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Foundation Stone Laid for the Panchayatan Temple at Ekatma Dham, Omkareshwar

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HISTORY & CULTURE

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Foundation Stone Laid for the Panchayatan Temple at Ekatma Dham, Omkareshwar

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✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources

*Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav performed the **shila-pujan of 45 sacred stones** and laid the foundation stone of a **Panchayatan-style temple** at **Ekatma Dham, Omkareshwar, Khandwa district**, on **August 27, 2026**, after offering prayers at the Omkareshwar Jyotirlinga.*

WHAT THE PANCHAYATAN SYSTEM IS

This is the concept the article turns on, and it is examinable in its own right.

Panchayatan puja is a system of worship traditionally associated with **Adi Shankaracharya**, which harmonises five major devotional traditions by placing five deities in a single shrine, with any one of them as the principal deity according to the worshipper's inclination and the remaining four in the corners.

DEITY	TRADITION HARMONISED	POSITION IN THIS TEMPLE
Shiva	Shaiva	Central sanctum
Vishnu	Vaishnava	Ishan, the north-east corner
Surya	Saura	Agneya, the south-east corner
Ganesha	Ganapatya	Nairitya, the south-west corner
Shakti (Bhagwati)	Shakta	Vayavya, the north-west corner

The theological point is Advaitic: the five are treated as **manifestations of one supreme reality**, so the arrangement is an argument in architecture. Sectarian rivalry is resolved not by declaring one tradition correct but by placing all five in one structure.

THE TEMPLE

FEATURE	DETAIL
Architectural style	Nagara
Dome over the main mandapa	26-foot diameter
Carved pillars	100
Kalashas	121
Stone	About 80,000 cubic feet of carved pink sandstone from Bansi Paharpur, Rajasthan
Jagati platform	16 feet high

Nagara is the north Indian temple idiom, characterised by a curvilinear **shikhara** crowned by an **amalaka** and **kalasha**, as against the **Dravida** style of southern India with its pyramidal **vimana**, and the **Vesara** hybrid of the Deccan.

Bansi Paharpur sandstone, from Bharatpur district in Rajasthan, is the same pink sandstone used in major recent temple construction in India, which is a useful cross-reference for art and culture questions.

A NOTE ON THE COST FIGURE

Reports circulating alongside this event attach a figure of about ₹2,200 crore to the temple. **That attribution does not hold, and neither does the looser claim that it covers the whole of Ekatma Dham.**

The traceable figure is the **₹2,195.54 crore revised outlay approved by the Madhya Pradesh Cabinet in May 2025 for the Advaita Lok museum complex**. That covers the **Advaita Lok** museum, the **Acharya Shankar International Institute of Advaita Vedanta**, **Advaita Nilayam**, the Project Information Centre, **Shankar Setu** and **Abhay Ghat**.

The **entire Ekatma Dham complex** is larger still: about **126 hectares across four phases**, including the Statue of Oneness, reported at roughly **₹4,000 crore**.

So there are three distinct numbers, and they are routinely conflated: the museum complex at ₹2,195.54 crore, the whole Dham at about ₹4,000 crore, and the Panchayatan temple itself, **for which no separate cost and no completion timeline have been published**.

EKATMA DHAM

Ekatma Dham is the Adi Shankaracharya memorial complex on **Mandhata island** at Omkareshwar. It already hosts the following, in place since 2023:

- The “**Statue of Oneness**”, a **108-foot** statue of Adi Shankaracharya as a twelve-year-old, unveiled on **September 21, 2023**, standing on a 54-foot pedestal over a 27-foot lotus base
- The **Advaita Lok** museum
- The **Acharya Shankar International Institute of Advaita Vedanta**

The choice of Omkareshwar is **deliberate**: tradition holds that **Adi Shankaracharya received initiation from his guru Govindapada at Omkareshwar** as a boy, which is why the statue depicts him at twelve.

ADI SHANKARACHARYA: THE ESSENTIALS

ATTRIBUTE	DETAIL
Philosophy	Advaita Vedanta, non-dualism
Core proposition	Brahman alone is real; the world as perceived is maya; the individual self is not different from Brahman
Principal works	Commentaries on the Brahma Sutras, the principal Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita
Four mathas	Sringeri (south), Dwarka (west), Puri (east), Jyotirmath or Badrinath (north)

The four mathas are a standard Prelims item, and the Panchayatan system is the practical, devotional counterpart to the philosophical unification Advaita proposes.

OMKARESHWAR

ATTRIBUTE	DETAIL
Location	Mandhata island, Narmada river, Khandwa district, Madhya Pradesh
Status	One of the 12 Jyotirlingas
Nearby	The Ekatma Dham complex; Simhastha Kumbh at Ujjain is scheduled for 2028

The Chief Minister announced an **Ekatma Yatra** ahead of **Simhastha 2028**, tying the site into the state’s build-up to the Ujjain Kumbh.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Religious-heritage infrastructure as state economic strategy. Madhya Pradesh is following a template now visible across several states, in which a religious site is developed with substantial public investment as an anchor for a tourism circuit. **Mahakal Lok at Ujjain** and **Kashi Vishwanath at**

Varanasi are the comparators. The economic argument is real: pilgrimage tourism generates local employment in hospitality, transport and crafts, and it is comparatively recession-resistant.

The constitutional question deserves to be stated, not dodged. Substantial public expenditure on religious construction sits against **Articles 25 to 28**, and specifically **Article 27**, which bars compelling any person to pay taxes for the promotion of any particular religion. The counter-arguments are that the State may fund heritage and tourism infrastructure of cultural value, that **Article 290A** already provides for payments to the Travancore and Cochin Devaswom Funds from the Consolidated Fund, and that the Indian constitutional model is one of principled distance rather than strict separation. A serious answer engages this rather than assuming either that the expenditure is obviously unconstitutional or obviously unremarkable.

Craft economies are the under-noticed beneficiary. Eighty thousand cubic feet of carved sandstone, 100 carved pillars and 121 kalashas represent thousands of person-years of **sthapati and silpi** work in traditions that survive only where large commissions exist. Temple construction functions, incidentally, as an intangible-heritage preservation programme.

Ekatma as political vocabulary. The framing of the project around **ekatma**, oneness, draws directly on Advaita's philosophical claim while also carrying a contemporary integrative political meaning. Noting that a religious-philosophical term is doing modern political work is analysis; asserting a motive is not, and the distinction matters in an examination answer.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 1 (Art and Culture): Indian culture covering salient aspects of art forms, literature and architecture from ancient to modern times; religious movements and philosophies.

GS Paper 2 (Governance): Government policies and interventions; public expenditure priorities.

Prelims focus: The five Panchayatan deities and the traditions they harmonise; Nagara versus Dravida versus Vesara; Omkareshwar as a Jyotirlinga on the Narmada; Adi Shankaracharya's four mathas; the Statue of Oneness at 108 feet, unveiled 2023; Bansi Paharpur sandstone.

Mains angle: Use the Panchayatan as a case study in **religious integration as institutional design**. Shankaracharya's achievement was not **doctrinal** victory over rival sects but the creation of forms, the Panchayatan and the four mathas, that made coexistence structural. That is a governance insight as much as a theological one.

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGE PEDIA

THE EVENT:

Foundation stone of the Panchayatan Temple laid at Ekatma Dham, Omkareshwar, Khandwa district, on August 27, 2026 by CM Dr Mohan Yadav

Shila-pujan of 45 sacred stones; saints of the Shad-darshan Sant Mandal participated

An Ekatma Yatra announced ahead of Simhastha 2028

Project outlay: ₹2,195 crore cabinet-approved for the Ekatma Dham and Advaita Lok Sangrahalaya project as a whole; no temple-specific cost is verified

PANCHAYATAN PUJA:

Five deities: Shiva, Vishnu, Surya, Ganesha, Shakti

Harmonises the Shaiva, Vaishnava, Saura, Ganapatya and Shakta traditions

Associated with Adi Shankaracharya; the five are treated as manifestations of one supreme reality

THE TEMPLE:

Nagara style; 26-foot-diameter dome over the main mandapa; 100 carved pillars; 121 kalashas

About 80,000 cubic feet of carved pink sandstone from Bansi Paharpur, Rajasthan; 16-foot jagati platform

EKATMA DHAM:

“Statue of Oneness”: 108-foot statue of Adi Shankaracharya as a twelve-year-old, in place since 2023, unveiled September 21, 2023, on a 54-foot pedestal over a 27-foot lotus base

Also houses the Advaita Lok museum and the Acharya Shankar International Institute of Advaita Vedanta

ADI SHANKARACHARYA:

Philosophy: Advaita Vedanta, non-dualism

Four mathas: Sringeri, Dwarka, Puri, Jyotirmath (Badrinath)

Tradition holds he received initiation from Govindapada at Omkareshwar

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Omkareshwar is on Mandhata island in the Narmada, one of the 12 Jyotirlingas

Nagara has a curvilinear shikhara with amalaka and kalasha; Dravida has a pyramidal vimana; Vesara is the Deccan hybrid

Simhastha Kumbh at Ujjain is scheduled for 2028

Article 27 bars taxes for the promotion of any particular religion; Article 290A provides for the Travancore and Cochin Devaswom Funds

Sources: IANS, Government of Madhya Pradesh

Source: Foundation Stone Laid for the Panchayatan Temple at Ekatma Dham, Omkareshwar — Ujjari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs

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