राष्ट्रदुत

#STRANGE

A Spider Like A Leaf

Leaf-Mimicking Orb-Weaver of Yunnan: A Master of Disguise





Araneidae family, this spider

has evolved an extraordinary

defense: it looks almost exact-

ly like a dead or decaying

leaf. This form of camouflage allows it to evade predators

real leaf. When the spider sits

motionless among real

foliage, it becomes nearly

leaves or tree bark, curling

its legs to enhance the illu-

sion. At night, it becomes

more active, often leaving its

hiding spot to build its intri-

cate orb-shaped web to catch

ment, survival often depends

on the ability to avoid being

seen. Birds, reptiles, and

larger insects are natural

predators, and camouflage is

kev. The orb-weaver's mimic-

ry not only protects it from

predation but also increases

hunting success by allowing

tles. The spider typically

hides during the day and

spins its web at dusk. If dis-

turbed, it will retreat to a

nearby hiding spot or drop to

the ground, remaining still

to maintain its disguise.

flying insects

effectively.

During the day, it rests on

eep within the lush Yunnan Province, China. lives a remarkable arachnid known as the eaf-mimicking orbweaver spider. A rare and fas-

and surprise prey in one of Asia's most biodiverse

he leaf-mimicking orbweaver, likely a species from the genus Poltys or closev related genera, displays a lattened body with jagged edges, earthy brown or greenish colouring, and markings that resemble leaf veins. Some individuals even appear to have a central 'midrib' down their abdomen, mimicking the natural texture of a

Habitat in Yunnan Rainforest

he Yunnan Rainforest, located in southwest China near the borders of Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam, is a biodiversity hotspot. This region hosts tropical and subtropical forests with rich plant and insect life, ideal conditions for orb-weaver spiders. In it to ambush prey more this dense, humid environ-

ike other orb-weavers, L the leaf mimic constructs large, symmetrical webs, often between trees or shrubs. These webs are designed to capture flying insects like moths and bee-

his spider plays an impor-L tant ecological role as a predator of harmful insects. In turn, it supports a balanced

Its presence also indicates a healthy ecosystem, as such specialized species rely on stable environmental conditions food web in Yunnan's forests.

he leaf-mimicking orbweaver of Yunnan is a striking example of evolution and adaptation. Its ability to disappear in plain sight highlights nature's ingenuity. As

habitat loss threatens species across China, preserving the Yunnan Rainforest is crucial. not just for the spiders, but for the entire web of life that thrives there.





Dr. Shri Gopal

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own.

in life they wish for,

both

except a child of

their own Unitary family,

husband and

wife both well edu-cated,

well placed, well off,

loving and caring.

They are more

than happy with

their vocations,

yet, inspite of being

busy and contended,

there is an intense

sense of emptiness in

Two years in marriage,

After confirmation of preg-

nancy, she has the happy feel-

ing of a life throbbing inside

her. She is ecstatic when she feels

for the first time the child's kick.

She shares it with her husband. He

too feels it, smiles contently with a

slips while cleaning a fan. Hurts

herself. And worse, it leads to mis-

carriage, followed by severe infec-

tion. Aggressively treated, she

recovers. Back home, the husband

cheers her: this is not the end. We

will be happy again. They live a

The misfortune strikes. She

she is happily pregnant.

A Case Of Compassion and Law

Two years pass, she has not con-

ceived. Worried, she consults her

doctor. A battery of tests is done

including the one to test the patency

of the uterine tubes. She does not

Two years pass, she has not conceived. Worried, she consults her doctor. A battery of tests is done including the one to test the patency of the uterine tubes. She does not like the intrusive test. The bolt strikes when the results come. With a glum face, the gynecologist discloses that both her uterine tubes are blocked. But for some miracle, she is told that normal conception is unlikely.



#SERVE ALL



a glum face, the gynecologist discloses that both her uterine tubes are blocked. But for some miracle, she is told that normal conception is unlikely. Back home, she breaks down in the arms of her husband. She waits long enough for a chance miracle to happen. She consults her gynecologist. The blockage is still there. As her ovaries are functioning normally, and her hus-



band has normal sperm count, in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer is suggested. This way, they will have their genetically own child. She is told the details of the procedure. She will be given medications to induce ovulation. The ova are removed (harvested) laparoscopically. Number of these harvested ova are fertilized in a petri dish. The fer-

tilized ova are then incubated and grown. A number of these embryos, as they are called, are manually transferred to her uterus. She is told of possibility of multiple pregnancies and the failure rate of the procedure. She may need repetition of the procedure once or twice. She is tense, her heart thumps, her grip on her husband's hand tightens as she visualizes herself undergoing the painful intrusive procedure. She is not willing. The only alternative is adoption, adds the gynecologist, as the couple rises to leave. Back home, she shares it with her two sisters, elder, a senior gynecologist, owning a hospital and

practicing down south, and the younger, a happily married mother of two children. One late evening, she receives a phone call from her younger sister.

She tells her that though they never

he obstetrician sister tells her about a young couple that had come for MTP for the unwanted child conceived because of contraceptive failure. Unfortunately, on investigation, it is found that the pregnancy is already 24 weeks old and beyond the permissible limit. The couple insists for an abortion, tells they just cannot afford to keep the child, for reasons they are not willing to disclose. The obstetrician cautions it will be very risky if they go for abortion by a quack.

wanted a third child, because of contraceptive failure, she has conceived again. Her husband wants her to undergo MTP. She is relucis more than happy to agree. She recalls her feeling when she

tant. She has discussed it with their elder gynecologist sister. The younger sister is willing to continue the pregnancy for the sake her childless sister. That's God sent. She

it in her mind, the presence of the child in her womb. She remembers and virtually feels the child's kick. She shivers imagining a newly born child put to her breast. But her hope and happiness are short-lived. She is informed that that her younger sister had a miscarriage. Then what happens is beyond her imagination.

She receives a phone call from her elder sister, the Obstetrician She is asked to come with her hus band. No, it's not an emergency, and adds she cannot tell her on the phone, it's something very private and personal, insists they come What she learns is very unusual

and intriguing. The obstetrician sister tells her about a young couple that had come for MTP for the unwanted child conceived because contraceptive failure. Unfortunately on investigation, it is found that the pregnancy is already 24 weeks old and beyond the permis sible limit. The couple insists for an abortion, tells they just cannot afford to keep the child, for reasons they are not willing to disclose. The obstetrician cautions it will be very risky if they go for abortion by a quack. The couple in the evening was pregnant. She virtually relives comes to the home of obstetrician

the child to orphanage. Please

madam,' she pleads with folded

An idea stuck her. In surroga-

hands. It is then she thought of her

cy contract, essentially, the surro-

gate couple relinquishes their

parental right in favour of the

adopting parents for altruistic

considerations. Why can't the

younger sister.

Tells her that they will continue the

pregnancy to term, will come to her

for delivery and leave the child and disappear. The lady requests,

'Please Madam, give the child to

some decent couple to bring up.

Don't report to the police, and send

her as pregnant patient for 24 weeks duration. Later, when the couple comes for delivery, she summons her sister to come. The pregnant lady is admitted under the case file in the name of her sister. She tells the couple about their assumed names. This ensures that all documents and birth certificate etc. are in the name of her sister and her husband. After delivery and discharge, the couple comes to the house of the obstetrician with the child and documents hands them over to the obstetrician. and leave.

who is keen to adopt a child.

and adoption laws.

She asks the couple. They are

more than willing to do it. But she

knows that, even though it is in the

interest of all, virtually saves a life

this is not something regular and in strict conformity of the surrogacy

She persuades the couple to

come for delivery and get regis-

tered in the assumed name of

the adopting parents. Deliver

and then leave. She tells her

sister of her plan. Register

The obstetrician sister escorts her younger sister and her husband to the airport and watches with immense content, as her sister leaves, cradling the child against her breast. The third sister joins them through a video call. Compassion, love and law, the ideal human trinity!

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#JAGANNATH

Altruistic? No-God's Hand, Yes

How the Jagannath Temple pushed the British Empire towards Secularism in India!



Puri, Odisha, is often spiritual and cultural significance. But few realize that this ancient temple also played a surprising political role in shaping British colonial policy, partic ularly in nudging the empire towards secular governance and leading to the abolition of the pilgrim tax imposed on

visiting the temple during festi-

vals like Rath Yatra. In fact, by

the early 19th century, the

British themselves were admin-

istering the Jagannath Temple

directly, overseeing its rituals

ecting pilgrim fees.

managing temple lands, and col-

dled with contradiction. On one

hand, the British prided them

selves on being 'neutral rulers'

who respected all religions. On

the other, they were deeply

entangled in the administration

of Hindu religious institutions,

turning devotion into a taxable

This involvement was rid-

The Pilgrim Tax: A Colonial Contradiction

W hen the British East India Company took control over large parts of India, they inherited a system of religious levies that had existed under earlier rulers. Among them was the pilgrim tax, a fee charged to Hindus who undertook religious journeys to sacred sites such as Varanasi, Allahabad, and Puri. The Jagannath Temple, one

of Hinduism's holiest shrines, was a major revenue source in this system. The British continued the practice, collecting thousands of rupees annually from the millions of pilgrims

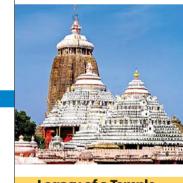
Rising Voices and Growing Discomfort

y the 1830s, criticism began **D** to mount, not only from Indian reformers but also from British officials and Christian missionaries who were uncomfortable with the colonial state's role in 'idolatry.' Influential voices, including William Bentinck, Governor-General of India (1828-1835), began ques-

profiting from religious devotion. Puri's Jagannath Temple was at the center of this debate. The spectacle of British officials managing rituals and collecting temple revenue sat uneasily with the growing liberal and evangelical movements back in Britain. The discomfort forced the colonial government



n 1833, the British officially withdrew from the direct management of the Jagannath Temple. The move was part of a broader shift, a conscious decision to step back from religious entanglements and present the colonial state as secular and impartial. Soon after, in 1837, the British abol ished the pilgrim tax altogether across India. This marked a key turning point: the beginning of the colonial policy of religious neutrality, not out of respect, but largely to avoid political controversy and moral criticism

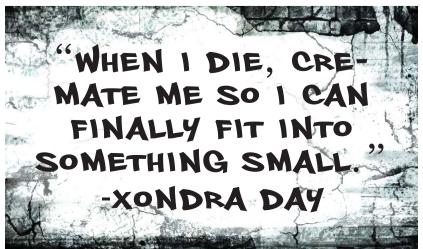


Legacy of a Temple

W hile the British withdrawal from temple management was far from perfect or altruistic, the Jagannath Temple played a crucial role in catalyzing the debate. It exposed the tensions between colonial governance and religious involvement, and helped push India's rulers, even if reluctantly towards a secular administrative frame-

So, the next time we speak of Jagannath not just as 'Lord of the Universe. but as a quiet force in Indian political history, remember this: A temple

THE WALL



BABY BLUES





By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott





