



Glory of Bharath » Bharath Darshan

Dear Sai brothers and sisters,

Last month we have visited Lord Ganesha at 8 places as Ashtavinayak in Maharashtra. This time our pilgrimage is to the abodes of Lord Shiva famous as the Twelve Jyothirlingas. So shall we begin our sacred journey. Har har mahadev.

The shloka below describes the twelve places where the jyothirlingas are placed along with the names of the lord there.

Dvaadasa Jyothir Lingas
 "Saurashtre Somanathamcha Srisaile Mallikarjunam |
 Ujjayinya Mahakalam Omkaramamaleswaram ||
 Paralyam Vaidyanathancha Dakinyam Bheema Shankaram |
 Setu Bandhethu Ramesam, Nagesam Darukavane ||
 Varanasyantu Vishwesam Tryambakam Gautameethate |
 Himalayetu Kedaaram, Ghrishnesamcha shivaalaye ||
 Etani Jyotirlingani, Saayam Praatah Patennarah |
 Sapta Janma Kritam papam, Smaranena Vinashyati ||"

Somnath Temple in Gujarat

Somnath Temple Jyotirlinga is situated at Somnath Patan (the south coast of Saurashtra), near Veraval in (Prabhas Kshetra) Kathaiwad district in Gujarat. Somnath is considered to be the first of the 12 Jyotirlingas of Shiva and is a revered pilgrimage center in India.



Sri Somnath or Someshwara

Legend of Somnath Temple

Skanda Purana, in a chapter on Prabhasa Khanda, describes the emergence of this Jyotirlinga. Legend goes that the moon was married to the 27 daughters of Daksha Prajapati. Amongst all his wives, he had special love towards Rohini and neglected the others. Seeing the negligence of Chandra towards his other wives Prajapati Daksha cursed Chandra that he would lose his beauty and radiance. But because of a moon devoid of radiance and beauty the entire world became lifeless. A disturbed Chandra, came down to Prabhasa with Rohini and worshipped the Sparsa Linga of Somnath after which he was blessed by Shiva to grow and shine in the bright half.

As the moon regained his light here, this town came to be known as Prabhasa. Brahma, one of the trinity, installed the Brahmashila, and paved way for the construction of the temple. On the request of the Chandrama and other gods Bhagwan Shankar assumed the name

Somchandra (Jyotirlinga) and resided there eternally. He became famous by the name Somnath in the three worlds. Since, it was the Prabhas Kshetra where Bhagwan Shri Krishna performed all his Lilas. In this temple there is a small cave in which a lamp burns continuously. The Skanda Purana describes the Sparsa Linga of Somnath as one bright as the sun, the size of an egg, lodged underground. The Mahabharata also refers to the Prabhasa Kshetra and the legend of the moon worshipping Shiva.

Mallikarjuna Temple in Andhra Pradesh

Mallikarjuna Temple is situated on Shri Shaila Mountain by the banks of the Patal Ganga, Krishna River in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh. Also known as **Kailash of the South**, Mallikarjuna constitutes one of the 12 Jyotirlingam shrines of Shiva and is one of the greatest Shaivite shrines in India. The presiding deities of Mallikarjuna Temple are Mallikarjuna (Shiva) and Bhramaramba (Devi). Every year there is a fair organized on account of Mahashivratri.

Legend of Mallikarjun Jyotirlinga

According to Shiva Purana, when Lord Ganesh was married of before his, Kartikeya became angry. Despite being stopped and consoled by his parents Shiv-Parvati, Kartikeya went away to the Kraunch Mountain. Even the Gods went and tried consoling Kartikeya but all their efforts were in vain. Because of this incident Shiv-Parvati were very sad and both decided that they would themselves go to Kraunch Mountain. However, when Kartikeya came to know that his parents have arrived, he went away. Eventually Lord Shiva assumed the form of Jyotirlinga and resided on that mountain by the name of Mallikarjuna. Mallika means Parvati, while Arjuna is another name of Shiva. In this way both Shiva and Parvati came to reside in this linga. It is said that by merely seeing the tip of mountain one is emancipated from all his sins and worries. The person becomes free from the vicious cycle of life and death.



Sri Mallikarjuna

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Mahakaleshwara Temple in Ujjain

Mahakaleshwara Temple is located by the banks of river Kshipra, in the dense Mahakal forests in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh. It is an important Shaivite pilgrimage centre in North India and is revered as one of the 12 Jyotirlinga manifestations of Shiva.



Sri Mahakaleswar

Legend Behind Mahakal Temple

According to an episode narrated in Puranas, a five-year-old boy named Shrikar was enthralled seeing the devotion of King Chandrasena of Ujjain towards Lord Shiva. Shrikar took a stone and by considering it a linga started worshipping it regularly. Others thought that his worship as merely a game and tried to dissuade him in all ways. But all the efforts went in vain. On the contrary, devotion of Shrikar increased by every passing day. Pleased by the boy's devotion Lord Shiva assumed Jyotirlinga form and resided in the Mahakal forest. According to another popular legend related to Mahakal Temple, a demon by name, Dushana tormented the residents of Avanti. Shiva appeared from the ground and vanquished the demon. Then, upon the request of the inhabitants of Avanti, Shiva took up a permanent abode here as Mahakaleshwara Jyotirlinga.

Omkareshwar Temple in Madhya Pradesh

Omkareshwar Temple is situated on the mountain Mandhata by the banks of Narmada River in the Malva area in Madhya Pradesh. Omkareshwar Temple is one of the 12 revered Jyotirlinga shrines of Shiva. The temple is closely linked with **Mammalleshwar Temple** (situated on the south of river Narmada) as both the forms of Shiva have been counted as one.

Legend behind Omkareshwar Temple

Shiva Purana describes the greatness of Omkareshwar and Mammalleshwar. It says, two sons of the sun dynasty Mandhata - Ambarish and Mucchkund practiced severe penance and austerities here and pleased Lord Shiva. They also performed great religious sacrifices in this place because of which the mountain is named Mandhata.

Another popular legend says that once upon a time Vidhya Parvat practiced severe penance and worshipped Parthivarchana along with Lord Omkareshwar for nearly six months. As a result Lord Shiva was pleased and blessed him with the desire boon. On the sincere request of all the gods and the sages Lord Shiva made two parts of the lings. One half being Omkareshwara and the other Amaleshwara or Amareshwar.

Some scholar say, King Mandhatha of the Ishvaku clan is believed to have worshipped Shiva here. Besides, Govinda Bhagavatpaada, the Guru of Shankaracharya is believed to have lived in a cave here.



Sri Omkareshwar

Vaidyanath Temple in Deogarh

Vaidyanath Temple, also called Vajinath Temple and Baidyanath Temple is located at Deogarh in the Santal Parganas region of Bihar in the south west of Keeul Station. Baidyanath shrine is revered as one of the twelve Jyotirlingams of Shiva. It may be noted that some schools of thought believe Vaidyanath near Parali in Andhra Pradesh to be the Vaidyanatha Jyotirlingam. Devotees of Lord Shiva believe that by sincere worship of Vajinath Jyotirlinga a person is relieved of all worries and miseries in life. It is also said that by worshipping in the shrine a person attains Moksha and all types of happiness. As a tradition, devotees carry 'Kanwars' on their shoulders and complete their travel here.



Sri Vaidyanath

Legend Behind Vaidyanath Temple

Legend has it that demon King of Lanka, Ravana meditated upon Lord Shiva, as he wanted to request him to come over to Sri Lanka and make his capital invincible. It is said that Ravana attempted to lift Mount Kailash and take it with him to his capital. However, Lord Shiva crushed it with his finger. Ravana prayed to him and sought his mercy, after which Bhagwan Shiva gave him one of the twelve Jyotirlingams on the condition that if it were placed on the ground it shall fix itself to the ground and shall remain there for eternity. Ravana thanked Lord Shiva and holding the Linga carefully started off to the Lanka. However, Varuna the God of Water, entered his belly and caused him to feel an urgent need to relieve himself. Vishnu then came down in the form of a lad and volunteered to hold the Jyotirlingam as he relieved

himself. Before Ravana returned, Vishnu placed the Jyotirlingam on the ground and it became rooted to the spot. A disappointed Ravana offered severe penance to Shiva here, and cut off nine of his heads. Shiva revived him and joined the heads to the body, as if by the work of a Vaidya or a physician, hence this Jyotirlingam goes by the name Vaidyanath.

According to another legend, Vaidyanath is one of the 52 Shakti Pitha shrines of Sati. It is believed that the heart of Sati fell here, when her half burnt body being carried by Shiva at the end of Daksha's Yagna was chopped to pieces by Vishnu's discus. Some people believe that this temple was re-discovered by a cowherd Baiju and hence named Baijnath.

Bhimashankar Temple in Pune

Bhimashankar Temple Jyotirlinga is situated in the ghat region of the Sahyadri hills in the village of

Bhavagiri, 50-km north of Khed, near Pune in Maharashtra. Bhima Shankar Temple lies on the banks of the river Bhima. Bhimashankar is also the source of the river Bhima, which flows southeast and merges with the Krishna River near Raichur. The other Jyotirlinga shrines in Maharashtra are **Tryambakeshwar** and **Grishneshwar**. It may be noted that according to the Shiv Purana the Bhimashankar Jyotirlinga is situated on the Mountain Brahmapur in district Kamrup, Assam.

Legend behind Bhimashankar Temple

According to the legends, once a demon called Bhima lived with his mother Karkati in the dense forests of Dakini, on the lofty ranges of the Sahaydris. It is said that Bhima was so cruel that every one was scared of him. But what tormented Bhima was his curiosity regarding his own existence. One day, Bhima urged his mother to tell him who his father was and why had he abandoned them in the wilderness of the forest. His mother revealed that he was the son of Kumbhakarna, the younger brother of the mighty King Ravana - the King of Lanka. Bhima's mother Kartaki also told him that Lord Vishnu in his incarnation as Lord Rama annihilated Kumbhakarna. This infuriated Bhima and he vowed to avenge Lord Vishnu.



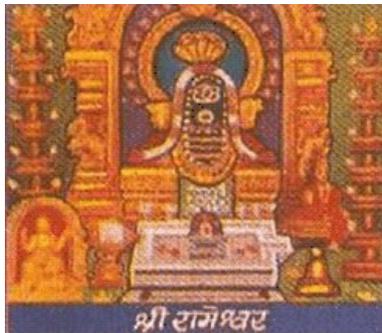
Sri Bhimashankar

Bhima performed severe penance to please Lord Brahma. The compassionate creator was pleased by the dedicated devotee and granted him immense prowess. With so much power, Bhima began to cause havoc in the three worlds. He defeated King Indra and conquered the heavens. He also defeated a staunch devotee of Lord Shiva - Kamrupeshwar and put him in the dungeons. All this angered the Gods and they along with Lord Brahma beseeched Lord Shiva to come for their rescue to which Lord Shiva agreed.

Tyrant Bhima asked Kamrupeshwar to worship him instead of Lord Shiva. When Kamrupeshwar refused, Bhima raised his sword to strike the Shiva Linga. But as soon as he raised his sword, Lord Shiva appeared before him in full magnificence. Then the terrible war began. Holy sage Narad appeared and requested Lord Shiva to put an end to this war. It was then that Lord Shiva reduced the evil demon to ashes and thus concluded the saga of tyranny. All the Gods and the holy sages present there requested Lord Shiva to make this place his abode. Lord Shiva thus manifested himself in the form of the Bhimashankar Jyotirlinga. It is believed that the sweat that poured forth from Lord Shiva's body after the battle formed the Bhimarathi River.

Rameshwaram Temple in Tamil Nadu

Rameshwaram Temple is situated in the island of Rameswaram, off the Sethu coast of Tamil Nadu and is reached via the Pamban Bridge across the sea. The huge temple is known for its long ornate corridors, towers and 36 theerthams. Rameshwaram Jyotirlinga represents the southernmost of the 12 Jyotirlingams of India and has been a time honored pilgrimage center held on par with Banaras. Rameshwaram Temple Jyotirlinga is associated closely with the Ramayana and Rama's victorious return from Sri Lanka.



Sri Rameshwar

Legend behind Rameshwaram Temple

According to a popular legend, it was Lord Rama who installed this Linga here. Story goes that when Lord Ram was on his way to attack Ravana, he reached this place where he made a linga of sand and worshipped it. It is said that when Lord Rama was drinking water on the seashore there was a celestial proclamation - "You are drinking water without worshipping me". Listening to this Lord Rama made a linga of sand and worshipped it and asked to be blessed so that he could vanquish Ravana. Lord Shiva blessed him accordingly. He also requested Lord Shiva to reside eternally here so that entire mankind should benefit from it. Shiva then manifested himself as the Linga and got installed there for eternity.

According to yet another legend, while returning to Ayodhya, Ram worshipped Lord Shiva in the form of a Shiva Lingam made of earth by Sita. It is said that Hanuman was entrusted with the task of bringing an image of Viswanathar from Banaras. Anticipating delay in Hanuman's return from Banaras, Rama offered worship to a Shivalingam at a pre-chosen auspicious moment. This lingam is referred to as **Ramalingam** and the town is known as Rameswaram.

There is yet another Shivalingam here - Viswanathar said to have been brought by Hanuman from Banaras. This Shivalingam is referred to as Kasilingam and Hanumalingam. Prayers are offered to Viswanathar before they are offered to Ramanathaswamy.

Nageshwar Temple in Dwarka

Nageshwar Temple or Nagnath Temple is located on the route between Gomati Dwarka and the Bait Dwarka Island on the coast of Saurashtra in Gujarat. The Jyotirlinga enshrined in the Temple of Nagnath is known as Nageshwar Mahadev and attracts thousands of pilgrims all round the year. This powerful Jyotirlinga symbolizes protection from all poisons. It is said that those who pray to the Nageshwar Linga become free of poison. The Rudra Samhita sloka refers to Nageshwar with the phrase 'Daarukaavane Naagesham'.

Legend Behind Nageshwar Temple

According to Shiv Purana, a Shiva devotee by name **Supriya** was attacked by a demon **Daaruka** while in a boat. The demon imprisoned him along with several others at his capital Daarukaavana where he resided with his wife Daaruki. Supriya advised all prisoners to recite the mantra 'Aum Namaha Shivaya'. When Daruk came to know about this he ran to kill Supriya. Instantly Lord Shiva appeared in the form of a Jyotirlingam and vanquished the demon with the Paasupata Astram.



This Jyotirlinga manifestation of Shiva is worshipped as Nageswara.

Two other sites in India, one near Audhgram near Purna in Andhra Pradesh and another near Almora in Uttar Pradesh also enshrine temples to Nageswara Jyotirlingam. According to the Shiv Purana, any one who ever with devotion reads the birth and greatness of this Jyotirlinga shall beget all material happiness and divine status in the end.



Sri Nageshwar

Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi

Vishwanath Temple is located amidst the crowded lanes in the holy city of Varanasi also known as Kashi and Benares. The Vishwanath Temple enshrines one of the twelve Jyotirlingams of Lord Shiva and is one of the most revered pilgrimage sites for Hindus. It is believed that Varanasi is the point at which the first Jyotirlinga, the fiery pillar of light by which Shiva manifested his supremacy over other gods, broke through the earth's crust and flared towards the heavens. More than the Ghats and even the Ganga, the Shivalinga installed in the temple remain the devotional focus of Varanasi. Millions of pilgrims converge here to perform an abhishekam to the sacred Jyotirlingam with sacred water of river Ganga.



Sri Kashi Vishwanath

Significance of Vishwanath Temple

Also famous by the name of Shiv Vishwanath Kashi, Shri Vishweshwar Temple is said to be dear to Lord Shiva. Hindus believe that those who come and die here attain liberation. It is said that Lord Shiva gives the Tarak Mantra to the ones who are going to die here. Some also believe that the Lord resides here and is the giver of liberation and happiness. The one who prays and worships Vishweshwar with devotion attains all his desires and one who incessantly recites his name attains all siddhis and finally gets liberated.

Trimbakeshwar Temple in Nasik

Shri Trimbakeshwar Temple is located at a distance of about 30-km from Nasik in Maharashtra near the mountain named Brahmagiri from which the river Godavari flows. Trimbakeshwar Temple is revered as one of the 12 Jyotirlinga shrines of Shiva and as the source of the river Godavari. Just as Ganga is known as Bhagirathi and is one of the most important river in North India, in the same way, Godavari is also known as **Gautami Ganga** and is the most sacred river in South India.

According to Shiv Purana, it is because of the earnest request of Godavari, Gautam Rishi and other gods that Lord Shiva agreed to reside here and assumed the famous name Trimbakeshwar. Interestingly, locals refer to the river here as Ganga and not as Godavari. All the heavenly Gods promised to come down to Nasik, once in twelve years, when Jupiter resides in the zodiac sign of Leo. On this a grand fair is organized at this place. Devotees take a holy bath in the Gautami Ganga and then seek the blessings of Trimbakeshwar.

Legend Behind Trimbakeshwar Temple

Legend goes that a sage name **Gautam Muni** resided on the Brahmagiri hill with his wife Ahilya. By virtue of his devotion, the sage received from Varuna, a bottomless pit from which he received an inexhaustible supply of grains and food. The other rishis, jealous of his fortune, arranged for a cow to enter his granary and caused it to die as Gowtam Rishi attempted to ward it off with a bunch of Darbha grass.



Sri Trimbakeshwar

Gautam Rishi, therefore, worshipped Lord Shiva to bring the Ganga down to his hermitage to purify the premises. Pleased with devotion, Shiva requested Ganga to flow down and make Sage Gautam pure. After that Ganga flowed down. Lord Shiva told Ganga to stay there eternally for the good of everyone. All the Gods started singing the praises of Gautam Rishi, Ganga and Lord Shiva. On the request of all the Gods, Lord Shiva resided by the river Gautami by the name Trimbakeshwar (one of the Jyotirlingas). Hindus believe that Trimbak Jyotirlinga is one, which fulfills everyone's desires. It emancipates all from their sins and miseries.

Another popular legend behind Trimbakeshwar Temple is the legend of **Lingodbhava** manifestation of Shiva. It says once Brahma and Vishnu searched in vain to discover the origin of Shiva who manifested himself as a cosmic column of fire. Brahma lied that he had seen the top of the column of fire and was hence cursed that he would not be worshipped on earth. In turn Brahma cursed Shiva that he would be pushed underground. Accordingly, Shiva came down under the Brahmagiri hill in the form of Tryambakeshwar. Trimbakeshwar Temple is the only place where Shivlinga is not out but it's inside the floor.

Some scholars say that Goddess Parvati also came down along Lord Shiva and Ganga. The place is therefore called Tryambakeshwa (three lords). Others believe that the place is so called because of the presence of three Shivlinga of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. The Shivlinga of Lord Mahesh has always-flowing water among the three Shivlingas.

Kedarnath Temple in Himalayas

One of the holiest pilgrimages for the Hindus, Kedarnath Temple Jyotirlinga is located in the picturesque surroundings of Rudra Himalaya Range at a height of 12000 feet on a mountain named Kedar. Near Kedarnath is the source of the river Mandakini that joins Alakananda at Rudraprayag. This place is approximately 150 miles away from Hardwar and 132 miles north of Hrishikesh and is accessible by foot.

The temple at Kedarnath enshrining the Jyotirlingam of Shiva opens only 6 months a year (April-November) when the sun enters the zodiac sign of Aries and it is closed when the sun enters Scorpio. The priests then go to Ukhimath, where the worship of Kedareshwara is continued during the winter season.



Sri Kedarnath or Kedareshwar

Significance of Kedarnath Temple

Located in the lofty Himalayas, Kedarnath Temple is one of the best known Shivasthalams in India and is considered to be one of the most sacred pilgrimage centers of the country. It is believed that by praying to Kedareshwar, one can get all his desires fulfilled. Importance of the shrine can be further understood from the beliefs that Upamanyu prayed to Lord Shiva in this place in Satayuga while in Dwapar, the Pandavas worshipped Lord Shiva here. Even the spiritual leader Adi Sankaracharya is closely associated with Kedarnath.

Grishneshwar Temple in Daulatabad

Grishneshwar Temple is an ancient pilgrimage site revered as the abode of one of the 12 Jyotirlinga manifestation of Lord Shiva. The Grishneshwar Jyotirlinga shrine is located at a village called Verul, which lies 20 km from Daulatabad (near Aurangabad in Maharashtra) and approximately 100 kms from Manmad station. Located close to Daulatabad (once known as Devagiri) is the popular tourist attractions Ajanta - Ellora.

Legend Behind Grishneshwar Temple

According to Shivapuran, in the southern direction, on a mountain named Devagiri lived a Brahmin called Brahmavetta Sudharm along with his wife Sudeha. The couple did not have a child because of which Sudeha was sad. Sudeha prayed and tried all possible remedies but in vain. Frustrated of being childless, Sudeha got her sister Ghushma married to her husband. On the advice of her sister, Ghushma used to make 101 lingas, worship them and discharge them in the near by lake.



Sri Grishneshwar

With the blessings of Lord Shiva, Ghushma gave birth to a baby boy. Because of this, Ghushma became proud and Sudeha started feeling jealous towards her sister. Out of jealousy, one night she killed Ghushma's son and threw him in the lake where Ghushma used to discharge the lingas.

Next morning, Ghushmas and Sudharm got involved in daily prayers and ablutions. Sudeha too, got up and started performing her daily choirs. Ghushma's daughter-in-law, however, saw stains of blood on her husband's bed and parts of the body drenched in blood. Horrified, she narrated everything to mother-in-law Ghushma who was absorbed in worshipping Shiva. Ghushma did not deter. Even her husband Sudharma did not move an inch. Even when Ghushma saw the bed drenched in blood she did not break down and said he who has given me this child shall protect him and started reciting 'Shiva-Shiva'. Later, when she went to discharge the Shivalingas after prayers she saw her son coming. Seeing her son Ghushma was neither happy nor sad. At that time Lord Shiv appeared before her and said - I am pleased with your devotion. Your sister had killed your son. Ghushma told Lord to forgive Sudeh and emancipate her. Pleased with her generosity, Lord Shiva asked her another boon. Ghushma said that if he was really happy with her devotion then he should reside here eternally for the benefit of the multitudes in form of a Jyotirling and may you be known by my name. On her request, Lord Shiva manifested himself in the form of a Jyotirling and assumed the name Ghushmeshwar and the lake was named as Shivalaya thereafter.



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