



BACKGROUNDERS

Press Information Bureau

Government of India

Somnath: The Eternal Flame of Bharat

Celebrating 75 Years of Faith, Courage and Cultural Continuity

May 08, 2026

Somnath is one of India's most sacred pilgrimage centres and the first among the twelve Jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva. Despite repeated invasions since 1026, Somnath has remained a symbol of faith, resilience, and cultural continuity. Rebuilt in 1951 under national leadership, its reopening marked India's civilisational resurgence. The Somnath Swabhiman Parv commemorates 1000 years since the first attack on the temple in 1026. It also marks 75 years of its reopening in May 1951. The Parv highlights the historic significance of the temple and celebrates its enduring legacy. To commemorate this event, Prime Minister Modi is visiting the Somnath Temple on May 11.

The Sacred Shores of Somnath

Somnath, located at **Prabhas Patan** along the Saurashtra coast in **Gujrat**, is among India's most sacred pilgrimage centres. The temple enshrines one of the most sacred Jyotirlingas mentioned in the Shiva Purana. It is revered for the worship of **Lord Shiva, Lord Krishna** and **Shakti**.

The Dwadasha Jyotirlinga Stotram places Somnath first among the twelve Jyotirlingas. This reflects its foremost place in India's spiritual and civilisational heritage.

Somnath temple has been repeatedly ravaged and plundered by invaders over centuries; every time devotees and rulers have rebuilt it and restored its lost glory. Somnath therefore stands as a testimony to India's unshattered faith that has risen



victorious over repeated assault over centuries. It reflects the continuity of our civilisation, the depth of our faith, and the strength of our collective resolve.

The Eternal Flame: Somnath Through Time and Trials

The origins of Somnath are deeply embedded in ancient Indian tradition. The site is closely linked with Lord Shiva and the worship of Chandra, the Moon God.

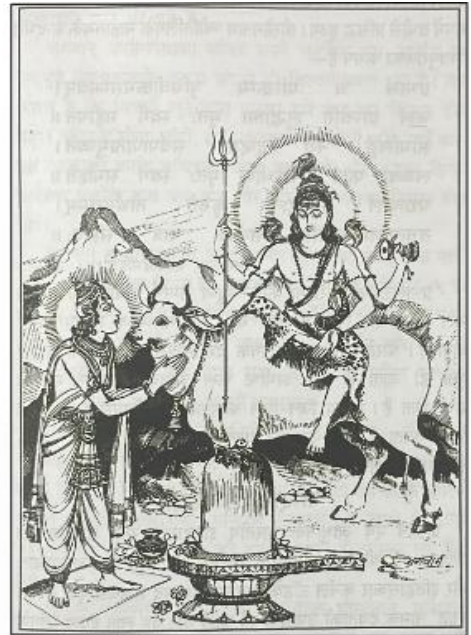
Over centuries, Somnath witnessed multiple phases of construction. Ancient traditions describe successive temples built using different materials, symbolising renewal and continuity.

The most turbulent phase of Somnath's history began in the eleventh century. In January 1026, Somnath faced its first recorded attack by invaders. This marked the beginning of a long period during which the temple was repeatedly destroyed between the eleventh and eighteenth centuries.

Every time the temple was destroyed, devotees and kings came ahead to rebuild it. Prominent among these were King Kumarapala who restored the temple in the 12th Century. The King of Junagarh rebuilt it in the thirteenth century. After yet another destruction, Lokmata Ahilyabai Holkar, the Maratha queen of Indore chose to consecrate a new temple at Somnath in the eighteenth century. Thus, despite repeated destruction, Somnath never disappeared from the collective consciousness of the people.

Following Independence, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel visited the ruins of Somnath in 1947 and resolved to rebuild the temple. His vision was rooted in the belief that the reconstruction of Somnath was essential for restoring India's cultural confidence. Supported through public participation and national resolve, the present temple was constructed in the Kailash Mahameru Prasad architectural style.

On 11 May 1951, the temple was ceremonially consecrated by President Dr. Rajendra Prasad. 75 years later, Somnath stands rejuvenated as a symbol of national pride and spiritual endurance.



Puranic Narrative: Origin of Somnath
Credit: Dwadash Jyotirlinga, Gita Press, Gaurakhpur

Veer Hamirji Gohil: Memory Beyond Chronicles

The story of Somnath is shaped by brave individuals whose courage lives on through memory.

Veer Hamirji Gohil is one such figure.

He was a regional warrior and is remembered in tradition for sacrificing his life while defending the Somnath Temple in 1299 A.D. during Zafar Khan's invasion.

He is remembered through local tradition and collective memory, rather than official historical records.

His life reflects the idea of *rājadharma*, which means the duty to protect sacred places, society, and cultural heritage, even when victory is uncertain or support is limited.



PM pays tributes to the statue of Veer Hamirji Gohil, in Gujarat on January 11, 2026.

Somnath Swabhiman Parv

The Somnath Swabhiman Parv honours the enduring legacy of the Somnath temple. It marks one thousand years since the first recorded attack on the Somnath Temple in 1026. **May 11, 2026 also marks the 75th anniversary of the reopening of the Somnath Temple in 1951**, when it was dedicated to the nation by India's first President, **Dr. Rajendra Prasad**. He had described Somnath as a **symbol of India's spiritual strength and cultural resurgence**. The reopening had marked far more than just a temple restoration. It represented the revival of India's civilisational confidence after centuries of struggle.

The Somnath Swabhiman Parv therefore juxtaposes two significant milestones in India's history. The first milestone represents destruction. The second represents the country's deep faith and resilience in rising victorious over destruction.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is also the Chairman of the Somnath Trust, will visit the Somnath Temple on 11th May to commemorate the **75th anniversary of the temple's reopening**.



Before his visit, the Prime Minister shared his insights on the Somnath Temple. He described its journey from ruin to renewal and called it a symbol of **India's unconquerable spirit**. He paid tribute to those who preserved and rebuilt the temple over centuries. PM specially highlighted the **"Vikas Bhi, Virasat Bhi"** approach, which focuses on development along with heritage preservation. He also announced special pujas at Somnath for the next 1,000 days, which will honour its history. He further urged people to visit Somnath during this important period.

Earlier, in January 2026, Prime Minister Modi took part in the Somnath Swabhimani Parv celebrations at the temple on January 10-11. The event featured a 72-hour chanting of the Omkar Mantra, accompanied by sacred rituals and prayers for the nation's welfare and prosperity. A grand Shaurya Yatra was also organised at Prabhas Patan, showcasing a symbolic procession of 108 horses in tribute to the warriors who defended Somnath through the centuries.



Somnath Swabhiman Parv Yatra

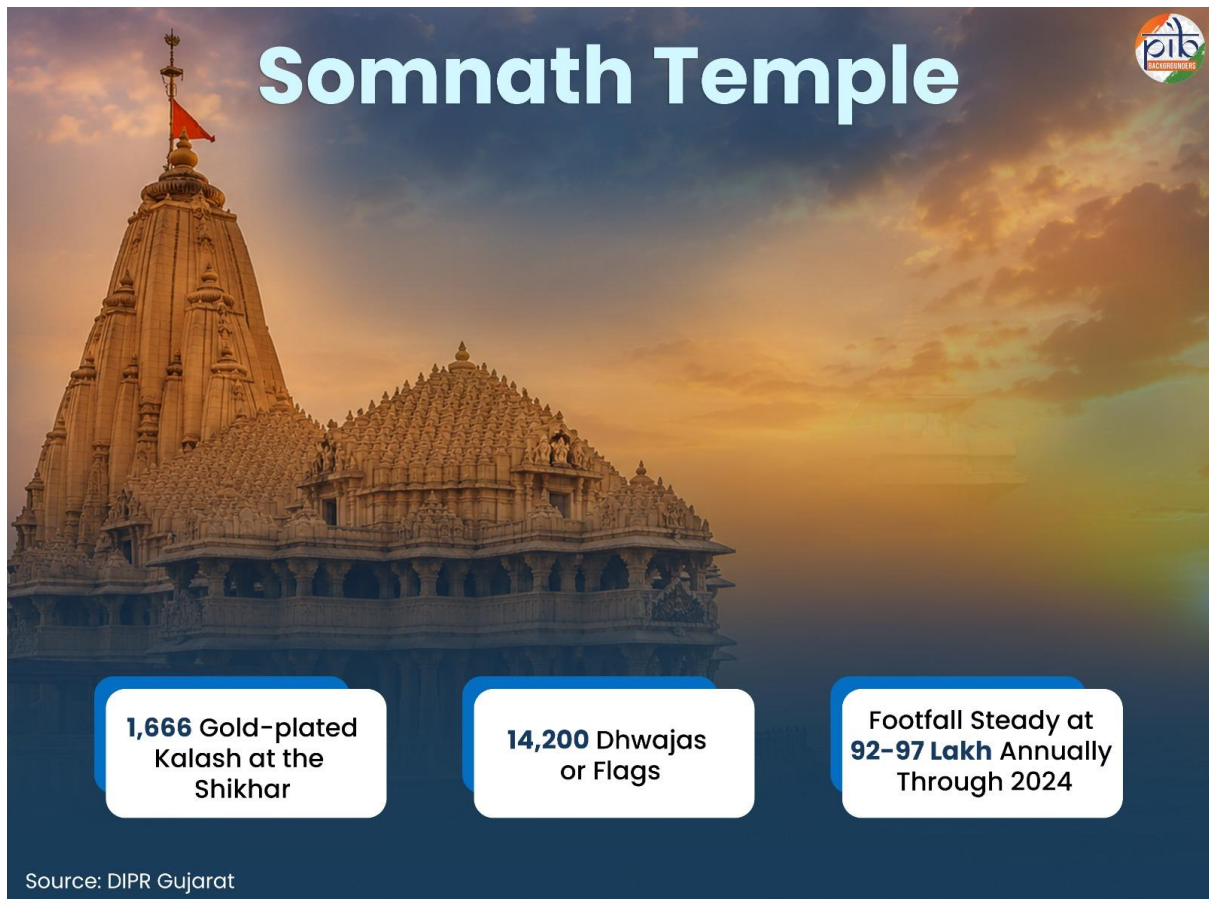
The Somnath Swabhiman Parv Yatra, organised under the campaign “Chalo Chalein Somnath,” was flagged off from Delhi’s Safdarjung Railway Station, on 30th April 2026. The special train, carrying over 1,300 devotees, travelled to Somnath, as part of a year-long celebration marking 1,000 years of the temple’s faith and resilience.

The yatra reached Somnath on 1st May, followed by a series of devotional and cultural programmes, including aarti, temple visits, and a light and sound show held over the following days.

Somnath Temple: Grandeur, Devotion and Living Legacy

Somnath holds a sacred place as the first among the twelve Aadi Jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva. The temple complex includes the Garbhagriha, Sabha mandap and Nritya mandap. It rises in grandeur along the Arabian Sea shoreline.

The temple is crowned by a 150-foot Shikhar, topped with a 10-tonne Kalash. Its 27-foot Dhvajdand represents the temple’s enduring spiritual presence. The complex features 1,666 gold-plated Kalash and 14,200 Dhwajas, reflecting centuries of devotion and craftsmanship.



Somnath remains a vibrant centre of worship and pilgrimage. Annual footfall ranges between 92 and 97 lakh devotees. Rituals like Bilva Pooja attract over 13.77 lakh devotees yearly.

Cultural initiatives have deepened public engagement with Somnath's heritage. The Light and Sound Show began in 2003 and was upgraded in 2017. It uses narration and 3D laser technology today.

Programs like Vande Somnath Kala Mahotsav have revived 1,500-year-old dance traditions. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Somnath has seen renewed cultural development. Governance reforms and heritage preservation have strengthened its spiritual and cultural significance.

Social and Welfare Activities of Shree Somnath Trust

Educational Development & Skill Training

The trust actively promotes education and employment-focused skill development programs. Vocational training programs improve opportunities for youth and women in nearby regions. Courses include **computer education, tailoring, beauty services, and digital literacy training.** **Scholarship assistance** supports students pursuing education after **Class 10 and Class 12.**

The “**School on Wheels**” initiative provides **mobile digital learning** in villages. Rural students receive **practical computer training** and **basic digital literacy education.** Educational competitions encourage awareness about **cleanliness and water conservation practices.** Environmental responsibility programs are also conducted regularly for students and local communities.

Food Donation & Community Welfare

The trust regularly operates **food donation initiatives** for devotees and needy individuals. **Free meals** are **served daily** through community-supported food assistance programs.

Donor participation helps sustain these welfare initiatives throughout the year. During emergencies, the **trust provides humanitarian support** to affected communities. Relief activities include **food distribution, medical assistance, and essential supply support.** Welfare initiatives also **underprivileged families** through community programs.

Health, Education & Community Welfare Initiatives

Shree Somnath Trust continues supporting healthcare and community welfare initiatives. Medical assistance programs help **economically weaker families** near Somnath-Prabhas Patan. **Physiotherapy facilities** provide affordable rehabilitation and recovery support for local residents. **Free dental and eye treatment camps** are regularly organised for nearby communities.

Welfare initiatives for **Persons with Disabilities** also continue through medical support camps. **Wheelchairs, hearing aids, and crutches** are distributed during these assistance programs.

COVID-19 Relief Support by Shree Somnath Trust

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Shree Somnath Trust provided large-scale relief support including financial aid, food distribution, medical infrastructure, and essential supplies to the affected. Assistance was extended to frontline workers, migrant labourers, and economically weaker families during both waves of the pandemic.

- ₹8.73 crore support in first wave
- ₹2.21 crore support in second wave
- ₹1 crore donation to Chief Minister's Relief Fund
- Oxygen plants and concentrators supported



Environmental & Public Welfare Initiatives

Environmental conservation remains an important focus area for the trust. **Large-scale plantation drives** help increase green cover across surrounding regions. **Bilva plantation initiatives** also promote ecological awareness near Somnath.

Eco-friendly waste management practices recycle temple and organic waste responsibly. Organic waste is converted into compost and natural manure for sustainable usage. Public sanitation initiatives support a cleaner and environmentally responsible pilgrimage destination.

The welfare initiatives of Shree Somnath Trust are not limited to regular social, educational, and healthcare services but also extend into emergency response and disaster relief. Along with continuous development work for community well-being, the Trust also actively steps forward during natural calamities and humanitarian crises.

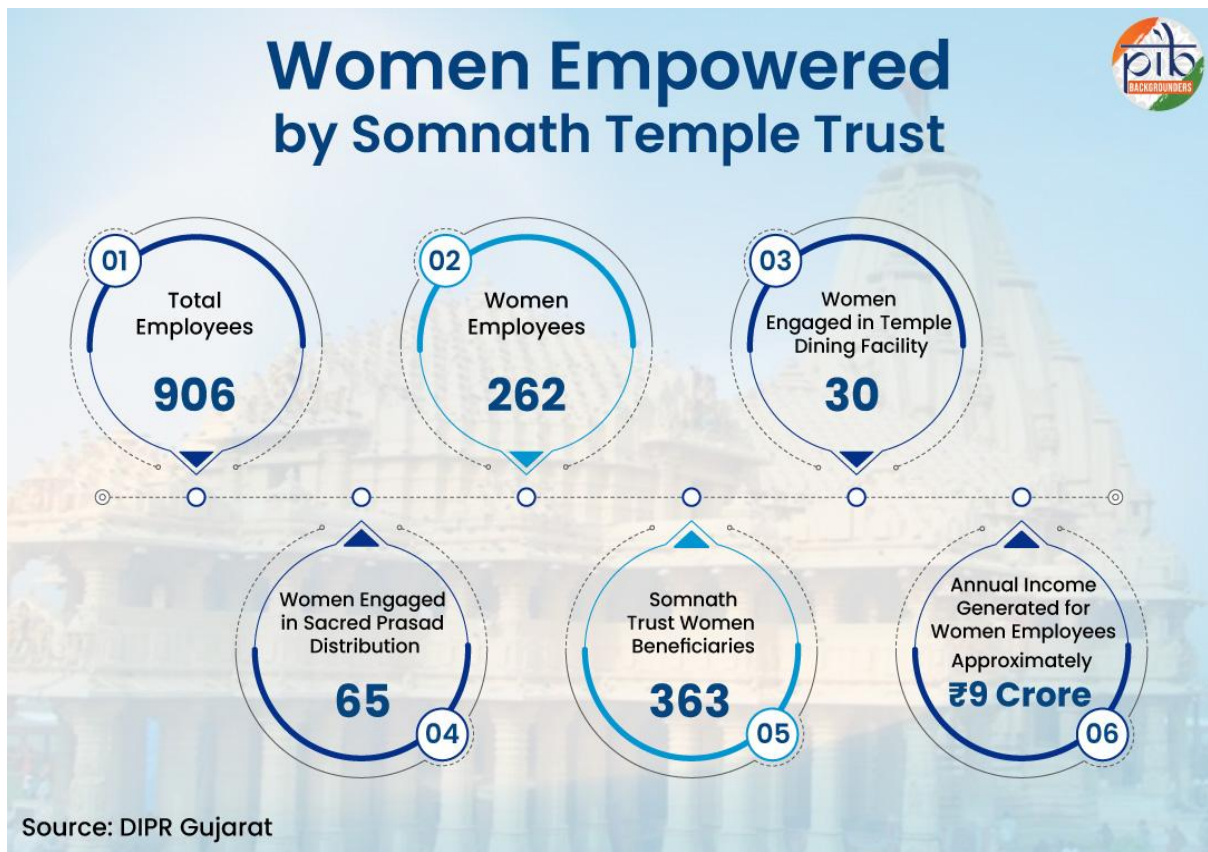
Women Empowerment and Sustainability at Somnath

Declared a “Swachh Iconic Place” in 2018, Somnath has adopted innovative sustainability practices. Temple flowers are converted into vermicompost nourishing 1,700 Bilva trees. Plastic waste is transformed into paver blocks under Mission LiFE, with 4,700 blocks produced monthly. Rainwater harvesting systems treat nearly 30 lakh litres of sewage water per month.

A Miyawaki forest of 7,200 trees, spread over 72,000 square feet, absorbs about 93,000 kilograms of carbon dioxide annually. Purified Abhishek water is bottled as *Somganga jal*, benefiting over 1.13 lakh families as of December 2024.

Somnath has also emerged as a strong centre of women empowerment. Out of 906 employees of the Somnath Temple Trust, 262 are women. The Bilva Van is managed entirely by women. 65 women are

engaged in prasad distribution and 30 women are engaged in temple dining services. Overall, 363 women receive direct employment, earning approximately ₹9 crore annually and, reflecting economic self-reliance and dignity.



Somnath: Faith That Withstands Time

Somnath stands as a timeless symbol of India's faith, resilience, and civilisational continuity. It has endured repeated destruction and renewal, reflecting the enduring strength of devotion across centuries.

From its mythological significance to its historic reconstruction in 1951, Somnath represents not just a sacred temple but a collective expression of cultural pride and national resurgence. This year the 75th anniversary of its reopening marks a significant milestone in its modern legacy, reaffirming its place in India's shared heritage.

Somnath continues to evolve as a living centre of worship, cultural revival, sustainability, and inclusive development. It stands as a powerful reminder that true heritage survives not only through preservation, but through continuous renewal and collective faith.

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