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## Significant of Baisi Pahacha in Shree mandir

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### Abstract: -

The word Baisi Pahacha of Jagannath temple puri is very familiar in Jagannath sanskruti. The “BAISI PAHACHA” also known as the “flight of twenty-two steps”, holds a great significance within the Shree Jagannath temple complex, not only for its architectural importance but also for its profound impact on devotees’ lives. Starting from the Singha dwara the eastern gateway of the outer enclosure, the baisi pahacha ascends in to the inner enclosure of the temple. Many people do not know the importance and significant of Baisi pahacha. The word Baisi is our Odia word which means twenty-two (22) and pahacha means steps. So, Baisi pahacha means 22 steps. There is various belief associated with the myths of these 22 steps (Baisi Pahacha). After crossing the baisi pahachas (22 steps), devotees can see Lord Jagannath, the Lord of universe.

### Keywords: -

Baisi Pahacha, Singha Dwara, Yama Danda, Pancha Mahabhuta, Pancha Indriya, Pinda Dana, Abhada, Lord Jagannath.

### Introduction

According to Vedas & Puran Puri is also named as purussottam khetra. Which means the abode of supreme being. According to Brahma Purana, Skanda purana a ‘Sabara’ Leader named Biswabasu worshiped the image of Nilamadhava at a secret place named ‘Nilakandara’.

The king of Malawa, Indradyumna advanced towards Utkal to take possession of that divine idol. But Neelamadhav disappeared from his original place and floated in the sea in form of a huge log of wood, ‘Daru’. The idol of the supreme being Purusottama Jagannath along with Lord Balabhadra & Subhadra is made of that wood, ‘Daru’ for which He is called as ‘Darubrahma’.

The significance of the Jagannath Culture lies in the fact that it has absorbed all religions and all religious beliefs within itself, within its all-embracing fold, one finds the essence of the evolution of Indian religions and culture.

Jagannath culture has been an elastic culture. Apart from influencing other cultures, it has incorporated into its fold the cultures of various faiths. Shree Jagannath is the Savara’s wooden deity without sense organs. Again, he is the Dravidian deity with sense organs. He is the purusottama of the Vedas and Darubrhma of the Brahmins. His image ideal is the influence of savaras. His rituals remind us of Dravidian customs and his festivals are of puranic origin. Of his mudras (incantations) AUM is Vedic and Hlim, Slim, Klim are Tantric. His Kaibalya is of Jain origin and Nirmalya is of Shaiva Origin. A close observation of his worship, attire, food, rites and rituals makes us conclude that Sri Jagannath culture has assimilated features from other cultures. It is devoid of and free from all types of regional narrowness. It has adapted itself to the varying environments by effecting changes in its outward form, but the essence remains unchanged.

Sri Jagannath culture always takes a positive view of life. It does not admit of the pessimistic thoughts of grief, suffering and death. It recommends staunch faith in the divine. It teaches man to strive for the perfection of his soul by the sacrifice of his self. Material pursuits find no place in this culture. Hence a devotee does not ask for material acquisition. He prays for Divine love and grace.

The Jagannath culture from its time immemorial preaches the word of love and peaceful existence among the human community. The character of this culture is generosity and endurance and coordination. One of the major salient features of culture of Lord Jagannath is tolerance which is an outstanding human value propagated by culture of Lord Jagannath which postulated with every way of life as its contribution in its specific way to human welfare. This culture stands for religious tolerance, co-existence of all religion's communal harmony and international integrations. This has led to the present-day situation in which we see that Lord Jagannath is worshipped by all irrespective of caste, creed, colour and community. As a result, the entire universe and inhabitants of universe are part and parcel of the concept of culture of Lord Jagannath.

Jagannath culture does not admit any distinction in between the caste and communities. It aims at liberating poor and down-trodden.

The flag tied to the 'Neelachakra' of Jagannath temple is also known as Patitapabanabana . Jagannath devotees who are not allowed to enter into the temple can view the flag from outside. The Patitapabana deity together with patitapabana flag are empowered to remove the sins of the sinner.

The Jagannath culture has had a great impact on the socio-religious and economic life of Odisha. A deep sanctity and significance are attached to the culture of Lord Jagannath not only by Hindus, but also by the people of other religions.

Odisha may be known as an economically backward state but it has carved a space for itself as a culturally rich state. The factor that is responsible for the elevation is Lord Jagannath and the traditions associated with the Jagannath Temple. This makes Odisha to be better known as the Land of Jagannath. He is therefore called the God of the masses or Ganadevata.

### **Baisi Pahacha: -**

Baisi Pahacha is a combination of two words 'Baisi' and 'Pahacha'. In local Odia language 'Baisi' means '22' and 'Pahacha' means 'Step', so 'Baisi Pahacha' means '22 Steps'. These 22 steps found at the 'Singha Dwara', the Lion's gate of Lord Jagannath temple, Puri. After entering the Lions' gate of the temple, devotees have to climb these 22 holy steps to reach the second inner gate (known as Baisi Pahacha Gumuta), after passing the second gate they will reach the courtyard from where they can get into the main temple to see Lord Jagannath.

According to belief, all sins of the devotees disappear who touch these steps even once, so devotees usually touch these 22 steps in hand while climbing them and also allowed their children to slowly roll over these steps from the top to the bottom in expectation of spiritual bliss. Pilgrims get a sense of fulfilment after putting a flake of dust from the surface of these 22 steps on their forehead.

While the historical records or puranic literature do not provide an exact construction date, legends attribute its creation to King Bhanudev. The steps dimensions vary width of the middle 15 steps varies from 5 feet 10.5 inches to 6 feet 3 inches in width and the rise is 6 inches to 7 inches in height. The size of the remaining 7 steps is smaller in length and width. These steps are constructed using felspar and khodalite materials.

A black colour stone known as 'Yama Shila' is engraved in the middle of the 3rd step. As per the belief, devotees must step on this stone while going up the steps because it frees them from 'Yama Danda'. It is believed that this stone frees individuals from the consequences of Punishment of Yama, the God of death, but must not step on this stone on their way back since it will take away all the 'Punya' (values collected after visiting Lord Jagannath temple). However, one must not step on this stone on the way back, as it would diminish the merits of the darshan (sacred viewing) of Shree Jagannatha

On the southern side of the Baisi Pahacha, notable features include the revered Shivalinga named KASHI BISWANATHA, as well as idols of Ramachandra, Nrusingha and Ganesh. The exact history and mystery surrounding these steps are not widely known. However, they are held in high regard by the people, believed to possess a profound spiritual essence.

Various holy activities and sacred rituals and ceremonies are performed on these 22 steps throughout the year, out of those 'Shraddha' ritual is the most important one. Shraddha is the annual Pinda Daana ritual of Hindus, a ritual in which food is offered to the ancestors, is usually performed on both sides of these 22 steps. The ancestral souls are believed to be satisfied by it. There is a small stone on the 7th step known as 'Pitru Shila'. Devotees offer Anna Mahaprasad, the holy rice of the temple that has been offered to Lord Jagannath, to this stone for feeding their ancestors to liberate their departed souls.

It is also believed that during the annual car festival several Gods, Goddesses, Demi Gods, other heavenly bodies, the souls of the ancestors (near the Pitru Shila), Chitragupta and Yamadutas (near the Yama Sihla) come to these steps to see the grand Pahandi ceremony of Lord Jagannath. Madana Mohana, the representative idol of Lord Jagannath, offers Pinda Daana on these steps to his ancestors (Nanda and Yashoda, Devaki and Vasudeva, Koushalya and Dasaratha).

Another ritual known as 'Bada badua Daka' (call the elders) is performed on these steps on the day of Deepavali. Devotees burn kaunria kathis (bundle of a particular kind of sticks which easily catch fire) on these steps on the Deepavali day to light up the path of their ancestral souls. The idols of Kasi Biswanath, Lord Rama, Nursingha and Ganesh have been installed on the southern side of the Baisi pahacha.

On the Chaturdashi tithi of the dark fortnight in the month of Margashira (December), Madana Mohan, the representative deity of Shree Jagannath, performs Pinda dana Niti (a ritualistic offering) on these steps to honour his ancestors, namely Nanda and Yashoda, Devaki and Vasudeva, and Kaushalya and Dasharatha. Madan Mohana also Offers pinda dana on this Baisi Pahacha at Gundicha Temple since King Indradyumna and queen gundicha were childless.

### Size & Structure of twenty-two steps: -

The size and structure of Baisi Pahacha are described by different historians and Pandits from time to time and their view are different from each other.

These Pahachas (steps) have been reconstructed or repaired many times for which the actual size and number of Pahacha (steps) differ.

As per Puranic view these 22 steps but currently 18 steps are directly visible but after including two steps towards Ananda Bazar it is 20 and two steps 21 & 22 are towards Rosasala or Roseigruha (Kitchen).

The height and width of steps are 6ft and length is 70ft but some steps are 15ft in width (18th step) and some steps are rounded in shape and less than 6ft. These steps are made of Felspar and Khodalite.

One black stone popularly known as Yama Shila is engraved into the middle of the 3rd step. The belief about the "Yama Shila" has already been explained previously.

The small rough stone on the seventh step is known as pretashila or pitrushila. People who believe in liberating the souls of the decease offer Mahaprasad the holy rice to their ancestors.

### Significance of baisi pahacha: -

According to One belief says each of these 22 steps has its own significance of the existence of the Universe. The significance is given below

- 1. First Five Steps (from step 1 to 5):** Describe all five Sense Organs, these are Eye, Ear, Nose, Tongue and Skin
- 2. Second Five Steps (from step 6 to 10):** Describe five Breathing (Prana), these are Up-breathing (prana), Down-breathing (apana), Back-breathing (Vyana), Out-breathing (Udana) and On-breathing (Samana). These five vital forces (Pancha Prana) breathe life into body

3. **Third Five Steps (from step 11 to 15):** Describe the Inner Beauty, these are Looks (Rupa), Aesthetics (rasa), Taste (swada), Smell (gandha) and Noise (sabda)
4. **Fourth Five Steps (from step 16 to 20):** Describe the Pancha Mahabhutas, these are Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Space
5. **Twenty First Step (step 21)** is for Wisdom
6. **Twenty Second Step (step 22)** is for Ego

| SL.NO. | Steps Name  |
|--------|-------------|
| 01     | Tibra       |
| 02     | Kumudabati  |
| 03     | Mandaa      |
| 04     | Chhandabati |
| 05     | Dayabati    |
| 06     | Ranjani     |
| 07     | Raktika     |
| 08     | Roudra      |
| 09     | Krodha      |
| 10     | Bardrika    |
| 11     | Prasarini   |
| 12     | Priti       |
| 13     | Maarjani    |
| 14     | Khiti       |
| 15     | Raktaa      |
| 16     | Sandipani   |
| 17     | Alapani     |
| 18     | Madanti     |
| 19     | Rohini      |
| 20     | Ramya       |
| 21     | Ugraa       |
| 22     | Khyobini    |

After crossing these Baisi Pahachas (22 steps), devotees can see Lord Jagannath the Lord of the Universe.

Believers of Jainism hold these 22 steps to be a symbolic representation of their 22 Tirthankars. When a Jain devotee enters the Lion's gate and starts climbing the 22 steps, he touches each step in deep devotion and then touches his head as a mark of respect to the Trithankars of Jain religion.

Some scholars say that these steps represent the 22 kinds of weaknesses and faults in human beings, so every devotee must sacrifice these 22 weaknesses by climbing these 22 steps before getting into the main temple to see Lord Jagannath.

These 22 steps are symbols of Pancha Mahabhoot (5 five elements) + Panch Indriya (5 organs or senses) + Sada Ripu (6 enemies) + Three Gunas (3 qualities) + Mana (mind) + Buddhi (intellect) + Ahankar (egoism).

The 3 deities (Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra) x their 7 generations = 21 + Lord Jagannath who is beyond the Purusha = 22. This is the symbolic representation of Baisi Pahacha.

These 22 steps represent four Vedas and eighteen Puranas (4 Vedas + 18 Puranas = 22). One has to cross these 22 steps, so that Param Brahma Lord Jagannath will be available to him.

## Conclusion: -

Baisi Pahacha (twenty-two steps) are the holy steps and the devotees need to be cross these steps to Darshan the Supreme Power Lord Jagannath and get the blessings from the deities. In Jagannath Sanskruti Loka Katha, different Purans, Shastras, and the opinions of different Scholars are very positive about Baisi Pahacha.

The inner feeling which comes into your body while you climb the Baisi Pahacha is very wonderful and it will not be possible to describe the feeling in words. So, we suggest after analysing all the facts and opinions that these twenty-two steps are a path to Darshan of Darubramha. The following 22 letters Odia Mantra need to be recited while climbing the Baisi Pahacha as per Jagannath Sanskruti.

“Srikrushna Govind Hare Murare

He Nath Narayan Basudev”

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