

= Badrinath Temple =

Badrinath or Badrinarayan Temple is a Hindu temple dedicated to Vishnu which is situated in the town of Badrinath in Uttarakhand , India . The temple and town form one of the four Char Dham and Chota Char Dham pilgrimage sites . The temple is also one of the 108 Divya Desams dedicated to Vishnu , who is worshipped as Badrinath ? holy shrines for Vaishnavites . It is open for six months every year (between the end of April and the beginning of November) , because of extreme weather conditions in the Himalayan region . The temple is located in Garhwal hill tracks in Chamoli district along the banks of Alaknanda River at an elevation of 3 @, @ 133 m (10 @, @ 279 ft) above the mean sea level . It is one of the most visited pilgrimage centres of India , having recorded 1 @, @ 060 @, @ 000 visits .

The image of the presiding deity worshipped in the temple is a 1 m (3 @. @ 3 ft) tall , black stone statue of Vishnu in the form of Badrinarayan . The statue is considered by many Hindus to be one of eight swayam vyakta kshetras , or self @-@ manifested statues of Vishnu .

Mata Murti Ka Mela , which commemorates the descent of river Ganges on mother earth , is the most prominent festival celebrated in the Badrinath Temple . Although Badrinath is located in North India , the head priest , or Rawal , is traditionally a Nambudiri Brahmin chosen from the South Indian state of Kerala . The temple was included in the Uttar Pradesh state government Act No. 30 / 1948 as Act no . 16 @, @ 1939 , which later came to be known as Shri Badarinath and Shri Kedarnath Mandir Act . The committee nominated by the state government administers both the temples and has seventeen members on its board .

The temple is mentioned in ancient religious texts like Vishnu Purana and Skanda Purana . It is glorified in the Divya Prabandha , an early medieval Tamil canon of the Azhwar saints from the 6th ? 9th centuries AD .

= Location , architecture , and shrines =

The temple is located in Garhwal hill tracks along the banks of the Alaknanda River in Chamoli district in Uttarakhand , a state in North India . The hill tracks are located 3 @, @ 133 m (10 @, @ 279 ft) above the mean sea level . The Nar Parbat mountain is located opposite to the temple , while the Narayana Parbat is located behind the Neelakanta peak .

The temple has three structures : the Garbhagriha (sanctum) , the Darshan Mandap (worship hall) , and Sabha Mandap (convention hall) . The conical @-@ shaped roof of the sanctum , the garbhagriha , is approximately 15 m (49 ft) tall with a small cupola on top , covered with a gold gilt roof . The facade is built of stone and has arched windows . A broad stairway leads up to the main entrance , a tall , arched gateway . Just inside is a mandap , a large , pillared hall that leads to the sanctum , or main shrine area . The walls and pillars of the hall are covered with intricate carvings .

The main shrine houses the 1 m (3 @. @ 3 ft) Shaligram (black stone) image of Badrinarayan , which is housed in a gold canopy under a Badri Tree . The image of Badrinarayan holds a Shankha (conch) and a Chakra (wheel) in two of its arms in a lifted posture and two arms are rested on its lap in a Yogamudra (Padmasana) posture . The sanctum also houses images of the god of wealth ? Kubera , sage Narada , Uddhava , Nar and Narayan . There are fifteen more images that are also worshipped around the temple . These include that of Lakshmi (the consort of Vishnu) , Garuda (the vahana of Narayan) , and Navadurga , the manifestation of Durga in nine different forms . The temple also has shrines of Lakshmi Narasimhar and for saints Adi Shankara (AD 788 @-@ 820) , Vedanta Desika and Ramanujacharya . All the idols of the temple are made of black stone .

The Tapt Kund , a group of hot sulphur springs just below the temple , are considered to be medicinal ; many pilgrims consider it a requirement to bathe in the springs before visiting the temple . The springs have a year @-@ round temperature of 55 ° C (131 ° F) , while outside temperature is typically below 17 ° C (63 ° F) all year round . The two water ponds in the temple are called Narad Kund and Surya Kund .

= History =

There is no historical record about the temple , but there is a mention of the presiding deity Badrinath in Vedic scriptures , indicating the presence of the temple during the Vedic period (c . 1750 ? 500 BC) . As per some accounts , the temple was a Buddhist shrine till the 8th century and Adi Shankara converted it to a Hindu temple . The architecture of the temple resembling that of a Buddhist vihara (temple) and the brightly painted facade which is atypical of Buddhist temples leads to the argument . As per other accounts , it was originally established as a pilgrimage site by Adi Shankara in the ninth century . It is believed that Shankara resided in the place for six years from AD 814 to 820 . He resided six months in Badrinath and the rest of the year in Kedarnath . Hindu followers assert that he discovered the image of Badrinath in the Alaknanda River and enshrined it in a cave near the Tapt Kund hot springs . A traditional story asserts that Shankara expelled all the Buddhists in the region with the help of the Parmar ruler king Kanak Pal . The hereditary successors of the king governed the temple and endowed villages to meet its expenses . The income from a set of villages on the route to the temple was used to feed and accommodate pilgrims . The Parmar rulers held the title " Bolanda Badrinath " , meaning speaking Badrinath . They had other titles , including Shri 108 Basdrishcharyaparayan Garharj Mahimahendra , Dharmabibhab and Dharamarakshak Sigamani .

The throne of Badrinath was named after the presiding deity ; the king enjoyed ritual obeisance by the devotees before proceeding to the shrine . The practice was continued until the late 19th century . During the 16th century , the King of Garhwal moved the murti to the present temple . When the state of Garhwal was divided , the Badrinath temple came under British rule but the king of Garhwal continued as the chairman of the management committee .

The temple has undergone several major renovations due to its age and damage by an avalanche . In the 17th century , the temple was expanded by the Kings of Garhwal . After significant damage in the great 1803 Himalayan earthquake , it was largely rebuilt by the King of Jaipur . It was still under renovation as late as the 1870s but these were completed by the time of the First World War . At that time , the town was still small , consisting of only the 20 @-@ odd huts housing the temple 's staff , but the number of pilgrims was usually between seven and ten thousand . The Kumbh Meld festival held every twelve years raised the number of visitors to 50 @,@ 000 . The temple also enjoyed revenue from the rents owed to it by various villages bequeathed by various rajas .

During 2006 , the state government announced the area around Badrinath as a no construction zone to curb illegal encroachment .

= = Legend = =

According to Hindu legend , god Vishnu sat in meditation at this place , keeping away from Thuling , a place in the Himalayas which was corrupted by meat @-@ eating monks and unchaste people . During his meditation , Vishnu was unaware of cold weather . Lakshmi , his consort , protected him in the form of the Badri tree (jujube or Indian date) . Pleased by the devotion of Lakshmi , Vishnu named the place Badrika Ashram . According to Atkinson (1979) , the place used to be a jujube forest , which are not found there today . Vishnu in the form of Badrinath is depicted in the temple sitting in the padmasana posture . According to the legend , Vishnu was chastised by a sage , who saw Vishnu 's consort Lakshmi massaging his feet . Vishnu went to Badrinath to perform austerity , meditating for a long time in padmasana .

The Vishnu Purana narrates another version of the origins of Badrinath . According to the tradition , Dharam had two sons , Nar and Narayan ? both of which are modern names of Himalayan mountains . They chose the place to spread their religion and each of them wed the spacious valleys in the Himalayas . Searching for an ideal place to set up a hermitage , they came across the other four Badris of the Pancha Badri , namely Bridha Badri , Yog Bhadri , Dhyan Badri and Bhavish Badri . They finally found the hot and cold spring behind the Alaknanda River and named it Badri Vishal .

= = Literary mention = =

The temple finds mention in several ancient books like Bhagavata Purana , Skanda Purana and Mahabharata . According to the Bhagavata Purana , " [t] here in Badrikashram the Personality of Godhead (Vishnu) , in his incarnation as the sages Nar and Narayana , had been undergoing great penance since time immemorial for the welfare of all living entities " . The Skanda Purana states that " [t] here are several sacred shrines in heaven , on earth , and in hell ; but there is no shrine like Badrinath " . The area around Badrinath is also celebrated in Padma Purana as abounding in spiritual treasures . The Mahabharata revered the holy place as the one which can give salvation to devotees arriving close to it , while in other holy places they must perform religious ceremonies . The temple is revered in Nalayira Divya Prabandham , in 11 hymns in the 7th ? 9th century Vaishnava canon by Periazwar and in 13 hymns in Thirumangai Azhwar . It is one of the 108 Divyadesam dedicated to Vishnu , who is worshipped as Badrinath .

= = Pilgrimage = =

Devotees of all faiths and all schools of thought of Hinduism visit the Badrinath Temple . All the major monastic institutions like Kashi Math , Jeeyar Mutt (Andhra mutt) , Udupi Pejavar and Manthralayam Sri Raghavendra Swamy Mutts have their branches and guest houses there .

The Badrinath temple is one of five related shrines called Panch Badri , which are dedicated to the worship of Vishnu . The five temples are Vishal Badri - Badrinath Temple in Badrinath , Yogadhyan Badri located at Pandukeshwar , Bhavishya Badri located 17 km (10 @. @ 6 mi) from Jyotirmath at Subain , Vridh Badri located 7 km (4 @. @ 3 mi) from Jyotirmath in Animath and Adi Badri located 17 km (10 @. @ 6 mi) from Karnaprayag . The temple is considered one of the holiest Hindu Char Dham (four divine) sites , comprising Rameswaram , Badrinath , Puri and Dwarka . Although the temple 's origins are not clearly known , the Advaita school of Hinduism established by Adi Shankara attributes the origin of Char Dham to the seer . The four monasteries are located across the four corners of India and their attendant temples are Badrinath Temple at Badrinath in the North , Jagannath Temple at Puri in the East , Dwarakadheesh Temple at Dwarka in the West and Sri Sharada Peetam Sringeri at Sringeri , Karnataka in the South .

Though ideologically the temples are divided between the sects of Hinduism , namely Saivism and Vaishnavism , the Char Dham pilgrimage is an all @-@ Hindu affair . There are four abodes in the Himalayas called Chota Char Dham (Chota meaning small) : Badrinath , Kedarnath , Gangotri and Yamunotri ? all of which lie in the foothills of the Himalayas . The name Chota was added during the mid of 20th century to differentiate the original Char Dhams . As the number of pilgrims to these places has increased in modern times , it is called Himalayan Char Dham .

The journey across the four cardinal points in India is considered sacred by Hindus , who aspire to visit these temples once in their lifetimes . Traditionally , the pilgrimage starts at the eastern end from Puri , proceeding clockwise in a manner typically followed for circumambulation in Hindu temples .

= = Festivals and religious practices = =

The most prominent festival held at Badrinath Temple is Mata Murti Ka Mela , which commemorates the descent of the river Ganges on mother earth . The mother of Badrinath , who is believed to have divided the river into twelve channels for the welfare of earthly beings , is worshiped during the festival . The place where the river flowed became the holy land of Badrinath .

The Badri Kedar festival is celebrated during the month of June in both the temple and the Kedarnath temple . The festival lasts for eight days ; artists from all over the country perform during the function .

The major religious activities (or pujas) performed every morning are mahabhishek (ablution) , abhishek , gitapath and bhagavat puja , while in the evening the pujas include geet govinda and aarti . Recital in vedic scripts like Ashtotram and Sahasranama is practiced during all the rituals . After aarti , the decorations are removed from the image of Badrinath and sandalwood paste is

applied to it . The paste from the image is given to the devotees the next day as prasad during the nirmalaya darshan . All the rituals are performed in front of the devotees , unlike those in some Hindu temples , where some practices are hidden from them . Sugar balls and dry leaves are the common prasad provided to the devotees . From May 2006 , the practise of offering Panchamrit Prasad , prepared locally and packed in local bamboo baskets , was started .

The temple is closed for winter on the auspicious day of Vijayadasami during October ? November . On the day of closure , Akhanda Jyothi , a lamp is lit filled with ghee to last for six months . Special pujas are performed on the day by the chief priest in the presence of pilgrims and officials of the temple . The image of Badrinath is notionally transferred during the period to the Narasimha temple at Jyotirmath , located 40 mi (64 km) away from the temple . The temple is reopened around April on Vasant Panchami , another auspicious day on the Hindu calendar . Pilgrims gather on the first day of opening of the temple after the winter to witness the Akhanda Jyothi .

The temple is one of the holy places where the Hindus offer oblations to ancestors with the help of the priests . Devotees visit the temple to worship in front of the image of Badrinath in the sanctum and have a hold dip in Alaknanda River . The general belief is that a dip in the tank purifies the soul .

= = Administration and visit = =

The Badrinath Temple was included in the Uttar Pradesh state government Act No. 30 / 1948 as Act no . 16 @, @ 1939 , which was later known as Shri Badarinath and Shri Kedarnath Mandir Act . A committee nominated by the state government administers both the temples . The act was modified in 2002 to appoint additional committee members , including Government officials and a Vice chairman . There are seventeen members in the board ; three selected by the Uttaranchal Legislative Assembly , one member each by the Zilla Parishads of Garhwa , Tehri , Chamoli and Uttarkashi , and ten members nominated by the state government .

As per the temple records , the priests of the temple were Shiva ascetics called Dandi Sanyasis , who belonged to Nambudiri community , a religious group common in modern Kerala . When the last of the ascetics died without an heir in 1776 AD , the king invited non @-@ ascetic Nambudiris from Kerala for priesthood , a practice that continues in modern times . Till 1939 , all the offerings made by the devotees to the temple went to the Rawal (chief priest) , but after 1939 , his jurisdiction was restricted to religious affairs . The administrative structure of the temple consists of a chief executive officer who executes the orders from the state government , a deputy chief executive officer , two OSDs , an executive officer , an account officer , a temple officer and a publicity officer to assist the chief executive officer .

Although Badrinath is located in North India , the head priest , or Rawal , is traditionally a Nambudiri Brahmin chosen from the South Indian state of Kerala . This tradition is believed to have been initiated by Adi Shankara , who was a South Indian philosopher . The Rawal (chief priest) is requested by the Government of Uttarakhand (Uttar Pradesh government before the formation of Uttarakhand state) to the Kerala Government . The candidate should possess a degree of Acharya in Sanskrit , be a bachelor , well @-@ versed in reciting mantras (sacred texts) and be from the Vaishnava sect of Hinduism . The erstwhile ruler of Garhwal , who is the tutelary head of Badrinath , approves the candidate sent by the Government of Kerala . A Tilak Ceremony is held to instate the Rawal and he is deputed from April to November , when the temple remains open . The Rawal is accorded high holiness status by Garhwal Rifles and the state governments of Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh . He is also held in high esteem by the Royals of Nepal . From April to November , he performs his duties as a temple priest . Thereafter , he either stays in Joshimutt or returns to his native village in Kerala . The duties of the Rawal starts at 4 a.m. every day with the Abhisheka . He should not cross the river until Vamana Dwadasi and must adhere to Brahmacharya . The Rawal is assisted by the Garhwali Dimri Pundits belonging to the Village Dimmer , Nayab Rawals , Dharmadikari , Vedapathi , a group of priests , Pandas Samadhini , Bhandari , Rasoiyas (cook) , devotional singer , clerk of devashram , Jal Bhariya (water keeper) and temple guards . Badrinath is one of the few temples in North India that follow the ancient Tantra @-@ Vidhi of Shrouta tradition

more common in the south .

In 2012 , the temple administration introduced a token system for visitors to the temple . Tokens indicating the time of visit were provided from three stalls in the taxi stands . Each devotee to visit the presiding deity is allocated 10 ? 20 seconds . Proof of identity is mandatory to enter the temple . The temple is reached from Rishikesh , located 298 km (185 mi) away via Dev Prayag , Rudra Prayag , Karna Prayag , Nanda Prayag , Joshimutt , Vishnuprayag and Devadarshini . From Kedarnath , visitors can follow the 243 km (151 mi) -long Rudra Prayag route or the 230 km (140 mi) -long Ukthimath and Gopeswar route .