

Jyotirlinga

Jyotirlingam is a shrine dedicated to Lord Shiva where Shiva is worshipped in the form of a Jyotirlingam or "Lingam of Light". There are said to be twelve Jyotirlinga shrines in India although their location is not consistently identified. The Jyotirlingas look like any other Shiva Linga. However, it is believed that a person who has attained a certain degree of spirituality sees these lingas as columns of fire piercing through the earth.

Legend of Jyotirlinga

According to a legend once Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma were fighting to prove who was the Supreme Being. At this point, Lord Shiva appeared as a flaming Linga and challenged the duo to measure the gigantic Linga (phallic symbol of Lord Shiva). Brahma and Vishnu decided to find one end each and declared that whoever returned first would be accepted as supreme. Vishnu assumed the form of a boar and went down. Brahma, in the form of a swan, flew upwards. They searched for days but in vain and returned to the starting point tired and bewildered. At that moment, the central part of the pillar split open and Shiva revealed himself in his full glory. Brahma and Vishnu realized their mistake and acknowledged Shiva as the Supreme Being.

Since it was on the 14th day in the dark half of the month of Phalgun that Shiva first established himself in the form of a Linga, the day is especially auspicious and is celebrated as Mahashivaratri. Worshipping Shiva on this day is believed to give one with happiness and prosperity.

Significance of Jyotirlingas

In Hinduism Jyotirlinga shrines have great importance. There is very much significance in Puranas. It is said that by reciting the name of 12 Jyotirlinga a devotee can eliminate all the sins. Besides, the devotee becomes calm and pure as he becomes illuminated and enlightened with supreme and divine knowledge. The names mentioned for the benefits of all are:

Saurashtra Sonmatham Cha Shrishaila Mallikarjunam ||

Ujjainyam Mahakalomkare Mammalleshwaram ||

Parlyam Vajjnatham Cha Dakinyam Bheem Shankaram ||

Setu Bandhe Tu Ramesham Nagesham Daruka Vane ||

Varanasya Tu Vishwesham Tribakam Gautamitate ||

Himalaye Tu Kedaram Ghurmesham Cha Shivalaye ||

Aetani Jyotirlingani Sayam Prataha Pathennaraha ||

Sapta Janma Kritam Papam Smaranen Vinashyati ||

Hindus believe that a sincere devotee who recites these 12 names regularly in the morning and evening washes all the sins committed in the previous seven births and attains all the powers and Siddhis.

The Twelve Jyotirlingas

There are 12 famous Jyotirlingas where Lord Shiva appeared in the form of light (Jyothi) lingam. These have been worshipped from time immemorial. They are mentioned in the Dwadasa Jyotirlinga Stotra and are enshrined in following temples.

Sonmatham Temple in Gujarat

Mallikarjun Temple in Andhra Pradesh

Mahakaleshwara Temple in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh

Omkareshwar Temple in Madhya Pradesh

Vaidyanath Temple in Deogarh, Bihar

Bhimashankar Temple near Pune in Maharashtra

Rameshwaram Temple in Tamil Nadu

Nageshwar Temple in Dwarka, Gujarat

Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi

Trimbakeshwar Temple in Nasik, Maharashtra

Kedarnath Temple in Himalayas

Grishneshwar Temple in Daulatabad, Maharashtra