

Shaligram stone

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In news— Shaligram stones, which are expected to be used for constructing the idols of Lord Ram and Janaki at the Ram Temple have arrived in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh

What are Shaligram stones?

- Shaligram stones are **fossils of ammonite, which is a type of mollusc** that lived between 400 million and 65 million years ago.
- As per Geological Survey of India publication from 1904, **shaligram stones date specifically from the Early Oxfordian to the Late Tithonian Age near the end of the Jurassic Period some 165-140 million years ago.**
- **Mostly found in riverbeds or banks of the Kali Gandaki, a tributary of the Gandaki River in Nepal,** this stone is revered by Hindus who believe it to be a **representation of Lord Vishnu(non-anthropomorphic representation).**
- According to Hindu mythology, **Lord Vishnu was cursed to become the shaligram stone for “betraying the chastity of the goddess Tulsi”**
- **The stone is considered to have divine powers** and is seen as a symbol of good luck and prosperity.
- The fossils are considered holy by Hindus because Madhvacharya received it from Vyasa, also called Astamurti, and also they resemble symbols associated with Vishnu, mainly the Shankha (conch shell).
- Historically, the use of shaligrama shilas in worship can be traced to the time of Adi Shankara through the latter’s works.
- The statue of Vishnu in the Padmanabhaswamy Temple of Thiruvananthapuram and Badrinath Temple of Garhwal region, and that of Krishna in Krishna Matha of Udupi and Radha Raman Temple of Vrindavana are also believed to be made from shaligrama shilas.

Why use the shaligram stone in the Ram temple?

- Lord Ram is believed to be the reincarnation of Lord Vishnu, and the use of the shaligram stone symbolises the connection between the two gods.
- The stones were brought to the site of construction from Galeshwar Dham in Janakpur, 100 km from Pokhara in Nepal.