

# COVID Outbreak and its Impacts on Selling of Temple Foods: A Study based on Lord Baldev Jew Temple, Kendrapara, Odisha

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## Abstract

The aim of this research paper is to find out the impacts of COVID outbreak on selling of temple foods particularly in Lord Baldev Jew temple, Kendrapara, Odisha. COVID outbreak in India and the world has made the hospitality sector a stand still. Around four Crores of tourism & hospitality employees and people depending on tourism activities suffered a lot. This Pandemic is considered as one of the worst crises ever to hit the Indian tourism industry impacting all segments. It is very much essential to minimize all possible touch points between a guest and staff not only in hotel or restaurants but also in all organized&non-organized sectors which in other hand will help in fighting against COVID. Odisha is known for its temples not only in India but also for the whole world. It has a rich tradition and cultural heritage. Temple food or Prasad or Bhog which is the food prepared in the temple premises, offered to the deity & then distributed among the devotees. When food is linked with religious activity it takes on a special significance. Many people earned their livelihood by selling temple food to devotees as well as religious tourists. Because of Covid outbreak temples are closed, people are debarred to enter into the temple and at the same time large gathering are also avoided. Hence consumption of temple food has gone down drastically due to which people selling temple food affected directly. Various suggestions are provided based on the research study for temple food vendors to handle the situation of pandemic in a smoother way.

**Keywords:** COVID, Pandemic, Tourist, Prasad, Bhog & Temple Food

## Introduction

Odisha is known for its temples, religion, food and culture not only in India but also throughout the world. Mostly temples are originated as a place of worship and also for

other activities like social, economic and cultural. Even today construction of temple is considered to be a pious social service. Presence of Nata Mandap and Bhoga Mandap gives the evidence of offerings of temple food to the deities in the earlier days too. Pilgrims or pilgrimage tourists when they visit temples offers temple food and also receives Bhog / Prasad which are directly purchased by them. In Odisha, the development of offering Bhog or temple food started during SOMVAMSHI rulers. In Odisha temples are not only the centres of worship rather they also acts as a manifestation of cultural traits which involves preparation of food in the premises and offering to the deities and then distributing among the devotees. To serve Naivedya (everyday offering to the deities) utmost care is taken. In most of the Hindu temples Prasad or Bhog or divine food which is first feed or offered to the Lord as Naivedya and later served to devotees is a common practice. Commonly Satvik food is usually served as Prasad or Bhog in most of the temples not only in Odisha but also throughout the world. Devotee prepares himself or herself the Prasad / Bhog from the ingredients brought to the temple and offer to the God and Goddess.

The COVID outbreak or pandemic have shown everybody worse conditions and affected a lot from all walks of life. Even priests and places of worship or people who prepares temple food and sells it is also no way an exception to it. Financial conditions of priests, temple cooks, temple food vendors are worsened during the ongoing pandemic which have led to escalating economic and social problems.

## Scope of the Study

This study is primarily concerned about the COVID outbreak and its impact on selling of temple food

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particularly within the context of Lord Baldev Jew temple, Kendrapara. Till date temple foods relating to tourism, have not received due attention within a policy framework. The research study conducted on the subject are limited in their scope. The main purpose of the study was to find out the importance of the temple foods, types of temple food & also the impact of COVID outbreak or pandemic on selling of temple food. Various suggested measures can be taken so that it can be helpful for the community associated with the preparation & selling of temple food towards development of tourism as well as to increase the economy standard of the local public associated with the Baldev Jew temple in Kendrapara in particular and Odisha in general.

### Challenges in Selling of Temple Food in Odisha to Increase the Demand during COVID Outbreak

The challenges of selling the temple food in Odisha in general and Lord Baldev Jew temple, Bhubaneswar in particular are many. Some major challenges involved in selling of temple food in Odisha are:

- There is an ample shortage of firewood and earthen pots for preparation and service of Prasad.
- Several COVID protocols need to be followed while preparation and selling temple food in the temple premise.
- Efforts should be made for availability and consumption of temple food in different places / eating outlets with proper guidance so that the authenticity of the Prasad or Bhog.
- Several temple authority including the government should highlight the nutritional aspects of temple food including its benefits for increasing the awareness as well as consumption of temple food in Odisha and abroad.
- Cleanliness and hygiene of the premises where temple food is served is a real challenge for the temple administration for serving food to the devotees. Since, everyday a huge number of people are using it for having their lunch so it need to be hygienically maintained with proper sewerage system and water supply facility so that devotees and pilgrimage tourists can get proper facility to sit and eat Prasad every day.

## Literature Review

### Books

Indian Regional Cuisine-Hyderabad & Andhra Pradesh, in her book, “The Essential Andhra cook book with Hyderabad and Telengana specialties” (1999), Latif. Bilkees states together the different aroma, spices and tastes of Andhra Pradesh cooking / cuisine from the simple idli-sambar to hot and spicy seafood delicious. Along with the recipes she mentioned the traditions and rituals associated with food. Gastronomic Tourism in India, In his book, “Gastronomic Tourism in India” (2016), Chaini Susanta Ranjan presented and defines the concept of Gastronomy Tourism, a detailed study on role of temple foods in promoting gastronomy tourism in India, Gastronomy tourism consumer Behaviour in India, wine tourism in India, culinary explorations and food tours in India, regional cuisines of different states and union territories. The major thrust given on how cuisine plays a vital role in promoting a destination.

The taste of India, (1985) in her book, Jaffery Madhur clearly stated together a series of authentic dishes and description on each dish on speciality food of each region of India. The dishes include speciality coconut scented stew from Kerala (south) to wazwan from lake laced Kashmir on (north).

Indian Regional Cuisine-Kerala, Kannampilly Vijayan in his book, “The Essential Kerala cook book” (2003), explained the ancient association of food with religion, the influence of foreign trade, and the intermingling of different communities of the Kerala Cuisine. Here, author opined that, Keralian foods are delicately spiced dishes, harmoniously balanced and simple to prepare, neither too rich nor too bland.

“Bhog – Temple food of India”: In their book, Buddhiraja, Geeta and Arun (2012) have mentioned about Bhog – Temple Food of India explores and celebrates the link between food and culture and endeavors to resurrect some elided portions of India’s heritage cuisine. Based on 6 ritu (seasons) and ashtha (8) prahar (unit of time) followed by temples for bhog offerings, numerous first-of-its-kind recipes are included. Culled out from the temple kitchens, several known dishes are given a traditional flavour. They have explained the importance of Bhog to the mankind.

## Journals and Magazines

Mukhopadhyaya, Rabindranath (1987) in the research paper titled “A study of regional pattern of consumption expenditure in rural India” author analysed regional consumption expenditures pattern of rural households. Researcher estimated expenditure elasticities for cereal substitutes, all food and non-food items. The study found variations in the consumption expenditure pattern of rural households.

Subramanian Shankar (1991) in his research paper “Gender effects in Indian consumption patterns”, the author clearly stated a range of household consumption patterns using the household expenditure data from national sample survey 1983 from Maharashtra state. Sample study stated that gender plays a vital role in consumption patterns. General food stuffs like rice, wheat, cereals, pulses, milk, meat, fruit, vegetables and sugar are either gender neutral or are consumed in larger quantities when there are more women in the household.

According to Mohanty Digamber, in his article on “Destination Puri for tourists and pilgrims” (2004) he has emphasized the importance of Puri, not only a religious place but also a destination which mainly attracts a large number of both domestic as well as foreign tourists for Lord Jagannath and its Mahaprasad. Being a District collector, he has emphasized that both the private as well as Government sector to come forward to increase their efforts to make a conducive environment for tourist activities. He also mentioned various types of fund allocation given by the Department of Tourism, both state and central Government to develop this destination.

Rout Nihar Ranjan (2009) researched on “food consumption pattern and nutritional status of women in Odisha”. Researcher tries to find out the variation in food consumption and nutritional status of women in the state in rural and urban areas against different background variables. The author has also clearly stated the difference between the standard and actual level of food intake among different groups of women.

## Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the research are:

- To find out the importance of social factors in influencing the current temple food demand and consumption.

- To examine the impact of COVID outbreak on selling of temple food specific and particular in Lord Baldevjew temple, Kendrapara.
- To examine the perception and attitude of the tourists regarding temple foods in the state of Odisha.

## Research Methodology

### Data Source

The major data collection for the proposed study has been done by primary and secondary sources. The primary data has been collected through a pre structured questionnaire. Tourists and vendors were the major respondents for the study. The primary data has been supplemented by secondary data cited in the reports of temple administrations, Department of Tourism, Government of Odisha, Odisha tourism Development Corporation and many others. Some relevant journals, magazines and News Papers have also been extensively consulted.

### Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted in the research area before designing the questionnaire. The data was collected through pilot study to know about the potential of study area and to avoid the biasness and obtain the authenticity response for the present study.

### Sampling Plan

In order to make the analysis more transparent, the sample size was restricted to 100 for tourists and 12 for vendors. Out of which 87 tourists as respondents were found suitable where as 10 vendors as respondents were also found suitable. Area of study was selected was confined to Lord Baldevjew temple, Kendrapara.

## Research Design

### Data Base

Primary and secondary sources will be used to gather data for the proposed study. Secondary data from Department of Tourism and Government of Odisha reports will be used to supplement the main data. In addition to these, relevant journals, magazines, books, and newspapers were consulted.

### Tools to be Used for Sampling

Wherever necessary, standard research tools such as analysis of variance, factor analysis, correlation, and regression analysis were used. To investigate topics such as tourist motivations, trip duration, and so on. A random sample of tourists, both domestic and international, was chosen using questionnaires. The data was analysed using standard tools such as MS WORD, EXCEL, and SPSS.

### Data Analysis

The primary data is obtained through a well-framed questionnaire circulated among tourists and different

temple food vendors. The questionnaire comprises of personal details to be filled by the respondents. In particular the study ascertains the age, marital status, qualification, annual income and occupation of the respondents. The percentage analysis is applied to identify different categories of tourists and vendors backgrounds.

### Data Analysis (Tourists)

The table below presents the demographic profile of the respondents on the basis of gender, marital status, age, educational qualification, annual income, occupation and region belongs.

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Profile of Tourists (N = 87)**

<i>Particulars</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	54	62.06	62.06
Female	33	37.94	37.94
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>Marital Status</b>			
Married	58	66.66	66.66
Single	29	33.34	33.34
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>Age</b>			
Below 25 yrs	11	12.64	12.64
26 - 35 yrs	27	31.03	31.03
36 - 50 yrs	41	47.12	47.12
51 - 60 yrs	07	8.07	8.07
Above 60 yrs	01	1.14	1.14
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>Educational Qualifications</b>			
Up to Matriculate	12	13.79	13.79
Intermediate	26	29.88	29.88
Graduate	39	44.85	44.85
Post Graduate & Above	08	9.19	9.19
Others	02	2.29	2.29
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Annual Income</b>			
Up to 2 Lakh	14	16.09	16.09

Particulars	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
2 - 5 Lakh	36	41.37	41.37
5 - 8 Lakh	29	33.33	33.33
8 - 12 Lakh	07	8.04	8.04
Above 12 Lakh	01	1.17	1.17
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>Occupation</b>			
Govt. Employees	24	27.58	27.58
Pvt. Sector Employees	32	36.78	36.78
Self Employed/ farmer	08	09.19	09.19
Business	20	22.98	22.98
Others	03	03.47	03.47
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Region</b>			
Eastern Region	74	85.05	85.05
Northern Region	04	04.59	04.59
Southern Region	05	05.77	05.77
Western Region	04	04.59	04.59
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Survey Data.

It can be observed from the Table 1 that in tourists out of the total respondents 62.06% (54) are male and 37.94% (33) are females. In marital status, majority of the respondents 66.66% (58) are married and 33.34% (29) are single. In age of the respondents, majority of the respondents 47.12% (41) belongs to 36 to 50 yrs of age and then coming 31.03% (27) belongs to 26 to 35 yrs of age and 12.64% (11) of the respondents are having below 25 yrs. Further in educational qualification maximum of the tourists are having graduate qualification 44.85% (39), then coming intermediate 29.88% (26) and up to matriculate 13.79% (12) and 9.19% (08) of the respondents are post graduate and above.

In annual income, majority of the tourists 41.37% (36) are having income 2 to 5 Lakh then coming 33.33% (29) are having 5 to 8 Lakh income and 16.09% (14) are having income up to 2 Lakh.

Out of the total respondents of tourists, 27.58% (24) are Government sector employees and then coming 36.78% (32) are private sector employees and 22.98% (20) are from business profession followed by self-employed/farmer. In region, majority of the tourists 85.05% (74) are coming from eastern region and then coming 5.77%

(05) from southern and few number of tourists are coming from northern & western region that is 4.59% (04).

Following table and chart shows the purchase pattern of temple food. The figure reveals that majority of the respondents 78.16% (68) prefers purchase of temple food by self then coming by vendors 18.41% (16) and few number of respondents prefers to purchase temple food by hotels & restaurants 1.14% (1) and 2.29 (2) by online booking.

**Table 2: Purchase of Temple Food / Prasad**

Sr. No.	Particulars	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	Self	68	78.16	78.16
2	Vendors	16	18.41	18.41
3	Online booking	2	2.29	2.29
4	Hotel & Restaurants	1	1.14	1.14
<b>Total</b>		<b>87</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100</b>

Following table and chart shows the occasion on consumption of Prasad / temple food by tourists. The figure reveals that majority of the tourists 47.15% (41)

prefers consumption of Prasad / temple food on regularly most of the days and then coming on religious function i.e. 28.73% (25) and on occasions like family rituals 12.64% (11) followed by specific days and others.

**Table 3: Occasion on Consumption of Prasad / Temple Food**

Sr. No.	Particulars	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	Religious function	25	28.73	28.73
2	On specific day	09	10.34	10.34
3	Regularly/ most of the days	41	47.15	47.15
4	On occasions like family rituals	11	12.64	12.64
5	Others	1	1.14	1.14
<b>Total</b>		<b>87</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100</b>

Following table and chart shows the promotion of temple food. The figure reveals that majority of the respondents 45.97% (40) prefers through electronic media then coming by participating in social activities 31.06 (27) followed by through print media 13.79% (12) and few numbers of respondents prefer promotion of temple food by participating in organizing food festivals.

**Table 4: Promotion of Temple Food**

Sr. No.	Particulars	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	Through print media	12	13.79	13.79
2	Through electronic media	40	45.97	45.97

**Table 5: Decline in Sales of Temple Food during Pandemic**

Sr. No.	Name of the Temple	Sales of Temple Food during Pre COVID (INR)	Sale of Temple Food during Post COVID (INR)	Decline in Sales Percentage (%)
1	Lord Baladev Jee Temple, Ichhapur, Kendrapara	7,20,00000	90,00000	87.50
2	Maa Ramchandi Temple Ram Nagar, Kendrapara	18,00,000	3,00,000	83.33
3	Maa Gojabayani Temple Baghdadia, Dumka, Kendrapara	80,00,000	7,28,000	90.90

Sr. No.	Particulars	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
3	Participating in social activities	27	31.06	31.06
4	Organizing temple food festivals	05	5.74	5.74
5	Others	03	3.44	3.44
<b>Total</b>		<b>87</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100</b>

### Data Analysis of Major Temples Offering Temple Foods in Kendrapara District, Odisha during Pre-COVID and Post-COVID Period

A study has been conducted among the major temples of Kendrapara district, Odisha selling temple foods during pre-COVID & post-COVID times. It has been found out that most of the temples selling temple foods in Kendrapara district have shown an average of ninety percent of fall down in volume of sales in comparison between pre-COVID & post-COVID period.

Lord Baladev Jew temple has seen a decline of sales around 87.50% which is a major & popular temple in the district. Maa Ramchandi temple has seen a decline of sales around 83.33%, Maa Gojabayani Temple has seen a decline of sales around 90.90%, Lord Chandramauli Temple has seen a decline of sales around 92.50%, Maa Matia Mangala Temple has seen a decline of sales around 96.75%, Sakhibata Temple has seen a decline of sales around 96.42%, Lachamanjew Temple has seen a decline of sales around 96.05%, Lord Gupteswaar Temple has seen a decline of sales around 95.07%, Lord Nilakantheswar Temple has seen a decline of sales around 94.42% & Laxmi Narayan Temple has seen a decline of sales around 95.26%.

Sr. No.	Name of the Temple	Sales of Temple Food during Pre COVID (INR)	Sale of Temple Food during Post COVID (INR)	Decline in Sales Percentage (%)
4	Lord Chandramauli Temple, Chandan Nagar, Kendrapara	32,00,000	2,40,000	92.50
5	Maa Matia Mangala Temple, Jarimula, Kendrapara	16,00,000	52,000	96.75
6	Sakhibata Temple Vilabalarampur, Kendrapara	19,00,000	68,000	96.42
7	Lachamanjew Temple, Balipatana, Kendrapara	21,00,000	83,000	96.05
8	Lord Gupteswaar Temple, Pattamundai, Kendrapara	29,00,000	1,43,000	95.07
9	Lord Nilakantheswar Temple, Murguria, Kendrapara	38,00,000	2,12,000	94.42
10	Laxmi Narayan Temple, Old Bus Stand, Kendrapara	46,00,000	2,18,000	95.26

### Major Findings

- The availability of Prasad or temple food inside the temple is a major factor responsible for consumption of temple food inside the temple.
- During purchasing of temple food majority people prefers purchasing self than depending on hotels or third party.
- Day time consumption and demand of temple food is more than evening time.
- The research has revealed from the data that maximum people prefer to consume temple food on religious functions because of religious sentiments than the normal days.
- Vendors are facing several financial difficulties during pandemic and needs assistance from the Government.
- Kumbhakarars who prepares earthenware pots for cooking and packing of Prasad or Bhog have lost their livelihood. Hence the people and community associated with the preparation & selling of temple food need urgent attention.
- Most of the temples selling temple food are badly affected during COVID period and sales comparison to pre COVID & post COVID has declined almost more than 90%.

### Suggestions and Recommendations

- Temple food occupies a unique position in the minds of the people because of its religious belief and sanctity.
- Temple food not only attracts more number of tourists to visit the temple but also to consume varieties of Prasad. So it should be marketed properly to promote tourism in the state of Odisha.
- Efforts should be made by the temple authority to make this temple food available for tourists at their place of stay and thereby increase the consumption of temple food.
- In order to maintain hygiene and longevity of dry Prasad or Sukhili Bhog proper packaging system may be introduced.
- The tradition of consuming temple food inside the temple premises may be enhanced by providing cleanliness in the dining area as well as maintenance of hygiene in the temple premises.
- Training must be imparted to Suaras or temple cooks pertaining to hygiene and food safety and thereby motivating them to be in their profession as well as to involve their families to continue in same profession for future generation.

- Particularly during the pandemic Government need to give some financial assistance and support to the people involved in preparation & selling of temple food.

### Limitations of the Study

During the present study the researcher has faced several following Limitations:

- Lack of literature on marketing of temple food: A study based on Lord Baldevjew temple, Kendrapara, Odisha the researcher had to collect primary information mostly through field visits.
- More time taken during the collection of the primary data, as the researcher had to thoroughly convince the respondents about the purpose of the survey.
- Most of the tourists and vendors were not ready to share their incomes and sales volume respectively. Hence during the survey the respondents are found to be conservative while providing some information. This limitation was felt particularly in case of vendors selling temple food / Prasad.
- Mainly the size of the sample is another limitation. This is basically due to the fact that the research is

purely on exploratory one and main source of data is primary one.

- Lack of useful data on types of temple food, marketing, pilgrims or devotees expectation and satisfaction level in the context of temples of Odisha had been constantly felt as a major limitation.

However the findings of the present study should be used judiciously and carefully taking into account the above limitations.

### Conclusion

This paper has sought to discover how COVID-19 and related government restrictions have affected the selling of temple food and its economic impact on people associated with it. It has also sought to assess the adequacy of socioeconomic relief and related mitigation strategies. The article applies several theories to assess the differential impacts of the pandemic on temple food. A both quantitative and qualitative approach to understand the data and to assess the effects of COVID-19 on temple food is used. These impacts have increased the burden on the people and their families who are dependent on temple food selling.