

निश्चित रूप से किया ही जाए। दोनों पहलुओं पर सख्त कार्रवाई करने की आवश्यकता है।

Maintenance and repairs of World Famous Jagannath Temple at Puri

SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR SAHU (Orissa): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I want to raise a very important matter which concerns the people of this country at large and, specially, of Orissa. It was a shocking news that on Shravana Purnima day last Thursday, one big stone in the inner temple of Puri fell down into the *sanctum sanctorum* of Lord Balabhadra. Puri is a unique religious place where lakhs of people assemble all through the year. The car festival of Puri is so famous that it attracts pilgrims not only from our own country but from foreign countries also. The word "Jagannath" has been taken by lexicographers of the English language to symbolize something big and something very unique. From the 12th century, when this temple was constructed, it has occupied a very important place for the religious assimilation of different cultures prevailing in the country. During the car festival, which is a unique festival, Adivasis, Harijans and people belonging to different religious cultures all gather here. Long before the Independence of India, in the 12th century, here was, for the first time, cultural unity which was shown in the religious worship system of Lord Jagannath. Not only that. The car festival is now observed in different parts of the world and it has attained an international status. So, when lakhs of people go there, the falling of this stone does not augur well. Such a thing had happened even two years back. A big stone fell down two years back and till now it has not been restored by the Archaeological Survey of India. The latest incident happened last Thursday and it was for the first time that a big stone fell in the inner sanctum, which shows the gravity of the situation.

Sir, this temple is a unique religious and cultural institution but it has been in continuous negligence so far as its maintenance and repairs are concerned.

Apart from the fall of the stone, a beam has been missing from the first floor and it has not yet been replaced. Luckily the Director of the Archaeological Survey of India has gone there.

Sir, if one had visited this temple 20 years before, he would have noticed that there was a thick infestation of pest and it was whitewashed. Before that there was no seepage of water inside the temple. For seven years the Archaeological Survey of India has been removing the pest and thus there has been seepage in the temple and the area has become totally wet. Now, it is a matter of grave importance that when there are international gatherings there and the car festival is observed in different places, only a small Overseer in charge of the Archaeological Survey of India is posted there to maintain it. It is a matter of shame. I say that a team of the Archaeological Survey of India along with its Director should go there, study the problem and must submit their report. The Government must also say how they are going to protect the temple, maintain and repair it. It is not only the responsibility of the Government to send a team to visit that temple but they should also see that the temple is properly maintained and repaired. Therefore, Sir, I demand through you, let a statement come before this House as to how they are going to preserve and maintain the safety of this ancient monumental temple where the idols are worshipped as living deities, which is a centre of religion and pilgrimage.

Secondly, Sir, through you I appeal to the Government that an expert committee should be appointed and the local sculptors, who have inherited, through generations, *Shilpa Shashtra*, should be consulted to go into this matter. If necessary, they may write to UNESCO to provide the necessary experts in the field and take their help also in the preservation of this great temple as otherwise, if we happen to lose it, it will be a great loss and the future generations will not excuse us.

Sir, Puri is the symbol of religious unity. The first guru of the Sikhs, Guru Nanak, visited Puri, Muslims visit it, Adivasis and Harijans worship there. In this

[Shri Santosh Kumar Sabu]

temple there is the unique worship of two brothers and a sister. It is unique in its own way that here in India it has assimilated the form of sculpture in which the perfect human figure is derived. It is how cubism has developed, which is the symbol of modern art. That is why all the world's people are interested in it. The car festival is observed not only in India but in America, Europe and other continents. So, it is unique. It is piece of great art. It is a great architecture. It is religious. Its uniqueness must be maintained at any cost. I ask through you to the Government that this national monument, this religious centre of international standing, must be maintained. The Government must come out with a statement. They must take the help of experts in the country and also help of international experts and the UNESCO, if necessary. They cannot go on with a negligence like this. Seven years they have taken. They are removing the paintings. They have not yet completed the job.

Two years back a stone fell from the outer side of the Temple. They have not fixed it. The beam of the first floor has been completely destroyed. That has not been restored.

Now, again a slab fell in the inner sanctum on the Gamha Punei day, the birthday of Lord Balabhadra. Luckily the worship was over, and no human being was there. Had it come down earlier, hundreds of people would have died. When the news spread in Puri, thousands of people thronged to that place.

I urge upon this Government to take it up with all seriousness and see that the Temple is maintained and preserved. On that immediately the Government must come out with a statement, on how they want to preserve the Temple. An expert committee may be constituted with with different experts in the country. The seepage has happened because the outside plaster was removed. It was done earlier. Now modern technical skills must be followed, and plaster must be applied so that seepage does not occur further and that the Temple is not damaged further.

This is a very shocking news. Even English newspaper, national newspaper has said, "Puri Tempel is ruined." Please save it at any cost. Otherwise, the future generation will blame us that we were very callous, that our authorities did not maintain it. Let us not get the blame.

Sir, I appeal to you humbly with my strength that this demand of the people of Orissa and the people of India and also the people of the world who assemble at Puri every year, must be fulfilled. I urge upon you that urgent step must be taken for it. You must tell Parliament what steps you are taking to restore it.

Thank you.

श्री विष्णु कांत शास्त्री (उत्तर प्रदेश): माननीय उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं आप को इससे सम्बद्ध करता हूँ और समझता हूँ कि भारत की संस्कृति की रक्षा के लिए, भारत की एकता की रक्षा के लिए, पुरी हमारा सर्वोत्तम प्रतीक है। सारे धर्मों में से एक धर्म है। सारे देश के लोग, सभी दलों के लोग इस मांग के हैं कि अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर भी पुरी के मंदिर के संरक्षण के लिए, उसके सौंदर्य के सम्बर्द्धन के लिए जो कुछ भी किया जा सकता है वह अवश्य किया जाना चाहिए।

मैं माननीय सदस्य की इस मांग को अपने आप को पूरी तरह से जोड़ता हूँ।

श्री चतुरानन मिश्र (बिहार): यह सभी सदस्यों का साथ है।

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHA (Andhra Pradesh): We all associate ourselves with what our friend has said.

SHRIMATI MIRA DAS (Orissa): Sir, I associate myself with what has been expressed by the hon. Member. I come from Orissa. At that moment I was present in the Temple. I know the sentiments that were there against the Archaeological Department. A very grave situation was there. Along with the hon. Member, I also demand that the Government should not neglect that Temple.