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Puri Jagannath Temple Secures Trademark for the Nilachakra

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HISTORY & CULTURE

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Puri Jagannath Temple Secures Trademark for the Nilachakra

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Source: ujjyari.com — Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs

✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources **HOW**

WHY IN NEWS

The **Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA)** has secured **trademark registration** for the **Nilachakra**, the eight-spoked metal disc atop the Puri Jagannath Temple’s spire, along with “**Ananda Bazar**” and “**Patitapabana**”, under the **Trade Marks Act, 1999**. The move protects sacred identifiers of one of India’s most revered temples from unauthorised commercial use, an occasion to examine intellectual property and the protection of cultural heritage.

WHAT WAS PROTECTED

IDENTIFIER	SIGNIFICANCE
Nilachakra	The eight-spoked metal disc (chakra) atop the temple spire; the official SJTA logo
Ananda Bazar	The temple’s vast prasad (offered food) marketplace
Patitapabana	A revered representation of the deity (the “saviour of the fallen”)

The SJTA reportedly filed **29 trademark applications**, of which these were granted, with more expected. The temple at Puri, dedicated to **Lord Jagannath**, is one of the **Char Dham** pilgrimage sites and is famous for its annual **Rath Yatra**.

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

INSTRUMENT	DETAIL
Trade Marks Act, 1999	Governs the registration and protection of trademarks in India
CGPDTM	The Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, administers it
What a trademark protects	A distinctive sign identifying the source of goods or services
Distinct from a GI tag	A Geographical Indication (under the GI Act, 1999) identifies goods from a specific place

A trademark is different from a **Geographical Indication (GI)**: a trademark identifies the source or owner of a mark and prevents others from using it commercially, while a GI links a product to a place of origin and its reputation.

THE ANALYSIS: IP LAW MEETS CULTURAL HERITAGE

- ❶ **Guarding against commercial misuse.** Sacred symbols are increasingly used on merchandise and in branding; trademark protection lets the temple control unauthorised commercial exploitation of its identity.
- ❷ **The line between protection and privatisation.** Using commercial IP law to protect religious symbols raises a careful balance: shielding heritage from misuse without appearing to “privatise” symbols of public faith.
- ❸ **A model for heritage institutions.** The move offers a template for other temples and cultural institutions seeking to protect their names, logos and sacred identifiers.
- ❹ **Wider debates on traditional knowledge.** It connects to broader questions about protecting traditional knowledge and cultural symbols within an IP regime designed mainly for commerce.

The way forward is to use such protection to **prevent exploitation while preserving public access and devotion**, ensuring that the legal shield serves the institution and its devotees rather than restricting legitimate religious and cultural expression.

UPSC RELEVANCE

- **GS Paper 1 (Art and Culture):** temples, cultural heritage, the Jagannath tradition and Rath Yatra.
- **GS Paper 2 and 3 (Polity and Economy):** intellectual property law, the protection of cultural symbols.

- **Prelims:** the Nilachakra, the Trade Marks Act 1999 versus the GI Act 1999, the CGPDTM, the Char Dham.
- **Mains:** protecting cultural heritage through intellectual property law.

FACTS CORNER

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THE PROTECTION:

Nilachakra (eight-spoked disc atop the Puri Jagannath Temple; SJTA logo) trademarked, with “Ananda Bazar” and “Patitapabana”

SJTA filed 29 applications under the Trade Marks Act, 1999

THE FRAMEWORK:

Trade Marks Act, 1999, administered by the CGPDTM, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry

Trademark (source of goods/services) is distinct from a Geographical Indication (GI Act, 1999; links a product to a place)

THE TEMPLE:

Puri Jagannath Temple, dedicated to Lord Jagannath; a Char Dham site; famous for the annual Rath Yatra

Sources: *Business Standard*, *CGPDTM*

Source: Puri Jagannath Temple Secures Trademark for the Nilachakra — Ujyari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs

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