

# Ratna Bhandar Opened After 46 Years

## Why In News

- **Ratna Bhandar, treasury of the 12th-century Jagannath temple in Odisha's Puri,** was reopened afternoon after 46 years on Sunday. Members of an **11-member committee** set up by the Odisha government entered the Jagannath temple on Sunday afternoon to reopen its revered treasury.



- Those who entered the treasury include former **Orissa High Court judge Biswanath Rath**, Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) chief administrator Arabinda Padhee, ASI Superintendent DB Gadanayak and a representative of Puri's titular king 'Gajapati Maharaja'.

## Ratna Bhandar

- The **Situated close to the Jagamohana** (the assembly hall) of the Jagannath temple, the Ratna Bhandar standing at a height of 11.78 metres with a length 8.79 metres and width of 6.74 metres looks just like a temple.
- **It has two chambers** — Bahara Bhandar (outer chamber) and Bhitara Bhandar (inner chamber) — containing the jewels of the Trinity.



- According to “Madala Panji”, the official chronicle of the temple dating back to 12th century, Eastern Ganga monarch Anangabhima Dev III donated more than 250 kg of gold while other kings such as Gajapati Kapilendra Dev donated gold, jewels and utensils.

## All You Need To Know

- The **Four temple servitors**, specifically Patjoshi Mohapatra, Bhandar Mekap, Chadhaukarana, and Deulikaran, unequivocally entered the Ratna Bhandar. The "Agnya" ritual, a crucial step involving seeking approval to reopen the Ratna Bhandar, was efficiently completed earlier in the morning.



- The **Ratna Bhandar holds** the precious ornaments of the sibling deities — Jagannath, Subhadra and Balabhadra — donated by devotees and erstwhile

kings through centuries. It is divided into the outer chamber (Bahara Bhandar) and the inner chamber (Bhitara Bhandar).

- **While the outer chamber of the 12th-century** shrine is opened on occasions, such as the Suna Basha (golden attire) ritual during the annual Rath Yatra, the last time an inventory of the treasury was done was in 1978. Originally under the **care of the Gajapati of Puri**, the Ratna Bhandar was first opened in 1905 by the British administration for 'inspection' and inventoried in 1926.



- **Two teams of snake catchers** were also present at the temple as the committee members went inside the treasure trove. It is apprehended that there are snakes inside the treasury.
- Addressing the media after the **opening of the Ratna Bhandar**, Padhee said, "We successfully accessed the outer Ratna Bhandar, and all the ornaments have been securely shifted to a temporary strongroom located at 'Changada Ghara' and 'Phula Ghara'."



- "Then, the **authorised persons entered** the inner chamber of the treasury. Three locks were there. No lock could be opened with the key available with the

district administration. So, as per the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), we **broke the three locks** in the presence of a magistrate, and then, we entered the inner chamber. We inspected the valuables kept in the almirahs and the chests,"

- He added that due to time constraints and the comprehensive nature of the task, the process of shifting the contents of the inner Ratna Bhandar would be carried out another day.
- **“Since the shifting of the contents** cannot be done partially, we will finalise another day for this complete process,” Padhee said, adding that all SOPs prepared for the Ratna Bhandar’s opening, were followed during opening the Ratna Bhandar. The jewels of the outer Ratna Bhandar have been shifted to a strong room, Chief Administrator of the Jagannath temple Arabinda Kumar Padhee told reporters here, adding that inventory of the inner treasury’s jewels will happen later.



- Justice Rath as saying, **“After shifting the ornaments** from the outer chamber, the temporary strong room has been locked and the keys have been given to three authorised persons as daily use ornaments are also there.”
- **New locks were used** to secure the doors of the inner chamber and the keys were handed over to the Puri collector, he was quoted as saying, adding that the entire process was videographed.
- Ahead of the reopening, the committee also made three SOPs for the entire process.

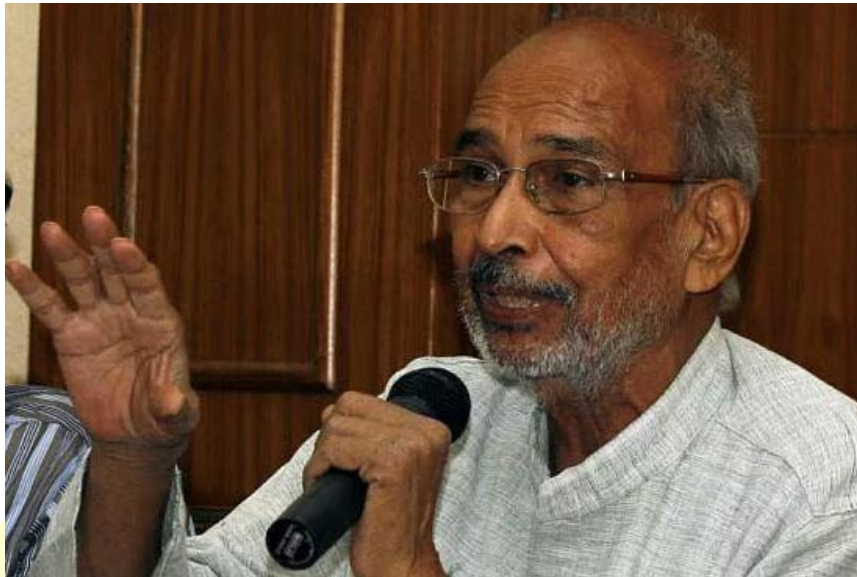


- **"Three SOPs have been made.** One is related to the reopening of the Ratna Bhandar, the second for the management of the temporary Ratna Bhandar, and the third one is related to inventory of the valuables," PTI quoted an official as saying.
- "The inventory work will not start today. It will be done after getting approval from the government on the engagement of valuers, goldsmiths and other experts," the official added.
- The government has decided to prepare a digital catalogue of the valuables in the Ratna Bhandar that will have details such as their weight and make.



## Last Inventory

- The **outer chambers are opened** on festive occasions when the servitors take out jewellerys to bedeck the trinities, but the jewels in both the chambers have not been audited since 1978 when a **9-member committee** headed by the then **governor of Odisha B D Sharma**.



- The inventory revealed the **presence of a total 454 gold articles** with a net weight of 128.38 kg and 293 silver articles weighing 221.53 kg in both the chambers of the treasury.
- **The inner chamber had 367 gold items** weighing 43.64 kg and 231 silver items weighing 148.78 kg while the outer chamber had 87 gold items weighing 84.74 kg and 62 silver items weighing 73.64 kg.
- **The inner chamber was opened twice in 1982 and 1985** to take out some gold and silver jewellerys for making new ornaments of Lord Balabhadra as well as silver cladding of the gate in sanctum sanctorum, but no audit was done.