



**T**ulasikshetra, the abode of *Tulasi* is famous for *Baladev* temple. It is situated at *Ichhapur*, just two kilometres far from *Kendrapara* town and Lord *Baladev*, the elder brother of *Shree Jagannath* is its main divinity. However, *Jagannath*, *Subhadra* and weapon *Sudarshan* are worshipped on the *Ratnasimhasan* in the main temple. Hindu mythology



## Beshas of Baladev Mahaprabhu at Tulasikshetra Kendrapara

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narrates that *Balaram* killed the wicked demon king *Kandarasura* ruled over *Lalitgiri*, married his daughter *Tulasi* and established *Tulasikshetra* at *Ichhapur*. The *Kshetra* is named after *Tulasi*, the daughter of *Kandarasura*. An idol, representing *Tulasi* a goddess in a seated position is also present after the sacred seven steps. Lord *Baladev* is the *Brahma* (the mystic syllable of *Om*). He is also *Purna Brahma* and gives salvation to the devotees. His *kshetra* is known *Guptakshetra*, *Gupta Brindaban* and *Brahmakshetra*. The chariot of *Shree Baladev Mahaprabhu* is '*Brahma Taladhwaja*' and the highest one. *Shreekshetra, Puri* is famous for his younger brother *Jagannath* and regarded the

holiest place and next to *Shreekshetra* is *Tulasikshetra* Kendrapara. Tourists and pilgrims from far and near come to *Tulasikshetra* not only during car festival but also all along the year and see the *Jews* in different *Beshas*.

*Besha* is a Sanskrit word means festive dress, *Alankar*, costume or attire. Everyday starting from '*Mangala Alati*' to '*Ratri Pahuda*' the deities on *Ratnasimhasan* are dressed with different clothes. The daily *Beshas* in *Baladev* temple include *Sakala Besha*, *Sandhya Besha* and *Badasingar Besha*. The *Jews* put on cotton and silken fabrics and wear golden ornaments decorated with different precious stones and



flowers of several kinds. *Baladev* is fond of *Tulasi* (the holy basil) and most of the times put on *Tulasi Dayana*. The silken and cotton clothes include *Uttariya*, *Paharana*, *phuta*, *Shree Kapada* etc. Garlands and other floral ornaments namely *Adharmala*, *Chandrika*, *Gava*, *Alaka*, *Karapallava* etc. prepared by the gardener servitors (*Mali Seveyats*) used in *Beshas*. Specific expert servitors decorate the *Jews* on different occasions. The *Beshas* are mainly embellished in three ways i.e. '*Bastra Singar*', '*Puspa Singar*' and *Alankar Singar*. Like *Shreemandira*, *Puri* different festivals are observed in *Tulasikshetra*, *Kendrapara* and the *Jews* are attired with varieties of *Beshas*. These are almost same but performed in separate *Tithis* (a lunar day). Besides daily *Beshas* twenty-five special *Beshas* are done in *Baladevjew* temple.

### 1. Nrusingha-Sheshadev – Besha :

This is done on the 14<sup>th</sup> bright fortnight of *Baisakha*. *Nrusingha* is the 4<sup>th</sup> incarnation of Lord *Vishnu* and killed the demon king *Hiranyakasipu*, the father of *Prahallad*. Poet *Jayadev* narrated this in his '*Gita Govinda*' – "*Tabakara Kamale Nakhabhuta shrunga / Dalita Hiranyakasipu Tanubhrunga / Keshab Dhruta Narahari Rupa / Jaya Jagadisha Hare*." *Hiranyakasipu* was killed by *Nrusingha* on the full moon day of *Baiksakha*. So *Jagannath* puts on this *Besha* on this day. One of the names of *Baladeva* is *sheshadeva* for he holds the whole earth. *Basuki*, the *Naga* king bears the Earth on its head and is also on the head of *Baladev*. For this *Shree Baladev* with a seven hooded snake on his head is decorated with *Nrusingha – Sheshadeva Besha* on the said occasion.

### 2. Gaja Uddharana Besha :

On the full moon day of *Baisakha* the *Jews* of *Baladevjew* temple are dressed with *Gajauddharana Besha*. It is narrated in '*Bhagabat*' of *Jagannath Das* that *Dravideswar Indradyumna* was a great devotee of Lord *Vishnu* and always recited the name of *Vishnu*. Once he did not attend the great saint *Agasti*. *Agasti* cursed *Dravideswar* and he became an elephant on the spot. The *Gaja Uddharana Besha* depicts the story that Lord *Vishnu* saved the *Gaja* (elephant) from the clutches of a mighty crocodile in deep waters. The elephant prayed *Vishnu* and its sincere prayer moved *Vishnu* to compassion. *Vishnu* sent his disc (*Sudarsan*) and cut the crocodile into pieces. In this *Besha* the devotees see *Baladev* with his *Halayudha* (Ploughshare) and *Jagannath* with a conch in one hand and a disc in the other hand. The portrait of an elephant being attacked by a crocodile is placed in the water filled floor of *Garvagrahu*. *Shree Baladev* and *Jagannath* wear this *Besha* as a sense of devotion to the grace of God.

### 3. Gajanana / Ganapati / Hati Besha :

*Snana yatra* of *Baladevjew* is performed on the full moon day of *Jyestha* (May-June). On this auspicious day *Gajanana Besha* of the *Jews* is done. On the *Snana Purnima* the deities are taken out to the *Snanavedi* (the bathing platform). After the completion of the ceremonial bathe, the deities are dressed like *Gajanana* or *Ganapati*. *Dardhyata Bhakti* says that one *Ganapati Bhatta* of Karnataka was pre-occupied in mind to see *Jagannath* as *Ganapati* but his devotional aspire could not be satisfied in *Snana Yatra*. *Ganapati* returned with a broken heart and on his way listened to the heavenly words, returned to *Shreemandira* and to his



astonishment Lord *Jagannath* appeared with a mask of pachyderm. Thus the devotional thirst of *Ganapati Bhatta* and his followers of the *Ganapatya* sect was satisfied. This is the mythological story behind the *Besha*. Since that day the *Hati Besha* of the *Jews* is done in *Shreemandira* and in *Baladevjew* temple, *Kendrapara*.

#### 4. Raja Rajeswar Besha :

On the day of *Shree Gundicha* (the 2<sup>nd</sup> bright fortnight of *Ashadha*), *Baladevjew*, *Jagannath* and *Subhadra* put on this *Besha* on the chariot, the *Brahma Taladhwaja*. It includes precious *Tahia*, different types of garlands, *Kundal* and *Karapallaaba*. In *Raja Rajeswar Besha* the deities move to *Gundicha Mandir*. *Raja* means the king and *Rajeswar*, the king of kings. This *Besha* symbolises that Lord *Baladev* is the sovereign and all are his attendants. The votaries have a *darshan* of the above royal and gorgeous *Besha* and are blessed themselves.

#### 5. Raghunath Besha :

This *Besha* is observed on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of bright fortnight in the month of *Asadha* or just on the day the chariot *Brahma Taladhwaja* reaches the *Simhadwara* of the temple. On the chariot Lord *Jagannath* is dressed like *Shree Rama* and holds a bow and arrow. *Baladevjew* is dressed like *Laxman*. *Bharat*, *Satrughna*, *Hanuman* and other side figures are also displayed. These are made out of *Sholapith* and wooden twigs. *Devi Subhadra* is dressed like *Seeta*.

#### 6. Gamha Abhiseka Besha :

The full moon day in the month of *Bhadra* is the birth day of *Shree Baladevjew*. On this day *Gamhabhisekha Besha* is done in

*Baladevjew* temple. The deities wear clothes and *kathi mukuta* (a crown made of *Solapitha* and wooden twigs) on the head and *Swarna Chita* (a golden ornament) on head. After *Gamha Abhisekha* (birth coronation) rituals, *Yajna* (religious offerings) starts on the spot in between *Tulasichanura* and twenty-two steps. In this ceremony the *Jews* are decorated with one lakh holy basil leaves. So some say the *Gamhabhisekha Besha* is '*Tulasichadha Besha*'.

#### 7. Sunia Besha :

The 12<sup>th</sup> day of the bright fortnight in *Bhadra* is the birthday of *Baman*, the incarnation of Lord *Vishnu*. From this day the New regnal Year of the *Gajapati* king of *Odisha* begins and the king presents a gold coin to Lord *Jagannath*. This system is called '*Veti*' (a present). On this day the *Jews* of *Baladevjew* temple attires gold and silver ornaments and different kinds of garlands. The *Besha* is known *Sunia Besha*.

#### 8. Janmastami Besha :

*Bhadra Krushna Ashtami Tithi* (the 8<sup>th</sup> day of dark fortnight of *Bhadra*) is observed the birth day of Lord *Krushna*. On this day *Krushna*, the incarnation of Lord *Vishnu* took birth. On this sacred day, *Janmastami Osha* fasting is performed in the *Bhoga Mandap* of *Baladevjew* temple. The idol of *Gopaljew* and *Anthua Gopal*, worshipped on *Ratna Simhasan* are taken to the *Osha* spot and worshipped as *Shree Krishna*. The devotees have a *darshan* of the *Anthua Gopal*, the baby *Krishna*.

#### 9. Ananta Besha :

Lord *Baladev* is regarded *Param Brahma*. He is omnipotent, omniscient and



omnipresent. According to Hindu mythology he is having a shape (*Sakar*) but is *Ananta*, the endless and eternal. On *Aswina Purnima* (the full moon day of *Aswina*) the devotees see their Lord *Baladev* in *Ananta Besha* decorated with a seven hooded snake over his head. This ritual is observed on the full moon day in *Bhadraba* after the *Ratra Dhupa* of the *Jews* is over.

#### 10. Radha Damodar Besha :

This *Besha* is done every year in the *Baladevjew* temple from the 11<sup>th</sup> day of bright fortnight of *Aswina* to the 10<sup>th</sup> day of bright fortnight of *Kartika*. The mythological story behind this *Besha* is that *Ankura*, the devotee of *Krushna* on his way to *Mathura* witnessed the *Radha Damodar Besha* while taking bath in the river *Yamuna*. Some scholars say that this *Besha* started in *Shreemandira* from the 12<sup>th</sup> century whereas others say from 16<sup>th</sup> century.

*Radha* has become famous throughout India after being made a female protagonist in *Gita Govinda* written by *Jayadeva*. Others say that the *Besha* is introduced since 16<sup>th</sup> century i.e. after the arrival of *Srichaitanya* in *Puri*. According to *Srichaitanya Shree Jagannath* is a composite figure of *Shree Radha* and *Shree Krishna*. This spirit is revealed in *Radha Damodar Besha*. Lord *Jagannath* and *Shree Balabhadra* put on '*Trikachha*', golden '*Nalibhuja*', *Chandrika* and different precious golden ornaments. In the *Baladevjew* temple the *Jews* are not decorated with this *Besha* but the idol of *Gourang* worshipped inside the *Mandir* premises wears *Radha*, *Krishna* and *Rama Besha* during this period.

#### 11. Kaliya Dalana Besha :

This *Besha* is performed on the 8<sup>th</sup> bright fortnight of *Kartika*. As per Puranic description

it is believed that *Kaliya*, the venomous serpent (viper) living on the banks of *Yamuna* caused continuous danger to the people of *Gopanagari* and *Krushna* killed *Kaliya*. In the memory of the incident this *Besha* takes place in *Baladevjew* temple. Lord *Jagannath* is dressed like *Krushna* killing the *Kaliya* serpent. This *Besha* is the symbol of *Krushna* cult in *Baladevjew* temple, *Tulasikshetra*.

#### 12. Lakhe Tulasi Arpana Vesha :

The other name of *Baladev* is *Tulasiramana*. *Ichhapur* is also famous as *Tulasikshetra*. On *Anala Navami Tithi* (the 9<sup>th</sup> day of bright fortnight in *Kartika*) in the *Baladevjew* temple *Lakhe Tulasi Arpana Besha* is performed. The *Jews* are decorated with one *lakh* holy basil and long garlands prepared out of the same. The devotees see this unique *Besha* and never forget in life time.

#### 13. Madhu Daitya Samhar Besha :

This is done on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of bright fortnight in *Kartika*. As per the Puranic lores *Madhu*, a powerful demon lived in *Lalitgiri* who was a close associate and minister of the demon king *Kandarasura*. Before killing *Kandara*, *Madhu* was killed in the war with *Baladev*. The oozing blood of the dead body of *Madhu* flew towards the Bay of Bengal and a river created. In the name of the demon *Madhu* the river is called *Madhusagar* and *Baladevjew* temple stands on its bank. *Madhu* was killed in the *Kartika Sukla Dasami Tithi* and in the memory of the victorious occasion this *Besha* is done in *Baladevjew* temple.

#### 14. Pralambasura Baddha Besha :

This *Besha* is performed on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the bright fortnight in the month of *Kartika* in *Baladevjew* temple. A demon *Pralamba* was



killed by *Balaram*, the elder brother of *Krushna*. So *Balabhadra* wears this *Besha* in the month of *Kartika*.

#### 15. Garuda Arohana Besha :

Garuda the king of birds is the *Bahana* (a carriage) of *Krushna*. Mythology says that *Krushna* ascended on its back on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of bright fortnight in *Kartika*. In the morning of this day *Garuda Arohana Besha* is performed in *Baladevjew* temple and Lord *Jagannath* is dressed like ascending on the back of *Garuda*.

#### 16. Dwibinda Banara Samhar Besha :

This *Besha* is done on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of bright fortnight in the month of *Kartika*. In Hindu mythology there is an interesting story regarding *Dwibinda* monkey. In *Tretaya Yuga*, *Dwibinda* was a counsellor of the monkey king *Bali* and *Sugriba* of *Kiskindha*. *Narakasura* a wicked demon, the friend of *Dwibinda* was killed by *Krushna* and that annoyed *Dwibinda*. Once *Dwibinda* found *Balaram*, the elder brother of *Krushna* in a cheerful and enchanting mood put on garlands and ornaments. This sight was intolerable by *Dwibinda* and to take revenge he attacked *Balaram*. In a terrible fight on the mountain top *Raibata*, *Dwibinda* was killed. Some say that *Dwibinda* was not a monkey but a giant and opinion differs. In the memory of this incident *Balabhadra* puts on this *Besha* and it is a special one. This *Besha* was offered by *pundit Binod Bihari Dash*, a famous Sanskrit scholar of *Ichhapur*, Kendrapara.

#### 17. Bakasura Baddha Besha :

It is done on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the bright fortnight in *Kartika*. In *Dwapara yuga*, *Krushna* and *Balaram* were on the river bank of *Yamuna* with cows. *Kansasura*, the demon king of

*Mathura* sent a furious giant namely *Bakasura* to kill both *Krushna* and *Balaram*. *Baka* in the guise of a heron attacked both the brothers and *Krushna* killed *Bakasura*. On this festive occasion a votary sees *Jagannath* in *Bakasura samhar Besha* and *Balabhadra* in royal robe on the *Ratnasimhasan*.

#### 18. Padma Besha :

This *Besha* is performed in *Baladevjew* temple on the full moon day of *Kartika* and the deities are decorated with lotus flowers. A legend behind this *Besha* is that a devotee from a very long distance, brought lotus flowers for Lord *Jagannath*. To perpetuate his legendary memory this *Besha* is being performed in *Shreemandir* on any Wednesday in between the new moon day in the month of *Magha* and *Basanta Panchami* as chosen. In *Baladevjew* temple it is done on the *Kartika Purnima*. But mythology says that in *Dwapar Shree Krishna* had his 'Rasalila' (special amusement in an enormous pastime) in *Brindaban*. In the memory of the same *Padma Besha* is performed. In this *Besha* big petals of lotus adorn the faces of the deities in the shape of a disc. *Shree Balabhadra* and *Shree Jagannath* hold lotus buds in their hands. Three triangular crowns made of lace (crape) and cloth is decorated with innumerable lotus flowers. Four swans are projected in this *Besha* and seen with lotus stalks. That adds extra glamour to this *Besha*. In *Baladevjew* temple the idols *Radha Krishna* and *Govindajew* are taken out and kept in a chariot made of flowers. The devotees see this in *Rathakhala* (the place for building the chariot, *Brahma Taladhwaja*).

#### 19. Prathamastami Besha :

*Prathamastami*, a famous festival of the Hindus is observed on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of dark fortnight



in *Margasira*. It is customary that the eldest child of the parents puts on new clothes on this day. In this *Besha* also *Baladevjew*, *Jagannath* and *Subhadra* of *Baladevjew* temple put on new clothes and adorned with gold and silver ornaments. The *prathamastami Besha* is also known '*Raja Besha*'.

## 20. Dhenukasura Mardan Besha :

The full moon day in *Margasira* is known *Pandu Purnima* and on this day Lord *Balaram* wears *Dhenukasura Mardan Besha*. The mythology says that *Krushna* and *Balaram* in their childhood were in the forest with cows grazing there. In that jungle one violent demon *Dhenuka* lived with his family. Out of anger *Dhenuka* attacked *Balaram* and used his force to kill *Balaram* but ultimately he and his family members were killed by *Balaram*. To make this memory alive in the minds of the devotees this *Besha* is observed. *Balabhadra* wears *Dhenukasura Mardan Besha* and *Jagannath* is worshipped as *Krushna*.

## 21. Pusyabhiseka Besha :

This is done in the full moon day of *Pousha*. In this *Besha* *Balabhadra*, *Jagannath* and *Subhadra* put on silver studded garments and different types of silver ornaments. This *Besha* is also called *Raja Besha*.

## 22. Kanchi Vijaya Besha or Kanchi Kaveri Besha :

On the 5<sup>th</sup> day of bright fortnight in *Magha* the votaries see the *Jews* in *Kanchi Kaveri Besha*. This *Besha* has a historical and legendary background. History says that *Purusottam Deva*, the *Gajapati* king of *Odisha* invaded *Kanchi*, defeated its king *Salwa Narasingha Deva* and married his daughter

*Padmavati*. But the legend narrates that in the first attempt *Purusottam Dev* was defeated in the war with *Kanchi*. He prayed *Shree Jagannath* for mercy and took the second attempt. Lord *Jagannath* and *Baladev* on the back of a black and white horse joined the infantry of *Purusottam Deva*. On the way they drank curd from a milkmaid named *Manika*. Due to unavailability of cowrie *Jagannath* mortgaged his jewel ring to *Manika* and told her to give that to *Purusottam Deva* coming behind. *Purusottam Deva* recognised the jewel ring of *Jagannath* and awarded *Manika* with a rent free village still called *Manika Patna* which stands nearby the Lake *Chilika*. Victory over *Kanchi* could be established due to the grace of Lord *Jagannath* and *Baladevjew*. *Purusottam Deva* ordered his minister to give marriage *Padmavati* to a sweeper. On the day of car festival *Gajapati* with a golden broom was sweeping on the chariot (*Chherapahanra seva*). The clever minister offered the hands of *Padmavati* to *Purusottam Deva* and at that time the King was no less a *Chandal* (a low caste Hindu). This concept exhibits equality in *Shreeketra*. In the memory of *Kanchi* victory this *Besha* starts in *Baladevjew* temple at 9 pm on the schedule day and the devotees see the victorious *Besha* up to 2 am. This is also known the '*Kanchi Kaveri Besha*'.

## 23. Kandarapura Mardan Besha :

On the full moon day of *Magha*, *Baladev* wears *Kandarapura Mardan Besha*. *Tulasi Mahatmya* says that *Baladev* killed the demon *Kandarapura* and married his daughter *Tulasi* and that is discussed earlier. On the spot *Kandara* was killed and *Kendrapara* got its modern name. To keep burning this mythological episode in the minds of the people, *Baladev* gives *darshan* to the devotees in this *Besha*.



#### 24. Krushna-Balaram Besha :

This *Besha* is observed on the full moon day of *Phalguna*. *Jagannath Das* in his '*Bhagabat*' narrates that *Krushna* and *Balaram* both are the sons of '*Basudeva*'. The other name of *Krushna* is also *Basudeva*. In his *Besha* Lord *Jagannath* and Lord *Balabhadra* are dressed like *Krushna* and *Balaram*. *Krushna* holds a flute in one hand and a stick in the other. This *Besha* attests the deep impact of *Krushna* cult in *Baladev* temple.

#### 25. Rama, Laxman and Seeta Besha :

On the full moon day of *Chaitra* this *Besha* is done. *Ramayana*, the great epic narrates that *Rama*, the elder brother of *Laxman* was the incarnation of *Shree Jagannath* in *Tretaya Yuga*. *Devi Seeta* was his wife. *Laxman* rendered selfless services to *Shree Ram*; being pleased *Rama* wished to be *Jagannath*, the younger brother of *Laxman* in *Kali Yuga*. Accordingly *Jagannath*, *Balabhadra* and *Subhadra* worshipped in *Shreemandira* are *Rama*, *Laxman* and *Seeta* respectively. But *Santha* (saint) *Tulasi Das* in his *Ramacharita Manas* has narrated a different story that one day he was moving on the river banks of *Saraju* and heard the voice of *Rama*, telling *Bibhisan* his desire to give *darshan* as *Jagannath* in *Shreemandira*. *Tulasi Das* moved to *Shreemandir* with a great

devotion in heart to see *Jagannath* as *Rama*. *Jagannath* fulfilled his devotional aspire. Behold, *Tulasi Das* wrote –

“*Johi Rama sohi Jagadisha*  
*Dina hi aka anta na pabat shesa*  
*Shesa bhaye Lachhiman anuchari*  
*Bhadraso siya rajkumari.*”

In this *Besha Jagannath* is dressed like *Sri Ram* and holds a bow and arrow. *Balabhadra* is dressed like *Laxman* and *Subhadra* like *Seeta*.

Besides these special *Beshas* some other *Beshas* are observed in *Baladev* temple. Lord *Balabhadra* as a symbol of integration of various sects of *Sanatan Dharma* is indicated in the above facts. The *Beshas* are the assimilation of variety of customs, traditions and faiths. Like *Jagannath* cult, *Balabhadra* culture spells out the concept of liberty, equality and fraternity. Different trends of Hindu religion are also well marked in the *Bhesas* of Lord *Baladev*. It is believed that a devotee achieves salvation if he gets an opportunity to see any of the *Beshas* of Lord *Baladev* at least once in his life time.

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