



Rameshwaram, the anchor of Indian Renaissance 5

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Jyotirlinga : The Endless Column of the Eternal Light 1

The western academia is at awe when they see the richness of Indian mythology and symbolism. A religion without a name, without a tag of only book, only god and only central authority is able to unite a vast population for centuries together and can survive shocks of severe viciousness and amplitude time and again. This is unthinkable for some of the western academia who has been celebrated in Indian studies. How one can explain the existence of four dhams, 12 Jyotirlingas and Shaktipithas across the entire geography of Indian soil? And people religiously doing pilgrimages of these sites every year?

Unfortunately, the indological research of the west is a long tale of disgusting and enraging misinterpretations of Indian Gods and symbols which started with the British rule. And so from the time of, say, William Jones, the research, narrative, and interpretation were, unsurprisingly, colonial in both colour and flavour. In other words Eurocentric. This trend continues till date where new scholarly papers and books are written purporting to "reinterpret" or provide an "alternative interpretation" of Hindu mythology, the Vedas, Puranas, symbolism, sages, Gods, Goddesses, and so on."



This background is necessary for modern educated Indians like us who are blown away by American academic perversions to the extent of doubting the significance of concepts like Jyotirlinga.

A **Jyotirlinga** (Sanskrit:ज्योतिर्लिङ्ग), is a devotional object representing the Supreme God Shiva. *Jyoti* means 'radiance' and *lingam* the 'Image or Sign' of Shiva. According to *Śiva Mahāpurāna*, once Brahma and Vishnu had an argument over supremacy of creation. To settle the debate, Supreme God Shiva pierced the three worlds appearing as a huge Infinite Pillar of Light, the *Jyotirlinga* which later cooled into the Holy Mountain Annamalai (on which the Temple of Arunachaleshwara is located). Vishnu and Brahma split their ways to downwards and upwards respectively to find the end of the light in either direction. Brahma lied that he found out the end, while Vishnu conceded his defeat. Originally there were believed to be 64 *jyothirlingas* while 12 of them are considered to be very auspicious and holy.^[1] Each of the twelve *jyothirlinga* sites take the name of the presiding deity, each considered a different manifestation of Shiva. (www.wikipedia.com)

The twelve *jyothirlinga* are

1. Somnath in Gujarat
2. Mallikarjuna at
Shrishailam in Andhra Pradesh
3. Mahakaleswar at Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh
4. Omkareshwar in Madhya Pradesh
5. Kedarnath in Uttrakhand
6. Bhimashankar Mahabaleshwar
in Maharashtra
7. Viswanath at Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh
8. Tryambakeshwar at Nashik in Maharashtra
9. Vaidyanath Temple at Deoghar in Jharkhand
10. Aundha Nagnath at Aundha in Hingoli District in Maharashtra
11. Rameshwar at Rameshwaram in Tamil Nadu and
12. Grushneshwar at Ellora near Aurangabad, in Maharashtra



सौराष्ट्रे सोमनाथं च श्रीशैले मल्लिकार्जुनम्। उज्जयिन्यां महाकालमोङ्कारममलेश्वरम्॥

परल्यां वैद्यनाथं च डाकिन्यां भीमशङ्करम्। सेतुबन्धे तु रामेशं नागेशं दारुकावने॥

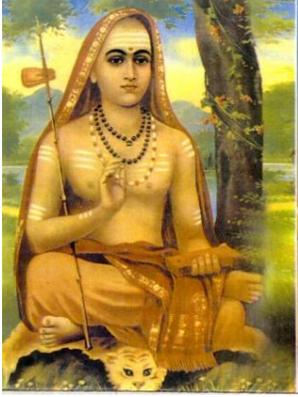
वाराणस्यां तु विश्वेशं त्र्यम्बकं गौतमीतटे। हिमालये तु केदारं घुश्मेशं च शिवालये॥

एतानि ज्योतिर्लिङ्गानि सायं प्रातः पठेन्नरः। सप्तजन्मकृतं पापं स्मरणेन विनश्यति॥

एतेषां दर्शनादेव पातकं नैव तिष्ठति। कर्मक्षयो भवेत्तस्य यस्य तुष्टो महेश्वरः॥

Following information can be found from a site on jyotirlinga:

<http://www.jyotirlinga.com/ramanath--rameshwaram.html>



‘According to puranas, as advised by Rishis, Rama along with Sita and Lakshmana, installed and worshipped the Sivalinga here to expiate the sin of Brahmahatya. It is said that Rama fixed an auspicious time for installation and sent Anjaneya to Mount Kailas to bring a lingam, but as Anjaneya could not return in time, Sita herself made a lingam of sand. Sri Agasthiya told Rama to perform pooja within the auspicious time.’

The Rameshwaram has distinction as the southernmost Jyotirlinga in India. The Ramanathaswamy temple was built during the 12th century and then expanded during the Nayak period in 16th century. In the first inner corridor, devotees offer worship to the venerated white Sphatika Lingam. Adi Sankaracharya instituted the Sphatika Lingam.
