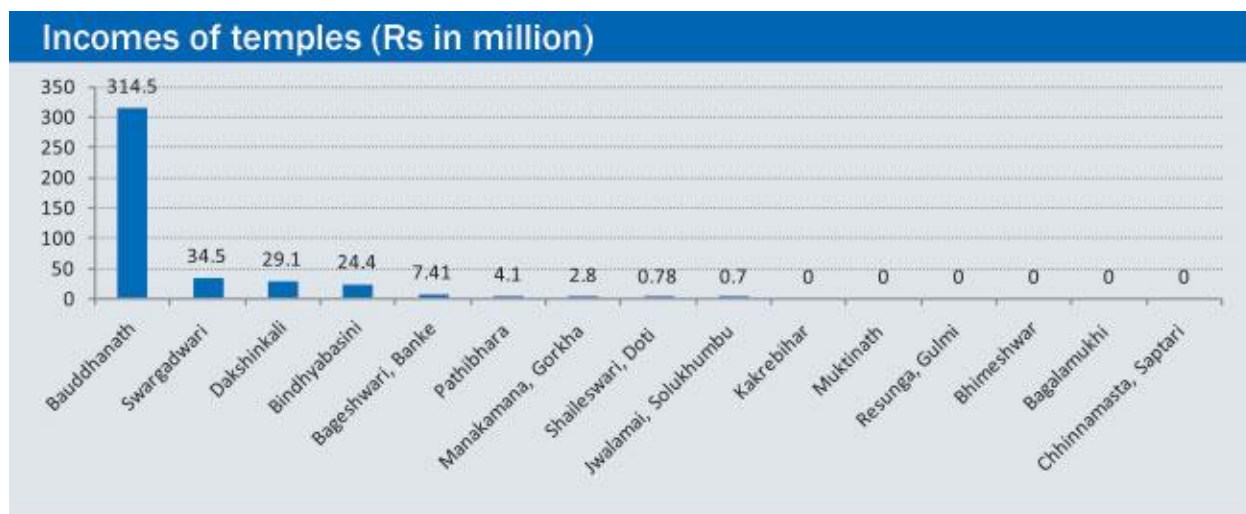


## Income and expenditure of temples opaque OAG



The management of offerings made to temples is not transparent and records of their incomes and expenditures are not maintained properly, much like in other public offices in the country that are not playing it by the book, say government auditors. The holy places also do not keep proper records of the offerings (both cash and kind) made by the devotees while there is no formal process of taking decisions on spending the money received as offerings, according to the findings of the government's audit agency.

The first 'in-depth' auditing of the 'books' of total 16 temples across the country has also revealed the mismanagement of the assets of these temples. The management committees of six temples --

Kakrebihar, Muktinath, Resunga of Gulmi, Bhimeshwar of Dolakha, Bagalamukhi of Lalitpur and Chhinnamasta of Saptari - reported zero income while others reported their incomes after deducting certain portions of the offerings made by the devotees to the idols and main temples as the personal incomes of the priests, according to the 55th report of the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) unveiled last week.

The total income of these famous temples is only Rs 418 million even as the income of Bauddhanath Stupa, which is at the top in terms of income, alone, is Rs 314 million, according to the report.

## **Income and expenditure of temples opaque OAG**

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Chief of the Performance Audit Division of OAG, Damodar Neupane says, “The incomes of these temples belong to the state. So, all earnings - both in cash and kind - of these temples and their expenditures should be recorded in a formal way.”

Though the system of dropping cash offerings in donation boxes is in place at most of the temples, there is still a common practice of pocketing the offerings by the priests without keeping any record, according to Neupane. The other common problem is only few of these temples got their books audited in fiscal year 2016/17. Though committees are handling the management of these temples, they are not registered with the government agencies concerned. “The incomes and expenditures of the temples should be maintained properly and their books should be audited regularly,” said Neupane, adding that the incomes of temples no more should be used as the personal incomes of a few persons.

There are a total of 799 major temples in 74 districts while the government is yet to determine the number of holy places in the Kathmandu Valley.

Source : My Republica, 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2018