

Somnath Temple

January 19, 2021

In News

- PRIME MINISTER was elected new chairman of the Shree Somnath Trust (SKT), the religious body which manages and maintains the famous Somnath temple near Veraval in Gujarat.

Concept:

- Somnath, literally translated as the **Lord of Moon (Soma)** houses the first of the 12 Jyotirlingas or the symbolic representation of Lord Shiva.
- This highly famed pilgrim destination is **located at the Viraval Port or PrabhasPattan in Saurashtra, Gujrat.**
- The temple's positioning is quite unique.
 - The temple is positioned in such a way that **not a single piece of land is visible from the Somnath seashore until Antarctica.**

History of Somnath Temple

- It is said the **first version** of the temple came into being even before the start of Christian era.
- The **second version** of the temple came into being under the initiative of the Vallabhi king around 408AD-768AD.
- This temple is often referred to as the '**eternal shrine**' because historical records say that this temple has been **destroyed several times** by invaders and have been resurrected several times too.
- Archaeological investigations point out that the temple of Somnath had been **rebuilt nearly thrice before the raid of Muhammad Ghaznavi in the year 1026.**
 - Also, it is told that later the temple was attacked three times more.
 - **Thus the temple was attacked and destroyed as many**

as 6 times until the present 7th version emerged.

- **The latest rebuilding of Somnath temple was done in 1947 under the initiative of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel;** the then deputy PM. Prabhashankar Sompura was chosen as the architect and thus the present day Somnath temple came into being.
- Some of the **ancient texts tell that the temple was built for the first time in gold by king Somraj during Satya Yuga.**
 - In Treta Yuga, Ravana had built it out of silver while in Dwapara yuga lord Krishna had built it out of wood.
 - Later King Bhimadev had built the temple out of stone.
 - That is the claim of some of the ancient scriptures of our country.

Troubled History of Somnath Temple

- **In AD 1026, Mahmud of Ghazni first looted** the temple, and **then came Afzal Khan**, the commander of Ala-ud-din Khilji and later Aurangzeb.
- It is said that the temple was looted and destroyed **as many as seventeen times.**
- **The Iron man of India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was instrumental in the construction of the present temple.** Renowned temple architect Prabhaschandar designed it and the first President of India Dr. Rajendra Prasad installed the Jyotirling in the new temple on May 11, 1951.

Architecture of Somnath Temple

- The temples in India stand for their **architectural marvel, craftsmanship and showcases rich culture and heritage.**
- The present structure was built by the Sompura Salat community in Kailash Mahameru Prasad Style or the

Chalukya style.

- The main spire of the temple is 150 foot high and has a flag post of 27 foot tall.
- A kalash of weight 10 tons was put on the top of the spire.
- The Baan-Stambh or the arrow-pillar located on the sea-protection wall indicates that the point is the first point on land in the north to the south-pole on that particular longitude.
- The Tirsthambh located at the temple indicates that the nearest landmark (South Pole or the Antarctica) is located at about 9936 km away indicating the geographical wisdom of ancient India.
- The silver doors, intricate carvings and a fabulous nandi are worth seeing inside the temple.
- The sea is visible from a side door inside the temple which gives you the most scenic view and worth watching for hours.
- The temple attracts huge crowds during the Mahashivaratri festival and every Kartik Purnima is grandly celebrated here.