegetables and fishes etc. Annual worship in the form of Patkhanda Jatra is performed in the month of Aswina. Sindura comes from Pataneswari temple of Patnagarh. Pata-Kana comes from Samaleswari temple of Patnagarh. Chhatar and Kalasa come from the temple of Budhi-Aai. Then only Patakhanda Yatra begins. When the deity appears through Barua or ascends in the body of Barua, he comes out with these three iron pieces with his hands.

Animal sacrifice is prevalent on this occasion. It is believed that, the head of the sacrificial animal ought to be dissociated from the body at one stroke only. Patakhanda Jatra in Jarasingha, besides providing entertainment, has been used to spread the message that, the deity is capable to cure the mentally retarded person and cure the ‘Bandhya-dosa’ of woman. This festival is based on faith and belief, where medical science has nothing much to do.

REFERENCE