



# Jagannath Temple

## Why in News?

Recently, **Odisha Governor Ganeshi Lal** has backed the entry of **foreign nationals inside the world-famous Jagannath Temple** in Puri, wading into a debate that has lasted for decades and periodically triggered controversy.

- Currently, **only Hindus are allowed inside the shrine** to offer prayers to the deities in the **sanctum sanctorum**.
- A sign at the **Lion's Gate (main entrance)** of the Temple clearly states: **"Only Hindus are allowed."**

## Why are Non-Hindus not Allowed in Jagannath Temple?

- It has been the practice for centuries even though there is no clearly articulated reason for it.
- Some historians believe that **multiple attacks on the Temple by Muslim rulers might have led the servitors to impose restrictions** on the entry of non-Hindus.
  - Others have said that this was the practice from the time the **Temple was built**.
- Lord Jagannath is also known as **Patitapaban** which literally means **"saviour of the downtrodden"**.
  - So, it is believed that, all those who are barred from entering the Temple because of religious reasons **get the privilege of a darshan of the Lord in the form of Patitapaban** at the **Lion's Gate**.
- **Example:**
  - In 1984, servitors of the Temple opposed **Indira Gandhi's** entry due to her marriage to a non-Hindu.
  - In 2005, a **Thai princess** was only able to view the Temple from the outside as foreigners are not allowed.
  - Also in 2006, a **Swiss citizen** was denied entry due to her Christian faith despite her large donation.

## What are the Key Facts about Jagannath Temple?

- The temple is believed to have been constructed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by **King Anatavarman Chodaganga Deva** of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty.
- Jagannath Puri temple is called '**Yamanika Tirtha**' where, according to the Hindu beliefs, the power of 'Yama', the **god of death has been nullified in Puri** due to the presence of **Lord Jagannath**.
- This temple was called the **"White Pagoda"** and is a part of **Char Dham pilgrimages (Badrinath, Dwaraka, Puri, Rameswaram)**.
- The temple is known for its **unique architecture, which includes a massive compound wall and a large temple complex** with multiple towers, halls, and shrines.
- The temple's main attraction is the **Annual Rath Yatra festival**, in which the three main deities of the temple, **Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra** are taken out in a grand procession on a chariot.
- The temple is also known for its unique food offering, the **Mahaprasad**, which is prepared in the temple kitchen and is distributed among the devotees.



### What are the Other Popular Monuments of Odisha?

- [Konark Sun Temple \(UNESCO World Heritage Site\)](#)
- [Lingaraja Temple](#)
- [Tara Tarini Temple](#)

### UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

**Q. The Prime Minister recently inaugurated the new Circuit House near Somnath Temple at Veraval. Which of the following statements are correct regarding Somnath Temple?**

1. Somnath Temple is one of the Jyotirlinga shrines.
2. A description of Somnath Temple was given by Al-Biruni.
3. Pran Pratishtha of Somnath Temple (installation of the present day temple) was done by President S. Radhakrishnan.

**Select the correct answer using the code given below:**

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (a)**

**Exp:**

- Somnath temple stands at the shore of the Arabian ocean on the western corner of the Indian subcontinent in Gujarat State.

- Shree Somnath is first among the twelve Aadi Jyotirlingas of India. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It was **mentioned by the Arab traveller Al-Biruni in his travelogue**, influenced by which Mahmud Ghaznavi attacked the Somnath temple in 1024 with his five thousand soldiers and looted its property and completely destroyed the temple. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The research based on ancient Indian classical texts show that first Somnath Jyotirling Pran-Pratistha was done on the auspicious third day of the brighter half of Shravan month during the tenth Treta yug of Vaivswat Manvantar.
- The modern temple was reconstructed with the resolve of Sardar Patel who visited the ruins of Somnath temple on November 13 1947. Then President of India, **Dr. Rajendra Prasad, did the Pran-Pratistha** at the existing temple on 11 May 1951. **Hence, statement 3 is NOT correct.**

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