

Religious and Cultural Significance of the Monasteries in the Rituals and Festivals of Shree Jagannath Temple, Puri

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Abstract

The monasteries are an indispensable part of the Indian culture and heritage. From ancient times, many monasteries have grown surrounding the holy temples and shrines across India to provide ritual services to the temple, educating the disciples and poor meritorious students, and giving shelter to the pilgrims. Similarly, many monasteries were established at Puri by eminent scholars, saints, and their disciples while visiting Puri from different parts of India to offer religious worship at Lord Jagannath temple and spread their ideals and philosophy. Apart from this, these traditional age-old institutions promote religious tourism and serve as preservers and promoters of the local religious and cultural traditions of the state. This is an exploratory qualitative research study that contributes an original piece of research on the religious and cultural importance of the monasteries in offering ritual services to the Jagannath Temple in Puri, especially during the rituals and festivals. The study delves into the current issues and challenges faced by the monasteries in Puri as many of them are on the verge of extinction due to lack of financial aid and other support from the government and other agencies. This study relies on a field-based investigation of the issue. Both primary and secondary data are collected to understand the crux of the problem and explore continuity and change in the monastic tradition in Puri. Besides, the study offers policy-relevant suggestions and valuable feedback to bring improvement to the situation.

Keywords: Monastery, Puri, Pilgrimage, Ritual Services, Jagannath Temple.

Introduction

The state of Odisha is a sacred land richly endowed with multiple holy shrines, ancient temples, and monasteries which remain a vital part of the culture and heritage of the land. The state is also famous for its historic antiquities and religious sanctuaries continuing since the 3rd century B.C. Orissa (the present name of Odisha) is derived from the Sanskrit word “Odra Vishaya” or Udra Desha or Utkal Province which consisted of the portions of three ancient regions such as Kalinga, Utkal, or Odra and Kosala which over time under political, social and economic pressure and turmoil have joined together as a distinct realm of Indian sub-continent during 12th Century AD. Of all the regions, Kalinga was the most prominent and advanced region in all respects (Behuria 1991). The ancient kingdom of Kalinga lies towards the east of the Indian peninsula as mentioned in popular legends like the Ramayana and the Mahabharat. In ancient times, Orissa was known as Kalinga which was a big religio-cultural landscape, encompassing the territories from the River Ganges to the River Godavari up to the Krishna River (Tripathy 2007). While evolving within the ambit of Indian civilisation, the Orissa remains a distinctive entity enriching the Indic panorama in different dimensions (Das 1977).

The spiritual quest for the almighty has always existed in every human soul and spirit since the origin of human lives in the universe. Odisha remains a pious land of Lord Jagannath has embraced people from diverse religions and faiths such as Buddhism, Jainism, Shaktism, and Saivism and forms a distinct religious landscape. Over the centuries, many monastic houses have grown across the state for propagating the spiritual thoughts and ideologies of different scholars and preachers of different religious ideologies of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. The monastic life revolves around religious certain principles and disciplines, dedicated to serving God which protects human lives from worldly distractions. These monasteries serve as great centers of learning which disseminate spiritual knowledge, heal sickness and offer mental peace and solace to human life. The creations of the monastic communities show the spiritual maturity of the faithful with a motive to protect the community and perpetuation tradition (Poujeau 2018).

Through the ages, numerous monasteries have sprouted around the holy shrines and temples at different pilgrimage sites across India, such as Kashi, Varanasi, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Mathura, Vrindavan, Puri, etc. Every year large number of Hindus during their pilgrimage journeys to these holy places used to stay in the monasteries which are considered as sanctified places for religious worship and serve as beautiful tourist destinations. Therefore, the monasteries remain as old as pilgrimage which every Hindu likes to visit during his/her lifetime. The earliest reference of pilgrimage referred in the Aitreya Brahmana of Rig Veda c.1500 to c.1000 BC. The Mahabharata (c.400 BC to c. 200 AD) also refers to several pilgrimage circuits (Bharadwaj 1973). Therefore, these monasteries are age-old institutions that are well equipped with all necessary arrangements and serve as shelter homes for the pilgrims during their pilgrimage.

The word 'matha' or monastery is a hut or a cottage (dwelling place) which means the residence for the ascetics and monks who have renounced their worldly lives and spend time meditating on God, reading scriptures, and rendering services for the welfare of humanity. According to the Sanskrit lexicon, "Amara Kosha" math is the residence of pupils along with their teachers. The monastic houses of different creeds, sects, and religions are known by various names such as viharas, asramas, gurudwaras, mathas, and akhadas. They differ widely in terms of their structures and functions. But, the most common characteristic of these institutions is collective living for the higher spiritual life (Ayer 2003). The residential places were converted into various mathas, akharas, ashramas, kottas, etc. (Mishra 2014). Like temples and shrines, the monasteries are also age-old institutions that are considered holy spaces for religious congregations where the inmates usually monks and saints lead an ascetic life during their retired life. Further, these monasteries facilitate the religious and cultural integration of the people of the land and serve as guardians of the local religious and cultural traditions strongly embedded within the local cultural landscape, that determine their historical evolution (Aulet, Mundet, and Vidal 2016). In the tenth century, monastery philosophy brings sublime manifestations of the finest Indian art and paintings (Behl 2008).

Origin and Antiquity of Purusottama Kshetra and Growth of the Monasteries in Puri

Lord Jagannath is the presiding deity of Odisha and Puri which is well known as the abode of Jagannath due to the invaluable presence of the grand majestic temple of Lord Jagannath. Though it is impossible to trace back the exact origin and antiquity of the deity of Lord Jagannath, He is known as Purushottama, and his holy land Puri is named after him as Purusottama Kshetra from ancient times. The antiquity of Puri or Purusottama Kshetra as a holy pilgrimage may be traced back to C.700 A.D. (Mahapatra 1954). The gigantic temple in Puri dedicated to Lord Jagannath was rebuilt in the 10th century by King Ananta Varman Chodaganga Dev of the Eastern Ganga dynasty replacing the old pre-existing temple. The Jagannath temple at Puri is considered sacred for all Hindus, especially for the Vaishnavites where devotees from all over India pay reverence to Lord Jagannath (Mahapatra 2008). The religious life of the people of Odisha revolves around the Purusottama Jagannath ever since the famous and majestic temple of the Lord in Puri was built in the 12th century CE (Stietencron 1977) Skanda Purana narrates the sanctity and glory of this pious and miraculous land as the Purusottama Kshetra (Satyanarayan 1998)

Puri is popular by many names such as Shri-Kshetra, Sankha Kshetra, Neelachala, Jagannatha Dhama, etc. As the spiritual capital of Odisha, Puri is considered Parampavana Devabhumi or divine land which is supremely purifying to attain Paramartha, Moksha, or salvation since Lord Vishnu in the form of Darabatanu of Lord Jagannath, (idol made of wood) is born here and performs his leelas like a human being. As a heritage city of India, Puri derives its religious and cultural importance as a seat of learning ancient scriptures like the Vedas, Samhitas, Puranas, and Epics. Puri or Sri Kshetra is widely acclaimed as a famous pilgrimage center and meeting ground of several religious sects (Panda 2011). The eminent scholars, saints, and religious exponents of diverse faiths and religions like Ramanujan, Madhavacharya, Ballavacharya, Nimbark, Shri Chaitanya, Guru Nanak, Saint Kabir, and Meerabai visited Puri for offering prayers and religious worship to Lord Jagannath and have reposed their firm faith and conviction for spiritual enlightenment. These religious scholars and their disciples have

established their monasteries surrounding the holy shrine of Lord Jagannath in Puri to offer religious worship and ritual services to the temple and also to spread their thoughts, ideologies, and philosophies across India and the world.

The traditional records show that there are 752 monasteries in Puri which are more than 500 years old. The establishment of some monasteries date back to the 8th-9th century. The saints and preachers have their ethics and ideologies. Therefore, the monasteries are different in terms of ideologies, philosophies, values, and principles which attract devotees and followers to follow their respective religious disciplines. The Govardhan Matha is the first monastery in Puri established by Adi Sankaracharya during his spiritual conquest (820 AD) to teach 'Adwaita Philosophy. However, several monasteries were built in Odisha long before Acharya Sankara visited the Puri. Some monasteries like Bhruvu Ashram and Angira Ashram were established during the 4th to 5th Century A.D. However, from the 9th Century A.D onwards many monasteries were established by the disciples of many great Vaishnavite Saints like Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya, Nimbarkacharya, Vallabhacharya and Ramananda who visited Puri. These monasteries were closely associated with the Jagannath Temple. The great Vaisnava Saint Ramanujacharya visited Puri during the reign of King Chodaganga Dev and established Emar Matha near Jagannath Temple in Puri. The Visnuswami established Jagannath Ballav Math at Puri on the 14th. Century A.D. which is known as the pleasure harbor of Lord Jagannath. Shri Chaitanya came to Puri during the reign of King Prataparudra Dev in the year 1510 and stayed for 18 years in Radhakanta Matha and his dwelling place is called 'Kashimisralaya'. Besides, other great scholars like, Madhvacharya, and Guru Nanak have also visited Puri and have established their monasteries.

Though both Saiva and Vaishnav mathas exist in Puri, most of the mathas are naturally Vaishnav (Malley 1908) since Lord Jagannath symbolises Lord Vishnu and Lord Krishna is the presiding deity of the land. Some Vaishnavite Mathas in Puri include Emar Matha, Srirama Dasa (Dakhina Parswa) Matha, Raghava Das Matha, Jagannatha Vallabha Matha, Uttara Parswa Matha, Radhakanta Matha, and Bada Odia Matha. The Saivite mathas found near Swargadwar were Siva-Tritha and Mahi-Prakash Matha. Near the

Gobardhan Matha there is a small matha called Kabir-Choura Matha established by the great Saint Kabir. Besides, Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism visited Puri and established 'Bauli Matha' in Puri and his son Sri Chanda established another matha called Mangu Matha. Similarly, scholars like Jayadev, Nimbark, Madhvacharya, Vallabhacharya, Karnama Giri, Hari Das, Raghu Das, Sarbabhouma Bhattacharya, Atibadi Jagannath Das, Nandini Devi, Sri Rama Das, Sri Venkat Swamy, Rasikananda, Madhavendra Puri, and Balak Ram Das have also established their monasteries in Puri. In addition to this, Swamy Nigamananda, Omkarnath, and Digambar (Languli Baba) have also established mathas and ashramas at Puri. According to the Puri Gazetteer (1929), there are over seventy monasteries in Puri affiliated to different sects, namely Angira Sect, Adwaita Sect, Atibadi Sect, Gaudiya Sect, Ramanandi Sect, Nimbarka Sect, Vaishnab Sect, Ramanuja, Sect Madhabacharya Sect, and Dashanami Sect, etc.

In the past, the saints and scholars visiting Puri for the holy darshan of Lord Jagannath were also in contact with the Gajapati Kings of Puri and had received gifts and donations in terms of land and money from the rich followers and kings for the religious worship of Lord Jagannath and charitable purposes. They established monasteries on the lands donated to them. The monasteries are patronised by the religious heads called Mahanta or Mathadhisa (Maharaja or Adhikari) nominated amongst the followers who take care of the supervision and maintenance of the monasteries and offer ritual services to the Jagannath Temple from the income generated from the landed properties spent which is known as 'Amrutmanohi' (nectar food) i.e., offering of 'Mahaprasad' to Lord Jagannath and then distributed among the pilgrims, pupils, ascetics, and beggars. Besides, during necessity, the Mahantas take care of the smooth functioning of the temple.

Objective(s)

- To explore the origin, history, and evolution of the monasteries in Puri, Odisha during the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial era and their valuable contribution towards the promotion and dissemination of the Jagannath Culture and Philosophy;

- To study the interrelationship of the monasteries with the Jagannath Temple, Puri in offering ritual services during different rituals and festivals, their continuity and change;
- To examine the emerging issues and challenges faced by the monasteries in Puri during present times and to analyse various factors responsible for the same;
- To document the best practices of the monasteries in Puri and to develop suitable strategies and measures to be adopted for better management and functioning of the monasteries and in offering ritual services to the Jagannath Temple by the monasteries.

Research Design and Method

This is a qualitative fact-finding research in which a holistic approach is adopted during the collection of both secondary and primary data from the two categories of respondents such as visitors, pilgrims, and locals as well as from the scholars and intelligentsia through purposive random sampling method. The scholarly views and opinions on the spiritual importance of the monasteries in Hindu Philosophy are drawn. The purposive random sampling method is adopted for the collection of primary data from the heads of the monasteries, pilgrims, and inmates of around 70 monasteries in Puri and officials of Shree Jagannath Temple Administration, Endowment Commission, Puri District Administration, scholars, academia, and experts, etc. The study facilitates knowledge building by gathering local evidence, critical analysis, and explanations of the problem through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focused group discussions with the stakeholders for the understanding of the ground realities of the issue.

This is an innovative research study that offers new research insights into the interrelationship of the monasteries in various rituals and festivals of the Jagannath temple in Puri observed throughout the year. Further, the study examines the religious and cultural significance of the monasteries and concludes how these religious institutions fulfill the sole purpose for which they were established. This is an important area of research, which is planned for making detailed documentation of the valuable facts, documents, and records

of the monasteries offering ritual services to the Jagannath Temple, Puri. The study contributes meaningfully towards the formulation of suitable policy measures for the self-sustenance of the monasteries in continuing their ritual services to the Jagannath Temple more efficiently and rigorously. After identifying the major issues and problems of the monasteries, the study offers practical solutions and policy recommendations to bring improvement to the problem.

Socio-Cultural and Religious Significance of the Monasteries in Puri

Over the centuries, the Jagannath culture has enfolded diverse religious creeds and sects like Saivism, Shaktism, Buddhism, and Jainism into its fold. Many monasteries have grown centered around the Jagannath Temple for offering religious duties or *sevas* for the worship of Lord Jagannath (Senapati and Kuanar, 1977). Puri holds its unique religious tradition and cultural florescence that reigns upon abundant spiritual essence. Puri is an important pilgrimage Centre as one of the four *dhamas* (abodes) of God and is regarded as one of the seven *moksha-dhama* or salvation for the Hindus (Pattanaik 1994). The modest climate with the spiritual ambiance of Puri attracts tourists and visitors from all around the world throughout the year. In the *Purusottama Mahatmya* of Skanda Purana, the *Purusottama Kshetra* (Puri) is described as the most sacred place in India as the abode of supreme Lord Jagannath that exists ever since the beginning of creation. According to the Orissa District Gazetteer, many monasteries were established by the saints and scholars for offering ritual services to the temple and for public welfare such as imparting education to the disciples, poor, meritorious students, giving shelter to the pilgrims and visitors, and feeding travelers, ascetics and beggars. etc.

Over the ages, the monasteries have played a distinctive role in shaping the religious and cultural history and heritage of India and Odisha as well. Being an inevitable part of the Jagannath culture Monasteries are intimately connected with the rituals and festivals of the Jagannath Temple. Many saints and sages of diverse religious faiths and ideologies have been congregated at the divine land Puri to attain "Paramartha", Moksha, or salvation synchronising their deep faith and devotion to Lord Jagannath as they perceived Lord

Jagannath as the supreme Godhead. Therefore, Puri is known as Martya Baikuntha, the abode of Lord Vishnu on the earth. The monks and saints visited Purushottama Kshetra and established their monasteries with twin objectives, firstly for providing ritual services to the temple and secondly, for educating the disciples and giving shelter to the students and pilgrims and spreading the ideologies.

The pilgrimage to Puri from different corners of India unites all Hindus and facilitates common understanding, human aspiration, and faith towards Jagannath Culture and Philosophy which promotes socio-cultural integration of the people of the land. The pilgrimage journey creates phenomenal energy that oozes through a strict regime of rituals followed by the pilgrims to transform one's life through attaining knowledge, devotion, and eliminating evil thoughts and habits of life. As mentioned in the Hindu scriptures and legends, these monasteries have distinct historical, geographical, religious, and cultural significance in protecting Sanatana dharma through realising divinity. Millions of pilgrims assemble in Puri every year during the special occasion of the Rath Yatra arousing a collective ethos to lead a spiritual life. These monasteries remain connecting bonds between the general public and Jagannath temple in Puri (Paikaray 2013). Apart from this, the monasteries were also patrons of music, art, dance, literature, philosophical debates, educating people, feeding poor, widows, and accommodating students and pilgrims visiting Puri (Devi and Acharya, 2008). Besides, many religious arts and mural paintings of the 19th Century are seen on the walls of *monasteries in Puri like the Bada Odia Matha and Gangamata Matha*. With an increasing focus on the preservation and promotion of the ancient cultural heritage of India, this study holds its importance in many dimensions.

Key Functions of the Monasteries in Puri

1. The monasteries play a significant role in propagating the essential religious values, thoughts, and ideals of Hindu Philosophy and especially Jagannath Culture across Odisha and India.
2. The monasteries provide shelter and accommodation to a huge number of pilgrims visiting Puri for the holy darshan of Lord Jagannath from different parts of India.

3. The monasteries provide financial help to the poor and meritorious students and look after the mendicants coming to Puri from far distant places across India and the world.
4. The monasteries offer ritual services to the Jagannath temple during rituals and festivals as per the Record of Rights of Shree Jagannath Temple Administration Act.
5. The monasteries serve as the preservers and promoters of the spiritual values, knowledge, and ideology of Hindu Philosophy.

Role of Monasteries in Daily Rituals of Shree Jagannath Temple, Puri

Some leading mathas of Puri perform specific ritual services during daily rituals and festivals of the Jagannatha Temple. These monasteries include the Jagannatha Vallabha Matha, Raghavadasa Matha, Badachhata Matha, Bada Odiya Matha, Sunagosain Matha, Sri Rama Dasa (Dakshina parswa) Matha, Uttaraparswa Matha, Emar Matha, Radhakanta Matha, Jhadu Mathas. Besides, the daily rituals, these mathas offer ritual services during the Ratha Yatra, Snana Yatra, Chandan Yatra, Jhulan Yatra, Navakalevar Ceremony, and other festivals by offering Pankti Bhoga, Pana Bhoga, Vesha materials, cleaning of Ratna Singhasana, supply Canopy and Chaka Apasara, Phuluri oil (Til-oil), Sandalwood paste for Sarbangalagi Ritual, flower garlands, Basil leaves and other puja materials and perform Sankirtana Seva i.e Reciting devotional Music, Chamar and Alata Seva to the deities in the Jagannath Temple.

Some monasteries established by the Gajapati Kings are known as Rajangila Mathas. The duties and functions of these monasteries are as follows.

Monasteries in Puri Services Offered by Monasteries to the Jagannath Temple

Bada Jhadu Matha sweeps the Garbhagriha (inner Sanctum sanctorum of the temple) and Anasara Pindi and Jagamohana of the Temple.

Chhauni Matha gives religious advice and greets Rajas and their family members in pious

	ways during their visit to the Jagannath Temple.
Dagara Matha	informs the public and temple officials if there is any break of ritualistic performance or violation of religious rites connected with the seva puja of Lord Jagannath.
Kadali Patuka Matha	supplies strands of plantain (banana plants) for flower garlands to offer to Lord Jagannath.
Kothabhoga Matha	keeps the stock of ghee and molasses in the store of the temple and looks after the cooking of consecrated foods.
Kalitilaka Matha four Sampradayas.	supplies Tilaka to the Vaisnavas of the
Puranasabha Matha	recites texts from various Puranas and preaches the philosophy of Jagannath culture.
Sana Jhadu Matha and the Natamandap	sweeps the Kurma Bedha Courtyard (Dancing Hall)
Sunagosain Matha	cleans the Suna Kuo (Golden Well) and walls of the Ratna-Singhasana and supplies Alaka and Padak (flower ornament) daily.

As per the Record of Rights of Puri Shree Jagannath Temple (Administration) Act, 1952 presently, around thirty monasteries in Puri are offering different types of services during the daily rituals or Nitis of the Jagannath Temple, the details are given below:

- *Gobardhan Matha* is also known as Sankaracharya Matha. The Sankaracharya is the religious authority and head of the Mukti-Mandap Pandit Sabha (an assembly of Brahmins) and gives a final opinion on the Niti or Rituals of the Jagannath temple. He is given some special privileges during his visit to Jagannath

Temple in Puri. This monastery offers special ritual services to the Jagannath Temple. In return, the Khei is given to this Matha by the temple as a daily routine.

- *Bada Odia Matha* is established by the great Odia scholar Atibadi Jagannath Das which provides Ballav Bhoga (Morning Tiffin) and performs Upachara Chamara, Alata Seva to Lord Jagannath in the temple.
- *Badachhata Matha* offers Sakirtana Seva (reciting devotional songs) daily during Mangala Arati, Badasinghara Vesha, and Chandan Yatra and offers Alata and Chamar Seva to the deities.
- *Chaulia Matha* performs the Chamara and Alata Seva, supplies flower ornaments to the deities, and supplies guava for Gopalavallav Bhoga (this service has been discontinued).
- *Dakhinaparswa Matha* offers Chatra Seva and Chamar Seva to the deities.
- *Dasavatara Matha* performs the cultural function of the temple
- *Emar Math* supplies the Ballabha Bhoga, 'Chandrika', and 'Chausara' (flower ornaments) daily for the Badasinghara Besha and offers Chamara, Alata, and Canopy Seva to the temple.
- *Gangamata Matha* offers Suna-Benta (golden handle) and Chamara and Alata Services.
- *Gopaltirtha Matha* provides the necessary materials for Hati Vesha (elephant-like adornment) for Lord Balabhadra.
- *Jhanjapita Matha* offers seva puja at 'Pada-Padma' (lotus feet of the Lord) in the temple
- *Jagannatha Ballabha Matha* offers Tilak, Jhumpa (a flower ornament) for Badasinghara Besha, lotus flower, and other flower ornaments during temple rituals such as Ramanabami, Dola Yatra, Dayanachori, Lakha Vindha, Dussahara. Besides, this monastery supplies Masala (torch) during Abakasha rituals, Khuamanda, Ballava Bhog, Khatani-bhoga (Anna

Mahaprasad), and performs Chamara services as per the Jagannath Temple tradition.

- *Kapadia Matha* provides dress materials to the deities in the temple.
- *Labanikhia Matha* offers sports materials of the deities during rituals like Janmashtami (Birth of Lord Krishna)
- *Nandimata Matha* sticks jari in Patta
- *Papudia Matha* offers Sunabenta Chamara (gold handle) of fine fly whisk and Alata (fan) services.
- *Raghava-Dasa Matha* offers (Chamara and Alata seva) and supplies Vallabha bhoga and Khatani bhoga in the morning and supplies materials for Hati-Vesha on the day of Snana Purnima.
- *Radhakanta Matha* performs Upachara Chamara Seva and daily Sankirtana Parikrama on the premises of the temple and offers cleaning services to the Gundicha temple before the Car Festival.
- *Rani Matha* provides decorated Tahia (flower crown) to the deities.
- *Rebasa matha* performs Upachara Chamara and Alata services and offers Khatani Bhoga.
- *Sriram Dasa Matha, Darpanarayan Matha, and Sunagoswami Matha* offer flower garlands for the decoration of the deities.
- *Sivatirtha Matha and Mahiprakash Matha* provides toothbrush for the deities in the temple.
- *Trimali Matha* performs Chamara and Alata services and supplies the Dihudi (torch) during Abakasha ritual and Gopala Vallabha Bhoga and offers Bhoga during the Chandan Yatra.
- *Uttarparswa Matha* offers Chamara and Alata Seva and supplies materials for preparing Mohanbhoga (made of coarse flour and sugar) to the temple every day which is distributed among the devotees after being offered to the deities in the temple.

The monasteries offering Chamara and Alata services include the Radhaballava Matha Sana Chhata Matha, Goswami Matha, Nua Matha and Mangu Matha Venkatachari Matha Nua Matha Chhauni Matha Balaramkote Matha, Ramji Matha, Sanachhata Matha, Sriram Dasa Matha and Rajguru Goswami Matha etc.

Some monasteries have the right to offer Khatani bhoga (offering of cooked food) to the deities are Gobardhan Matha, Radhakanta Matha, Badachhata Matha, Jagannath Ballav Matha, Emar Matha, Uttarparswa Matha, Dakhinaparswa, Matha, Sidhabakula Matha, Gangamata Matha, Jeerswami Matha, Haridas Thakura Matha, Rebasa Matha, Chhauni Matha, Radhaballav Matha, and Bada Odiya Mathas, etc. The monasteries involved are given facilities of occupation of Saraghara" (Store houses), "ovens in temple kitchen", "Khandua Patta" (Silk Cloth), and in return, Mahaprasad in terms of Khei is given to the concerned monasteries by the temple.

Conclusion

Odisha is the land of divinity which has facilitated the growth of the monasteries of diverse religions and sects like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism over the centuries across the state. These monasteries have both material and spiritual significance. These ancient institutions have not only played an important role in developing spiritual consciousness but also serve as preservers of ancient art, culture, and tradition. The temple culture of Puri has given a boost to the flourishing of the culture of the monastery which remains an integral part of Jagannath Culture and is instrumental in developing the Sanatana consciousness in internalising the supremeness of the divine. While on pilgrimage, the pilgrims seek sanctified places like monasteries which are in close association with the holy personage. Therefore, these monasteries in Puri not only serve as shelter homes for a large number of pilgrims but also contribute to building an excellent spiritual ambiance for sharing religious values, fellow feelings, mutual trust, love, compassion, loyalty, and close bonding among the pilgrims. Puri is a center of Hindu pilgrimage where many saints and scholars offer their worship to Lord Jagannath where monasteries serve as a medium for spiritual sensitisation since they are intimately connected with the rituals and festivals of the Jagannath Temple.

However, during the present times, many monasteries have not been able to perform their ritual services to the temple properly due to a paucity of funds and resources. Further, due to a lack of proper management and maintenance, many monasteries are found in dilapidated conditions. Therefore, after independence, many monasteries lost their autonomy and were taken over by the Government (Pattanaik 2005). Though some monasteries have some landed property, they are not being able to generate income for maintaining self-sustainability. In the recent past, the demolition drive taken up by the district administration in Puri has demolished the old grand structures of many ancient monasteries surrounding the Jagannath Temple after Justice BP Das Commission (a committee held under the chairmanship of BP Das a retired judge of Orissa High Court has given a recommendation for the removal of these old buildings within 75 meters periphery of the Jagannath Temple in Puri. Despite public criticisms and heavy protests from religious heads of monasteries including Shankaracharya of Puri seeking stay over erasing the century-old structures of monasteries, the demolitions of the ancient Hindu monasteries such as Emar Mutt, a 900-year-old monastery, Bada Akhada Matha, a 600-year-old monastery, Mangu Matha and Languli Matha continued using bulldozers and heavy machinery and the remnants of boundary wall have been razed in the name of beautification of the surroundings of the Jagannath temple and safety and security of the devotees. Public discontentment grow after the demolition of the monasteries established by great scholars like Ramanujacharya, Nimbark Acharya, Madhwa Acharya, Dasanami, Ramananda Acharya, Bishnu Swami, Ballabhacharya. As a consequence, Puri lost its ancient heritage and culture to a great extent.

In this context, this research study has unfolded many unexplored dimensions on the issue of the monasteries which were originally built to strengthen the cultural unity and integrity of the state, in reality, the very existence of the matha is at stake (Mohanty 2010). The mutual distrust among the mahantas and financial mismanagement are the main causes of the deterioration of the monasteries in Puri. In this context, suitable strategies and policy measures need to be adopted to bring improvement to the problem. Further, consistent efforts are required for the implementation of

appropriate measures by the government and non-government agencies for the effective functioning of these monasteries in Puri. The monasteries are a vital part of the history, culture, and heritage of Odisha and India as well. To restore past glories, the revival of these ancient religious institutions and re-establishing their cultural legacy is highly essential in the current era.

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Glossary

1. *Abakasha Ritual*: A daily morning ritual of brushing teeth and bathing deities.
2. *Alata and Chamara Seva*: Service of fanning the deities with yak-tail whisk fans.
3. *Akhada*: A place of practice and training on martial arts with lodging, and boarding facilities in a monastery for religious renunciation of the saints and monks.
4. *Amruta Manohi*: Landed properties endowed to the monasteries to be spent for food offerings of the deities.
5. *Anasara Pindi*: A platform in the temple where the repairing of the deities takes place during Anasara just before the Rath Yatra
6. *Badasinghara Vेशha*: Decorating the deities in flowers during the night ritual in the temple.
7. *Chandan Yatra*: Summer Festival of the temple when the representing Lord of the deities are smeared with sandalwood paste come out of the temple
8. *Dayana Chori*: A ritual when representative idols of Rama and Krishna are taken to the garden of Jagannath Ballav Matha where the deities pick up Dayana leaves unnoticed.
9. *Gopala Ballav Bhoga*: Food offered to the deities during the morning ritual of the temple.
10. *Jagamohan*: An assembly hall in the temple where devotees offer their prayers to the deities.

11. *Khei*: A portion of Kotha Bhoga paid by the temple to the servitor and monastery.
12. *Khuamanda*: A kind of food offering to the deities on some special occasion.
13. *Khatani-Bhoga*: A special type of food offered to the deities on request.
14. *Khandua Patta*: A type of hand-woven silk cloth worn by deities.
15. *Lakha Vindha*: A ritual of shooting arrows is performed in Jagannath Ballav Math.
16. *Matha*: This is a kind of residence of the monks and their disciples which also serves as a shelter home for the pilgrims and visitors.
17. *Mahaprasad*: Food offered to the deities is considered auspicious for devotees.
18. *Mangala Arati*: Lamp Ritual offered to the deities in the temple in the morning.
19. *Mukti Mandap*: An open platform located on the southern side of temple premises where an assembly of Brahmins sits who serve as the advisory body of the temple.
20. *Parikrama*: Circumference of the deities and temple is considered auspicious.
21. *Paramartha*: Salvation i.e., releasing from the cycle of birth and death of mankind from this material world.
22. *Rath Yatra*: Annual festival when the deities come out of the temple and are placed in Chariots to give darshan to the devotees and visitors.
23. *Sankirtan Seva*: Service of singing the glory of God by the saints of monasteries.
24. *Saraghara*: Store house of the temple where the required essential items are kept.
25. *Snana Purnima*: Annual Bathing Ritual when the deities take a bath in 108 barrels of water which takes place in the Odia month Jyestha (June)
26. *Tilak Jhumpa*: A kind of flower ornament offered to the deities in the temple.
27. *Tahia*: Flower Crown of the deities used in temple rituals such as Rath Yatra and Snana Yatra.