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JAGANNATH RATH YATRA

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Jagannath Rath Yatra". The topic "Jagannath Rath Yatra" has relevance in the Art and Culture section of the UPSC CSE exam.

Relevance:

For Prelims:

What is Jagannath Rath Yatra?

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For Mains:

GS 1: Art and Culture

Jagannath Temple?

Gundicha Temple?

Significance of Jagannath Rath Yatra?

Why in the News?

As per the Odia calendar, the Jagannath Rath Yatra is celebrated on the second day of Shukla Paksha at Puri. In 2023, this was on June 20.

What is Jagannath Rath Yatra?

The Jagannath Rath Yatra, also known as the Chariot Festival, is a significant Hindu festival associated with Lord Jagannath (a form of Lord Krishna), held annually in Puri, Odisha, India. The festival is celebrated on the second day of the lunar month of Ashadha (June/July) according to the Hindu calendar.

The Rath Yatra involves the procession of Lord Jagannath, along with his siblings Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra, in grand chariots called "raths" through the streets of Puri. The chariots are huge wooden structures with intricate designs, colors, and decorations.

Facts about Jagannath Rath Yatra?

- **Historic Significance:** The Jagannath Rath Yatra has a history of over a thousand years. It is believed to have been initiated by King Indradyumna, a legendary ruler of Odisha, who wanted to bring the deities out of the temple so that everyone could have the opportunity to see and worship them.
- **Chariot Construction:** The three chariots used in the Rath Yatra are built every year using specific types of wood. The chariot of Lord Jagannath, called Nandighosa, has 18 wheels and is 45.6 feet high. The chariot of Lord Balabhadra, called Taladhawaja, has 16 wheels and is 45 feet high. The chariot of Devi Subhadra, called Darpadalana, has 14 wheels and is 44.6 feet high.

- **Rath Pulling:** One of the highlights of the festival is the pulling of the chariots by devotees. Thousands of people come together to grab the ropes and pull the chariots through the streets of Puri. It is considered an act of devotion and a way to seek blessings.
- **Chariot Festival of Massive Scale:** The Jagannath Rath Yatra is one of the largest chariot festivals in the world. It attracts millions of devotees from different parts of India and abroad, making it a significant event in the Hindu calendar.
- **Rath Yatra Outside Puri:** While the Rath Yatra in Puri is the most famous and grandest, similar chariot processions are also organized in other parts of India and abroad. Cities like Ahmedabad, Kolkata, and Jagannath temples in different countries also celebrate the festival with great enthusiasm.
- **Chhera Pahara Ritual:** During the Rath Yatra, the Gajapati Maharaja, the King of Puri, performs the ceremonial sweeping of the chariot floors with a golden broom. This act symbolizes the equality of all devotees before the deities, as the king humbly serves them.
- **Symbolic Journey:** The Rath Yatra symbolizes the journey of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, and Devi Subhadra from their main temple, the Jagannath Temple, to the Gundicha Temple, where they stay for a week before returning. The journey signifies the divine siblings' visit to their aunt's house.

Jagannath Temple?

- **Age and History:** The Jagannath Puri Temple, also known as Shri Mandir, is one of the oldest and most revered Hindu temples in India. Its construction dates back to the 12th century. The temple is associated with the Eastern Ganga dynasty and King Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva, who initiated its construction.
- **Deities:** The main deities worshiped in the Jagannath Puri Temple are Lord Jagannath (a form of Lord Krishna), Lord Balabhadra (his elder brother), and Devi Subhadra (his younger sister). The deities are carved out of neem wood and are replaced with new idols every 12 to 19 years in a sacred ritual called the Navakalevara.
- **Unique Appearance:** The idols of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, and Devi Subhadra in the temple have a distinct appearance. They are devoid of any specific human-like features and have large round eyes. This iconic representation is known as the "Darubrahma" form and is unique to the temple.
- **Rituals and Festivals:** The Jagannath Puri Temple is known for its elaborate rituals and festivals. The daily rituals include offering various bhogs (food offerings) to the deities, known as Mahaprasad. The temple is also famous for its annual Rath Yatra, where the deities are taken on a grand chariot procession.
- **Kitchen and Prasad:** The temple has one of the largest kitchens in the world, known as the "Ananda Bazar." Here, food is prepared in traditional methods to offer as prasad to the devotees. It is believed that the prasad from the Jagannath Puri Temple is spiritually significant and can purify the soul.
- **Nilachakra:** The Jagannath Puri Temple is adorned with a prominent wheel-shaped chakra on its top known as the "Nilachakra." It is made of alloy and is believed to be one of the largest metal wheels in India. The chakra has symbolic representations and is considered auspicious.
- **Rath Yatra and Chariots:** The Jagannath Puri Temple is famous for the annual Rath Yatra or Chariot Festival. During this festival, three grand chariots, namely Nandighosa for Lord Jagannath, Taladhwaaja for Lord Balabhadra, and Darpadalana for Devi Subhadra, are pulled by devotees through the streets of Puri.
- **Temple Architecture:** The Jagannath Puri Temple showcases the Kalinga style of architecture, characterized by its towering spires (shikharas), intricately carved pillars, and exquisite

sculptures. The temple complex covers a vast area and includes various mandapas (halls) and shrines.

Gundicha Temple?

- **Significance:** The Gundicha Temple, also known as the Mausi Maa Temple, is located in Puri, Odisha, India. It holds immense significance in the Jagannath Rath Yatra festival as it is believed to be the temporary abode of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, and Devi Subhadra during their annual Rath Yatra.
- **Temple Architecture:** The Gundicha Temple follows the Kalinga style of architecture, similar to the Jagannath Puri Temple. It is a simple yet elegant structure with a square sanctum and a spire (shikhara) adorned with sculptures. The temple complex includes a large courtyard and several smaller shrines dedicated to various deities.
- **Annual Visit:** During the Rath Yatra, the deities from the Jagannath Puri Temple are ceremoniously carried in chariots to the Gundicha Temple. They stay at the Gundicha Temple for a period of seven days, known as the “Navadina Brahma” or “Vrindavana” period. Devotees eagerly await the opportunity to have darshan (sight) of the deities during this time.
- **Symbolism:** The Gundicha Temple holds symbolic significance in Hindu mythology. It is believed to represent the house of Lord Krishna’s aunt, where he would visit during his childhood days. The Rath Yatra reenacts Lord Krishna’s journey from his abode to the house of his aunt, showcasing his playfulness and love for his devotees.
- **Rituals and Festivals:** Various rituals and festivities take place during the stay of the deities at the Gundicha Temple. Special prayers, bhajans (devotional songs), and performances are conducted by devotees. Devotees also engage in cleaning the temple premises as an act of devotion and service.
- **Devotee Access:** Unlike the Jagannath Puri Temple, which is restricted to Hindus only, the Gundicha Temple allows people of all faiths to enter and have darshan of the deities during the Rath Yatra period. This inclusive approach promotes unity and the idea that the divine is accessible to all.
- **Return Journey:** After the seven-day stay at the Gundicha Temple, the deities are carried back to the Jagannath Puri Temple in a grand procession called the “Bahuda Yatra.” The return journey signifies the conclusion of the Rath Yatra festival.

Significance of Jagannath Rath Yatra?

- **Darshan of the Deities:** The Rath Yatra provides an opportunity for devotees to have darshan (sight) of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, and Devi Subhadra outside the temple premises. It is believed that having a glimpse of the deities during the procession brings blessings and spiritual fulfillment.
- **Equality and Inclusivity:** The Rath Yatra emphasizes the principle of equality and inclusivity. During the festival, people from all walks of life, irrespective of caste, creed, or social status, come together to pull the chariots. It signifies that in the eyes of the divine, everyone is equal.
- **Unity and Brotherhood:** The Rath Yatra fosters a sense of unity and brotherhood among devotees. As they collectively participate in pulling the chariots, people experience a feeling of togetherness, transcending barriers and differences.
- **Journey of the Divine:** The Rath Yatra represents the divine journey of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, and Devi Subhadra from their abode, the Jagannath Temple, to the Gundicha Temple. The journey symbolizes the divine siblings’ visit to their aunt’s house and their subsequent return. It is seen as a metaphorical representation of the eternal journey of the soul towards spiritual liberation.

- **Spiritual Cleansing and Renewal:** The Rath Yatra is believed to cleanse the sins and impurities of the devotees. The act of pulling the chariots and being in the presence of the deities is considered purifying and spiritually rejuvenating.
- **Devotional Service:** Participating in the Rath Yatra and engaging in the seva (service) of pulling the chariots is seen as an act of devotion and surrender to the divine. It is believed to be a way of seeking blessings and expressing love and devotion towards Lord Jagannath.
- **Cultural Heritage and Tradition:** The Jagannath Rath Yatra is deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of Odisha and holds significant historical and traditional value. It showcases the rich traditions, rituals, and art forms associated with the festival, contributing to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage.

Source:

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/jagannath-rath-yatra-2023-get-to-know-the-festival-of-chariots-a-bit-better/articleshow/101121401.cms>

Q.1 The Gundicha Temple, also known as the Mausi Maa Temple, is associated with which famous Hindu festival?

- (a) Diwali
- (b) Holi
- (c) Jagannath Rath Yatra
- (d) Makar Sankranti

Answer: (c)

Q.2 Which of the following statements about the Jagannath Temple in Puri is correct?

- A. The temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva.
- B. The Navakalevara ceremony is performed every year in this temple.
- C. The temple architecture follows the Dravidian style.

Options:

- (a) A and B only
- (b) B only
- (c) A, C,
- (d) B, C,

Answer: (b)

Q.3 Discuss the architectural style and historical significance of the Jagannath Temple in Puri, highlighting its influence on Odisha's cultural heritage.

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