




Pilgrim Guides and their roles in the Sacred Complex of Lingaraj Temple

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Abstract

Lingaraj Temple is widely known as a great religious and sacred centre (Kshetra). A place of pilgrimage (tirtha) where Hindu pilgrims from different parts of the country visit and throng wearily, and often barefooted under fatigue and hardship to get the sight of the Lord, which they believe, obliterates the transgressions of one's whole life. The article deals with the roles of pilgrim guides in Lingaraj Temple. For the comfort of the pilgrims in the temple, there are pilgrim guides functioning among the temple servants (sevayats). These temple functionaries serving the pilgrims are known as Pilgrim Guides or otherwise locally known as 'Yatri Panda' or 'Elaka Panda'. There are three categories of sacred servants (sevayats), Pujapanda, Brahmana (Mahasuar) and Badu who are the Brahmin sevayats and perform rituals in the temple. They act as pilgrim guides of the temple during non-service days. This study is purely an ethnographic study based on fieldwork.

Keywords: Elaka Panda, Yatri Panda, Pilgrimage (tirtha), Pilgrim Guide, Sacred Centre (Kshetra), Sevayats.

Introduction

Lord Lingaraj is a temple of the Hindu God Lord Shiva, is one of the oldest temples of the temple city Bhubaneswar, India. The word Lingaraja refers to the "The King of Lingam" i.e., Lord Shiva. It has a huge 60m tall tower, which is 2m higher than Jagannath Temple, and it is considered to be is an excellent example of Kalinga architecture. It is a revered pilgrimage center visited by pilgrims throughout the year. On special occasions, such as *Shivaratri* and other festivals, the devotees gather there in large numbers. The presiding deity is in the form of massive granite block in the sanctum and is the *Swayambhu Linga* and is worshipped both as Shiva and Vishnu (*Hari-hara*). The leaves of *bel* (vilva) and *tulasi*, which are favourites respectively of Shiva and Vishnu, are used in daily worship practices.

The temples and centers of religious pilgrimage are important aspects of heritage and provide a configuration of Indian personality. The folk beliefs, rituals and learnings that are associated with them are difficult to separate, or even identify. The story is not merely in the scripture and temple art and architecture, but is also in the folkways and the mores that are inextricably woven into the 'sacred complex' of the cities and temples. Briefly, the deity is called 'Bhubanesvara' and is named after the deity, and thus the place is called Bhubaneswar.

The name "Bhubaneswar" itself holds a deep meaning. It comes from the Sanskrit words "Bhubana" meaning "Earth" and "Iswar" meaning "Lord." So, Bhubaneswar translates to "Lord of the Earth," a title often associated with Lord Shiva. This name isn't just a coincidence. It connects Bhubaneswar to the concept of Bhudevi (Mother Earth). In Hinduism, Bhudevi is a goddess who represents the Earth itself. Often seen as the wife of Lord Vishnu, she symbolizes fertility, nourishment, and life. (Mittal, 2024)



As an important religious centre, the temple town was famous as '*Ekamra Kshetra*'. The Lingaraja Temple is dedicated to Shiva, Bhudevi. She represents the foundation of existence, both in physical and spiritual terms. The temple's teachings stress the nurturing power of the Earth, which equates with Shiva's role as a protector and regenerator. Bhubaneswar's name, "Lord of the Earth," and its many temples celebrate the special and divine guardianship and the sacredness of Earth (Mittal, 2024).

Legends trace the sanctity of the place, when there was a single mango tree with Shiva Linga below it. The religious centre initially developed around it, and with the construction of the famous Lingaraj temple in the 11th century, the *Ekamra Kshetra* rose into splendor and was treated as a major religious centre of Saivism. Despite changes over the centuries, Bhubaneswar continues as a living centre of pilgrimage (Behera Karuna Sagar, 1993; 2008). The *Sanatana Linga*, called Tribhuvaneshvara located in *Ekamra* in Utkal Desa, according to Siva Purana (Uttara Khanda), is the root of all the *Jyotirlingas* in India. It is call Lingaraj, being the Lord of twelve *Jyotirlingas*.

The history of pilgrimage is a history of spiritual yearning for salvation and even language, distance was no barrier for devotees to visit the sacred centre. This is the same in Christian Orthodoxy where pilgrimage is sacred (Nicolaidis, 2024). Odisha's temples, are all known for their intricate carvings and immense pinnacles, and they have rich chronicled traditions that intricately interlace spiritual wisdoms with artistic expressions and attract pilgrims (Patnaik, 2003). People for example, visit Lord Jagannath temple of Puri, an important sacred centre of pilgrimage, from all parts of the country. It has been seen that pilgrims on their way to Puri halt and take *darshan (blessing)* of Lord Lingaraj or while returning from Puri, they halt and take the *darshan* of the Lord. It is a belief that, full merit of *tirtha yatra* will be obtain by making Lord Lingaraj as a witness for the visit. According to William Shakespeare, "A true-hearted pilgrim does not fear to measure kingdoms with his feeble-steps" (Patnaik Nityananda, 2005).

Methodology

The methodology employed in this study was ethnographic and the researcher looked at people in their cultural Hindu faith setting, with the goal of producing a narrative account of that particular culture, against a literature review generated theoretical backdrop. Interviewing and observations allowed the researchers to personally connect with individuals and groups while securing first hand information that is needed and useful in answering questions in a case study approach. The research site was Lingaraj temple which is located in Bhubaneswar, the capital city of Odisha. It is situated on the main railway line that runs between Howrah and Chennai (Madras). Lingaraj temple is 4 kilometres from the Railway station and also from the Airport.

As the fieldwork is descriptive, as well as analytical in nature, data were collected by using techniques like a schedule, observation, individual interviews, group interviews and case-study methods. The society and culture of the respective *sevayats* were investigated and analyzed using an anthropological approach. Schedules were specially designed to collect the life history as well as the sacred beliefs of the sacred specialists and the social life of each caste group. These schedules were also framed to obtain data with respect to the changes undergone in the style of life of the sacred specialists due to the the impact of the overall transformation of Hindu civilization. Interviewing was another technique through which data was collected directly by interviewing the sacred specialists based on sacred performances, services, etc. at both individual and group levels.

At the individual level, data were collected regarding caste-based occupation, sacred performances, the role of a pilgrim guide, the procedure of *darshan (blessing)* in the temple, the maintenance of pilgrim register and a group interview was also administered to know about the group opinions. The data were further verified by observation of both participants and non-participant types. Apart from this, it is a case-study method essentially used to pinpoint data on the changes found in the sacred temple service relating to the roles of guides.

Results and discussion



Pilgrim guides

For the convenience of the pilgrims, pilgrim guides operate in the temple among the temple servants (*sevayats*). They serve as guides for very many pilgrims, possessing as they do, hereditary privileges to escort pilgrims from designated districts throughout the country (Kagan & Lamba, 1987). There are three categories of temple functionaries serving as Pilgrim guides. They are respectively the *Pujapanda*, *Brahmana* and *Badu*. The pilgrim guides are locally known as '*Yatri Panda*' or '*Elaka Panda*'. However, among the over and above the three functionaries' there are no other families involved in the service of *Yatripanda*.

The main function of the *Yatripanda* (pilgrim guide) is to help the pilgrims visit inside the temple, performing rites and offering flowers, vilva leaves, banana, coconut, milk, water and performing *Abhisekha* as per the wishes of the devotees. *Abhisekha* relates to "cleansing" or "purifying" and is an important Hindu religious rite. It is also a way of praying in which a devotee pours a liquid offering on an image or murti of the deity. The deity is bathed by the priests as mantras are chanted and they explain some historical background of the temple and show the pilgrims all the minor shrines in the temple premises.

Inside the temple, no pilgrim guide can act as a *Yatripanda* for all the pilgrims. Among the *Yatripanda* with mutual agreement over their concern, categories are distributed among themselves relating to the pilgrims coming from various parts of the country as well as from within Odisha. These *Yatripanda* are referred to as *Elakapanda* (*Area Panda*). When a pilgrim first enters a temple through *Simhadwara* they need to confirm from which state and area the pilgrims emanate and then they become their *Panda* (pilgrim guide). The *Pandas* are quite proficient in talking in most of the major Indian languages (Bharati, 1970). Even through the pilgrim's language and appearance, the *Yatripanda* is able to identify from which part of the country the pilgrim originates. For establishing rapport, some of the *Elakapandas* also try to speak in the *Elaka* (regional) languages in order to attract the pilgrims. The pilgrim to his utter surprise finds a *Panda* speaking in his mother tongue and generally may be pleased to communicate with one in an unknown area (Dash, 2010). For example, a *Yatripanda* of Bihar and Jharkhand manages to speak Hindi and Bhojpuri with their *Jajmans*; the *Yatripanda* of the south manages to speak in Tamil and Telugu and with Bengali pilgrims in Bengali.

Procedure for Darshan

It is prescribed, and is almost obligatory that if a pilgrim visits a holy place, he should stay in the place of his pilgrimage at least three days and nights and perform the functions in the order as laid down in the holy book of '*Ekamra Purana* and *Swarnandri Mohadaya*'. If a pilgrim visits the holy place Lingaraj Temple for the first time, there are many rules and regulations mentioned in the holy book that need to be observed by the pilgrims. The very first thing a pilgrim should do at Bhubaneswar before visiting Lingaraj Temple is to take a holy bath in the great tank Bindusagar. This is done by taking three dips in the water. Then he should visit the shrines of Ananda Vasudev Temple just on the eastern bank of the tank. Lord Ananda Vasudev is considered the *Kshetrapati* (the guardian deity) of the place. After visiting Ananda Vasudev Temple, the pilgrim should visit *Devi-Pada-Hara* in front of Lingaraj Temple and again going back, he visits Tirtheswara Temple on the bank of Bindusagar tank (Banerjee, 1931). Lord Tirtheswara is in charge of the *Tirtha*, and whosoever visits this Temple city of Bhubaneswar, is required to pay a courtesy call to this temple as it is considered to be celestial evidence of the visit to Lord Lingaraj. No pilgrim dares to forget to clap his hands before the guardian of the temple who is deeply involved in meditation throughout the day and night. The necessity of clapping hands is to divert God's attention to the devotees' and obtain humble homage and thereby the pilgrim enrolls his visit in the eternal journey of man (Mahapatra, 1989).

By finishing the *Darshan* outside the temple, the pilgrim should approach the Lion's Gate (*Simhadwara*) of the Lingaraj Temple and bow down. After entering the temple, the pilgrim should first pay homage to Lord Siddha Ganesh, and then Goddess Bhubaneswari, Kartikeya, Brusava (the holy bull), Chandeswar, Kalpabrushya, the goddess Parvati and then returns back, enter main temple through *Natamandir*, and take the blessings of Lord Lingaraj. After darshan, he/she exits



through southern door (*Dakhini Dwar*) and paid homage to goddess Savitri situated on the south-west of Lingaraj Temple and the returns. In a Shiva temple, it is believed that a complete circumbulation should not be performed because the *paduka* water (sacred water) poured on the Shiva Linga flows outside the sanctum in a channel and the devotees should not ever cross that sacred water.

In Lingaraj Temple the *paduka* water flows in an underground tunnel present on the North-West corner flowing from the back area of Bhubaneswari Temple and it passes from the side of Parvati Temple and falls into a tank present inside the Garden. The tank is also connected with the Papanasini tank present in the premises of Mitreswar Temple outside the Lingaraj Temple. One of the informants revealed that the tank inside the temple premises is cleaned when it becomes full. It is thus believed that a complete round should not be performed. However, in Lingaraj Temple no one follows the rules (*Darshan Vidhi*), even the *Yatripandas* also do not take the pilgrims through rules and regulations correctly. All the pilgrims/devotees make a complete circumbulation of the temple as there are around 108 minor shrines situated all around the temple premises and all devotees are of course interested in paying homage to all the deities therein.

The pilgrims do not follow the *Darshan Vidhi* mentioned above completely at present. After visiting Lord Ganesha, the pilgrims ascend the step, and then proceed to the *Natamandir* through the *Bhibisana Dwara* entrance, enter *Jagamohana* via *Kalahata*, and have a *Darshan* of Lord Lingaraj from the *Jagamohana* and whenever allowed to access the sanctum sanctorum, they worship Lord Lingaraj with *pushpa*, *gandha*, *dhupa*, *dipa* and *naivedya*. *Dhupa* or secret worship is conducted four times a day in Sri Jagannath Temple. In the temple vernacular, it is called *Dhupa* (Offering fragrant smoke-incense). "The ritualistic Puja ceremony of Lord Jagannath is based on "Gopala Archana Bidhi" and "Sarada Tilaka". The priests who conduct the Puja ceremony are supposed to be well versed in these texts, according to which the Lords are worshipped" (Choudhury, 2019). There is *Pushpam Gandham* (offering Sandal paste) and also *Arghya* (Showing water). The pilgrims sometimes choose to offer *pushpa* (Offering flowers and garlands), and *dipa* (Lighting the lamp), on their own without the help of any temple priest. When one wants to offer *pushpa* and *naivedya*, one usually requeststhe help of a priest. When the pilgrim entry is restricted to sanctum (*Garbhagruha*), the priest enters the sanctum and offers puja for the pilgrim. Sometimes the priests (*Yatripanda*) perform *puja* in front of Lord Lingaraj standing in *Jagamohan* by uttering the name and *gotra* of their *Jajman*. The priest receives an amount as *Dakshina* for his service. The devotees generally offer coconut, banana, milk, water, flowers etc. on the Shivalinga by repeating the mantra uttered by the priests. Lord Lingaraj is worshiped in the form of *Hari-Hara* (a deity combining the two major gods Vishnu (Hari) and Shiva (Hara)). After the *Darshan* of Lord Lingaraj, the devotee makes a *pradakshina* (*bedha parikrama*) or clockwise circumambulation of sacred entities on a fixed path of the temple by visiting the Parsa-Devatas and minor shines present around the temple.

The important Role of Pilgrim Guides

The *Yatripanda* of the temple plays an important role in providing temple *darshan* for the pilgrims. While entering the temple the pilgrims meet their *yatripanda* and the *yatripandas* help them in providing the *darshan* of all deities. By way of interfaith comparisons, this is the role of monks in Orthodox monasteries as well and has a special place in spiritual growth (Nicolaidis, 2024). They allure the yatri with the promise to show all the nooks and corners of the temple complex and arrange for the darshan and prasad of the presiding deity and other deities without any difficulty to the satisfaction of the yatri. The *yatripanda* take the pilgrims to Lord Siddha Ganesha first in order to pay their homage. They ascend the steps, worship Lakshmi-Narsimha and proceed to the *Natamandir* through the *Bhibisana Dwara* entrance. Then they enter *Jagamohana* via *Kalahata* and have a *darshan* of Lord Lingaraj from the *Jagamohana*. Whenever allowed to the sanctum sanctorum, they worship Lord Lingaraj with *pushpa*, *gandha*, *dhupa*, *dipa* and *naivedya* (food offered as part of a worship ritual, before consuming it). When the pilgrim's entry is restricted to the sanctum (*Garvagriha*), the priest enters the sanctum and offers rites on behalf of the pilgrim. Sometimes the priests (*yatripanda*) perform ritual in front of Lord Lingaraj standing in *Jagamohan* by uttering the name and *gotra* of their *Jajman* (De,1961).

The devotees generally offer coconut, banana, milk, water, flowers etc. on the Shivalinga by repeating the mantra uttered by the priests. After the *darshan* of Lord Lingaraj, the *yatripanda* takes the devotee to make circumnavigation or *pradakshina*



(*bedha parikrama*) of the temple by visiting the *Parsa-Devatas* and minor shrines present around the temple premises and explaining some historical and architectural background aspects of the temple. The devotees are called and cared for as a *jajmana* (sacrificial offering) by the Pandas. One of the *yatripanda* revealed that if necessary they provide all necessary help to their *Jajmans*. If they want to stay near the temple, they try to provide accommodation in Dharmashala or any other hotels nearby as per their wish and even arrange for food. If the pilgrims want *Abhada* (sacred food) from the temple, they also arrange for this eventuality. Most of the pilgrims prefer sacred food (*abhada*) from temple as they visit the temple on *Tirtha yatra*, devotionally. When the pilgrims visit in tourist bus, they prefer to stay in Dharmashala which is close to the temple. Nowadays very rarely do the pilgrims approach the pilgrim guide (*yatripanda*) to provide arrangements for accommodation and food.

Maintainance of the Yatri Khata (Pilgrim Register)

After performing the temple *darshan* all the concerned *yatripanda* maintain the '*Yatri Khata*' which means 'Pilgrim register' in which the *yatripanda* note down the devotee's genealogical records including intra-alia the pilgrim's name, father's name, forefather's name, family members name, title, caste, gotra, address etc. from Odiya (native or inhabitant of Odisha). They also obtain the signature of the devotee. The register is updated regularly and changes of addresses etc. are made (Swain, 2006). Some *Elakapandas* maintain two registers one '*Dastakat Khata*' (signature copy) and another '*Elaka khata*' (an area copy). In the signature copy the *Elakapanda* notes down all the pilgrims names, addresses, father's name, family members names, *gotra* or people who are descendants in an unbroken male line from a common male ancestor or patriline irrespective of the area because most of the pilgrims would be busy after taking *darshan* of Lord Lingaraj and then leave.

In the meantime, the information such as name, address and other as described earlier were often taken down hurriedly and thus in a haphazard manner and also generally in a poor handwriting. So, in order to avoid bad handwriting in the *Elaka khata* they first note down information in the *Dastakat Khata* (signature copy). In their leisure time, *Elakapanda* copy down needed information in their *Elaka* copy in a neat handwriting and information is taken from the *Dastakat* copy and under this they then wrote down a numbered code. The *Dastakat Khata*, the signature is then also present. For each state, they maintain a different copy and it is placed within the state register. For their convenience they have divided the register in alphabetical order based on districts and villages (Thana).

The index is maintained based on villages and sometimes even on surnames (titles), *gotra*, caste etc. If any pilgrim from a particular village or their family have visited Lingaraj Temple earlier, the concerned *Elaka panda* shows their name and signature in order to establish a good rapport among the *Jajman-Kamin* relations. Lastly he becomes their *Elaka-panda* and family *panda* and requests them to contact him if they ever intend to revisit. Some of the *Elakapanda* establish rapport by providing pilgrims with visiting cards and advise them to contact him further if necessary. Some *yatripanda* are contacted automatically on a pilgrim's return. One of the informants revealed that there are pilgrims/devotees who pay them as much as Rs.500/- to 600/- to perform rites as requested by them in their name for up to one year. There are even some devotees who contact them telephonically and send payments for them to perform rites in their name if they cannot visit temple personally. In time the *Jajman-Kamin* relationship becomes so intimate within the passing generations, that some *Jajmans* used to send them invitation cards during auspicious occasions like marriage etc. One of the informants revealed that there are pilgrims/devotees who visit every day, others once in a month, and devotees from far away places that may visit once or twice in a single year.

By acting as a *Yatripanda*, they do not have a fixed rate of charge. The rate changes from person to person or from devotee to devotee. According to pilgrims/devotee's status, they used to change the rate at times because there are different classes of devotees visiting the temple. Not all the devotees can afford it if the guides charge a particular rate. The charge also differs according to the guiding techniques. If the devotee wants to only perform rituals inside the temple he pays Rs.10/- to 20/- as *dakshina* to the pilgrim guide (*Yatripanda*). If the *yatripandas* provide *darshan* of Lord Lingaraj and all the minor temples around in the temple premises and even explains some historical background of the temple, they charge Rs. 50/- to 100/-. If they come in a group Rs. 100/- to Rs. 200/- is charged. There are even *yatripandas* especially for VIPs and they



maintain special VIP register book. If any of the VIP's visit the temple, the VIP's give their guide a *dakshina* of Rs. 500/- to 1000/-. One of the *yatripanda* revealed that there are instances, where they sometimes do not receive any *dakshina* from VIP's because they are in hurry and due to high security issues they forget to pay. When the VIPs come with high security, they will generally inform the temple and make all arrangements in advance ready. Sadly some forget to pay any homage for services rendered.

There are some *yatripandas* (guides), who 'squeeze' the pilgrims for money and do so in a very negative manner. Such *yatripanda* hamper the image of other guides amongst the pilgrims. Among the three categories of functionaries, there are also *yatripandas* who do not have particular areas (*Elakas*). These types of *yatripandas* are called '*Dhulia Pandas*' by some *Elaka Pandas*. They accept any pilgrim who comes across them, perform rites inside the temple and take the people around the minor temple. They charge Rs.100/- to Rs.200/- as *dakshina* from the devotees.

In ancient days, the *Elakapandas* used to maintain an intimate relationship with the *Jajmans*. During that time when Kings and Landlords of different states or districts visited Lingaraj temple with love, they used to gift parts of their landed properties wholeheartedly to Lingaraj temple where the *marfardar* (owner) of the land then became the *Elakapanda*. To date, the families of such *Elakapandas* have kept the landed properties, which their ancestors have received as a gift from the Kings and Landlords. Some of the *Elakapandas* have given the land on lease to farmers for cultivation and they visit the land once or twice annually. Believers even visit from outside the state and go to their *Elaka* where they have landed properties. During the visit to the *Elakas* (areas), some *pandas* even make a visit near the *Jajmans* (those of a fixed circle of persons in a Hindu caste system whom a member of an occupational group serves as an exclusive and hereditary right) who live nearby those areas.

Rivalry among the Three Categories of Pilgrim Guides

In the book "Traditional structure and changes in an Orissa Temple" it is mentioned that the strongest rivalry was between the Badus and the Suars, as both the groups of guides performed major services in the ritual cycle of the temple and owned clients (*Jajmans*) in different parts of the country (Mahapatra , 1981). Both the Suars and the Badus served pilgrims in the Town (Bose , Patnaik & Ray, 1958). Prior to the establishment of the *Nijogas*, the Suars were reported to have been at the mercy of the *Badu* who were viewed as the most influential and richest people in the locality and were well placed in society. The Suars acted as their agents in the pilgrim estates and brought the pilgrims to them – many coming by ferry from Balianta. They also supplied the Badus with food cooked in the temple during festival days. Among the Brahmana (suars) and Pujapanda families all the *sewayats* are not involved in serving as *Elaka panda* (pilgrim guides). Between these three functionaries it is common that disputes arise for one or other reason and there are many cases filed in courts by one group against another . Recently there were two disputes that occurred in the temple between Badu and Mahasuars based on issues related to pilgrims.

In 2007 November, there was a conflict between Badu and Mahasuar based on breaking 108 coconuts. A devotee visited Lingaraj Temple with great devotion and wanted to break 108 coconuts after fulfilling his dreams. As the poor devotee did not know any of the rules and regulations of the temple or the temple *sewayats*, while entering the temple he met the Mahasuar *sevak* and asked him to perform worship in his name and break the 108 coconuts in the name of the almighty. When Mahasuar was performing the rites and breaking the coconuts by chanting mantras, Badu *sewayats* heard the news that Mahasuar was breaking the 108 coconuts of a devotee and interrupted this. Immediately a conflict arose and the breaking of coconuts was stopped. Badu *sewayats* argued that it is part of their service to attend to the pilgrims and break the coconuts as requested.

As the argument heated up, the case was brought to the executive officer. He tried to appease the two *Nijoga* secretaries but he could not take the decision alone. In an emergency, Trust board members were called and a meeting was convened. Meantime the breaking of coconuts was stopped, and the angry devotee took the coconuts from Lingaraj Temple and broke them in another temple. On that day, no *Nijoga* groups benefitted at all. The argument was based on the notion that if one



coconut was to be broken then Mahasuar *sevak* could have done it but if there were more than one coconut, then only the *badu sevak* had the right to break it. What was the view of *Badu sevak*? Another reason for the intense argument might be the *dakshina* paid by the devotee. The devotee would have paid a good amount of *dakshina* after breaking 108 coconuts. To *dakshina* may likely have been the cause for the conflict arising.

On 27 July 2009, another major conflict occurred between the *Badu Nijoga* and *Mahasuar Nijoga* inside the temple premises over a group of devotees that donated money for the rituals. A group of devotees from Rajasthan came to Lingaraj Temple to perform worship on 27 July 2009. The *Badu* and *Brahman Nijoga* both acted as temple guides for the tourists. The devotees met *Mahasuar* (*Brahmana sevak*), and asked him to perform worship, and handed over to him Rs. 3,500/- for worship. When the *Badu sevak* came to know of this payment, a feud broke out in the evening between the *Brahmana Nijoga* and *Badu Nijoga sevak* group over the collection of *dakshina* from the group of pilgrims from Rajasthan. In the evening, the conflict spread into their wards (*sahi*) and *sevak* of both the group pelted stones at each other and even attacked one another with bricks. The innocent visitors and some commuters were injured in the clashes. Police and other high officials reached the *Badadanda sahi* where the fight was ongoing.

They tried to control the situation. Three platoons of police force officers were deployed from Lingaraj Temple to Mausima Temple (other wise known as Rameswar Temple) and later section 144 was imposed to restore normalcy in the area and some of the *sevak* were arrested. Rituals at the 11th century Lingaraj Temple in Bhubaneswar were disrupted on 30 July (Sunday) morning after a group of priests' *gheraoed* the local police station, demanding the release of some of their arrested brethren, who were detained in connection with a clash. In the evening normalcy was restored after around five hours following the intervention of senior officers, temple management members and political leaders. Trouble again started after some priests (*sevak*) and women, belonging to *Badu Nijoga* demonstrated at the police station, pressing for the immediate withdrawal of all cases registered against others lodged behind bars.

The Sunday protest stemmed from a group clash between *Badu* and *Brahman Nijoga* members on the prior Thursday. The clash led to the arrest of at least 18 priests of the temple. The two groups had reportedly entered into a major dispute over some money given by a group of devotees for the performing of rituals. While a group of priests collected the money from some pilgrims from Rajasthan on Wednesday evening to perform the rituals, another group claimed that the money should have gone to them instead. An intense argument between the two groups sparked tension, leading to the pelting of stones. Resisting the police action, around 200 members, swearing allegiance to the *Badu Nijoga* *gheraoed* (prevented people from leaving until certain demands were met) the police station and disrupted rituals at the famous shiva temple. This left the officialdom worried as the tension came on the eve of the last Monday of the Hindu month of *Sravana* when pilgrims usually throng in huge numbers to the shrine. However, following assurances from the police and local leaders the demonstrators relented. At last, the money was shared between the two *Nijogas*, *Badu* and *Brahmana*.

Distribution of Places among the *Badu* Pilgrim Guides

The *Badu sevak* (*yatripandas*) have distributed among themselves, and by mutual agreement the pilgrims coming from various parts of Odisha as well as India. Even during the ancestral period, most of the *Yatripanda/Elakapanda* had received landed properties from the respective *Elaka* king or Landlords (*Jajmans*) as a gift for their services when they visited Lord Lingaraj Temple. In the land litigation paper, it is indicated as I am donating the landed properties to Lord Lingaraj and the Mafardhar would be Sri... i.e. concerning *Yatripandas* name. Following are some of the lists of places as mentioned in Table 1 assigned to the *Badu* families that have been collected by means of iqualitative research nterview procedures in which ethical consent was granted and anonymity of respondents guaranteed.



Table 1. Distribution of areas among Badu Pilgrim Guides (Authors own)

Sl.No	Name	Place
1.	Vasudev Badu	Bikaner, Bengal: Muktagacha, (Raja family: Raja Rajendra Malik's family in Chorbagan, Jaipur, Jodhpur and 1/8 th of Ranpur (Odisha))
2.	Nursingha Badu	Ranpur 1/8 th , some from Kolkata.
3.	Jiten Badu	Kanika, Kujanga, Dhenkanal, Paradeep, Kendrapara
4.	Ratikant Badu	Kalahandi, Ranchi, Sunderghar, Gangpur, some Marwari and Bengali
5.	Vinayak Makadam	Khalikot, Angul, Parikud, Raja of 8handrapur and Khandapara Estate, Andra Pradesh (Ichhapur), Tamil Nadu, Karnataka.
6.	Debendra Samantary and Bijendra Samantary	Daspalla, Khandapara, Angul, Khalikota, Gumsur, Berhampur and half of Ranpur.
7.	Samantary Family	Athgarh, Sorada, some from Kolkata
8.	Makadam Family	Sonepur, Baud, Bolangirpatna, Berhampur, Sambalpur and some Marwari, Bengali pilgrims
9.	Makadam Family	Whole of Berhampur
10.	Manas Ku Badu	Talchar, Balangir, Keonjhar, Phulbani, Bihar, Jharkand, Sambalpur
11.	Satyanaryan Botu and Narayan Botu	Danpara state (Khurda)
12.	Narasingha Badu	Banki (Odisha)
13.	Narasingha Badu	Banki (Odisha)
14.	Narasingha Badu	Ranpur ¼ th share, some Marwari and Bengali pilgrims, Chhattisgarh
15.	Hulas Badu	Baramba, Narasinghpur and Surguja
16.	Muktikant Badu	Jaipur, Cuttack, Bhadrak, Baleswar, Ganjam, Devagarh, sundargarh, Delhi, Meerut, Ghaziabad, Muzaraffarabad, Punjab: Patiala, Mathura; Gwalior, Sultanpur, Ametti,



		Tripura, Agartala, Manipur, Assam, Uttar Pradesh 30 districts, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Tata, Jamsedpur.
17.	Taranisen Botu	Kashmir, Marwari, Bengali, Cuttack
18.	Ramakrushna Badu	Kharswan, Seraikella, some Bengalis, Singhbhum and Tigiria Raja
19.	Dwarika Badu	Bengali, Marwari pilgrim, Ranchi and Gangpur.
20.	Dwarika Badu	Gangpur, Sunderghar, Ranchi, some Bengali and Marwari pilgrim.
21.	Dwarika Badu	Ranchi, Bihar, some Marwari pilgrim
22.	Digambar Badu	Bihar, Bengal and Kendrapara
23.	Vijendra	Nayagarh, Bengal

In similar ways there are specific *Elakas* for *Brahman Pandas* and *Pujapandas* distributed among themselves by mutual agreements.

However, as in July 2009 when a major dispute occurred between the two groups of pilgrim guides Badu and Brahmana (Mahasuar), the management comprising of ADM and a Collector, ordered that there should not be any specific area (*Elaka*) for a pilgrim guide. It was stated that any *yatripanda* can act as a pilgrim guide to any pilgrim irrespective of which state, district he/she belongs to so as to avoid disputes between the *sevayats* in the name of the *Elaka*.

Conclusions

In North Indian Hindu pilgrimage, *pandas* are the most common name for a class of hereditary religious guides. *Panda* derived from the Sanskrit word *pandita*, which means 'learned man'. Each *panda* family have exclusive hereditary rights to serve pilgrim clients (*jajmans*) from a particular area or areas of the subcontinent. These rights were confirmed and protected by detailed genealogical records.

Nowadays some pilgrims feel less need to have *pandas* helping with rituals in temples. In addition their activities have been curtailed and monitored and even regulated due to allegations of unethical practices such as excessive fees charged. Nonetheless they still play an important part in offering unique services. Modern pilgrims are apprehensive about using their services due to mistrust. However it is interesting to note that many *pandas* are using modern technology in providing their still needed services. They still seek opportunities to serve pilgrims and the faith in general.

Pandas thus still play a significant role in Hindu temples and sacred pilgrimage sites. The *pandas*, who are traditionally Brahmin priests, act as religious guides, and help pilgrims with many rituals, prayers, and special offerings, which are vital in Hindu temple worship. They assist many pilgrims in performing various rites, such as *pujas* (worship), *shraddha* (ancestor worship), and *aarti* (offering light). Their guidance is essential for pilgrims. In addition they keep records of families' visits to holy sites over generations known as *Pandas' Bahis*, and these are handwritten and have been passed down through generations of families of *pandas*, thus providing a sound historical record of families' spiritual journeys and legacy. *Pandas* also help to facilitate a personal experience within the temple, enhancing the pilgrim's spiritual connection and devotion and provide guidance on issues of faith while supporting families emotionally as needed as they maintain family traditions and become more spiritually orientated.



During the pilgrims stay, the *pandas* arrange rooms, food and guide them including facilitating any necessary or desired rituals. The *pandas* functioned as members of the pilgrims' extended family and were an essential support network in those days before good transport and communication networks. For the services, pilgrims rendered a token of cash payment in appreciation for services obtained. Twentieth century improvement in transportation and communication have severely cut short the pilgrims need for the *pandas*' support network. The *Panda's* status has gradually shifted from being a family member to being a contractor, to been hired when needed. *Panda* communities are fundamentally conservatives. Their primary role is to facilitate traditional religious rituals and this makes it difficult for them to adapt to changes. However, the forces generated by social and economic changes are compelling *pandas* to adapt to new circumstances and to seek better opportunities that they may be provided for.

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