

Our Puranas

There are (18) eighteen Puranas and 18 Upapuranas and another 18 Upa-Upapuranas.

- *1. Brahma Purana. 10,000 verses*
- *2. Padma Purana 55,000 verses*
- *3. Sri .Vishnu Purana. 23,000 verses*
- *4. Siva Purana. 24,000 verses*
- *5. Bhagavatha Purana. 18,000 verses*
- *6. Naradha Purana. 25,000 verses*
- *7. Markandeya Purana. 9,000 verses*
- *8. Agni Purana. 15,400 verses*
- *9. Bhavishya Purana. 14,500 verses*
- *10. Brahma Vaivārtha Purana. 18,000 verses*
- *11. Linga Purana. 11,000 verses*
- *12. Varaha Purana. 24,000 verses*
- *13. Skandha Purana. 81,100 verses *
- *14. Vamana Purana. 10,000 verses*
- *15. Koorma Purana. 17,000 verses*
- *16. Matsya Purana. 14,000 verses*
- *17. Garuda Purana. 19,000 verses*
- *18. Brahmanda Purana. 12,000 verses*

SHIVARATRI SPECIAL:-

1 ON LINGAPURANA:-

- a) In the Lingapurana, the five aspects of Shiva- Sadyojaata, Vaamadeva, Tatpuruasha, Aghora and Eeshaana are described.

The story of Shiva appearing as a huge pillar of fire to Vishnu and Brahma is dealt with.

Chapters 17 to 20 of the Purana deals with the puffed up and arrogant pride of Vishnu and Brahma with their powers .

They had ignored Shiva and so, he appeared before them as a pillar of fire of immense length. When he challenged both Vishnu and Brahma to find the extremities of the pillar, they failed.

They accepted his superiority.

This pillar of fire became "Linga" and all creatures merge in it at the time of laya (dissolution).

(LeeyatE asmin; Layam gachchati) IT HAS BEEN CONCLUSIVELY PROVED THAT THE FIRST IDOL WORSHIPED BY ANYONE WAS A SHIVALINGA AS A FINAL PRODUCT OF THE YOOPASTAMBHA AS THE YAAGASHAALA EVOLVED GRADUALLY INTO THE HINDU TEMPLE PROVING THAT THE SHIVALINGA WAS AN EXTREMELY ANCIENT SYMBOL.

b) TYPES OF LINGAS-

Lingas are of two types_ kritrima and akritrima. Akritrima lingas include svayambhoo and Baana lingas. There is another classification also- chala and Achala. Chala lingas made of metals, clay stones and wood are worshiped at homes. Rubies, pearls, corals, topaz, emerald and diamond are the precious stones used for chala lingas. Gold, silver, copper and bell metal are the metals used.

Achala lingas made of stone are usually fixed in temples with a pedestal and the linga proper. The linga itself consists of Brahmabhaaga, Vishnu Bhaaga and Rudrabhaaga. The upper most part is the cylindrical portion which is the poojaabhaaga.

Stories of Dadheechi, Vyasa, Nandi, Sooryavamsha and chandravamsha kings, Kaashi etc., are the other stories.

Shiva's eight forms, Shiva panchaakshari mantra and the meditation of Shiva after establishing shivalinga, the mruthyunjaya mantra are the other contents. SHIVA IS DEPICTED IN DIFFERENT CATEGORIES- SAUMYA OR ANUGRAHAMURTI , UGRA, RAUDRA OR SAMHAARAMURTI, NRITYA OR TANDAVAMURTI.

Sphatika Linga

God is niraakaara and nirguna. No particular form or specific qualities are to be assigned. A uniformly rounded surface has been conceived as the best representation of such a God. You may remember that Linga also represents Devi, Ganapati and Nrisimha in addition to Shiva-Rudra.

Lingas are of two types- kritrima and akritrima- natural or man made. They are also classified as chala and achala- movable and immovable. Chala lingas are made of metals (gold, silver, copper or bell meta), clay, precious stones or wood. The precious stones could be rubies, pearls, corals topaz, emerald or diamond. Different materials used for the lingas are recommended for fulfillment of different kinds of desires.

For example- topaz linga gives prosperity, pearl linga removes sins etc. The sphatika linga is considered sacred and is believed to yield immense benefits to the worshipers. It is this type which is generally used for rudraabhisheka at homes. It is important to know that the lingas are divided into three parts- The lowest part, called Brahmabhaaga is square in shape. The middle part represents the vishnubhaaga and it is octagonal in shape. The top most part is the Rudrabhaaga and it is this portion which is worshipped (poojaabhaaga).

WORSHIPPING LINGA:-

The sculptured image of Shiva and Parvati worshiping a linga in the Kailasanatha temple in Ellora adds to the mystery that the linga may be a very ancient object of reverence. It could be the final product of the Yoopasthamba as the Yaagashaala evolved gradually into the hindu temple. Thus it is an extremely ancient symbol.

Shiva is said to have manifested himself as a great altar of gold from which sprang forth a blazing fire before Ashvatthaama. This is as mentioned in the Mahabharatha (Souptikaparva). Certain non vedic cults wherein phallic worship might have existed as in many ancient civilisations of the world might have been absorbed into the vedic culture and the same elevated to the father-mother principle at

the cosmic level. We may also remember that the lingas have been described as emblems of the Devi, Ganapati and Narasimha and worshipped as such.

The Lingapurana states that when Vishnu and Brahma were puffed with arrogance ignorig Shiva, he appeared before them as a pillar of fire of infinite length whose extremities could not be found. This pillar of fire came to be known as linga because all creatures merge in it at the time of destruction (leeyate asmin, layam gachchanti).

ABOUT THE VISHVESHWARA LINGAM IN KAASHI-BENARES.

The puranas say that Shiva came down from the mandara hills along with his paraphernalia and stood in the mukti mandapa in Kaashi to give darshan to Vishnu and Brahma in the form of a huge jyoti which is now called Viswesara jyotirlingam (sat chit ananda swaroopa).

The ancient Shiva temple is believed to be at the place where a mosque now stands next to the Adi Visweswara temple on a hill on the banks of Ganga river. This mosque was constructed after destroying the ancient Shiva temple (at the same location) during the rule of Raziya Sultaana. This is the view expressed by the American researcher Diana Eke. The present temple of Vishvanatha was constructed in the Viswanatha lane under the patronage of maharani of Indore Ahalyabai Holkar in 1777.

This is in a congested place and it is difficult even to see the top of the temple because of insufficient space alround. There appears to be an influence of the Muslim architecture in the design. Although there is no antiquity, the temple attracts lakhs of pilgrims regularly to attend to the ancient pooja system etc., The evening saptarishi abhisheka attracts devotees in large numbers.

When Aurangazeb was destroying the temple, the priest of visweswaras temple took the lingam and immersed in the jnaanavaapi well nearby. It was reinstalled after the construction of the temple again.

The water of jnaanavaapi well is considered very sacred as it was supposed to have been made by Shiva himself through his trident (trishoola).. This was kept closed for a long time. (even now it is closed). The mosque constructed near this well is called the jnaanavaapi mosque. LINGAS IN KAASHI:- There are 511 shivalingas in Kaashi. Out of these the twelve swayambhuva shivalingas are:-

1. AvimuktEswara,
2. OmkaarEswara,
3. JyEshtEswara,
4. MadhyamEswara,
5. Adi mahaadEva,
6. VishvEswara,

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| 7. BrishabhadvEswara, | 8. KEdaarEswara, | 9. Kapardeeshvara, |
| 10. Swayambhuva lingEswara, | 11. BhoorbhuvEswara, | 12. VeerEswara, |

In addition to these, there are several others installed by deities, rishis and grahas and shivaganas.

JYOTIRLINGAS IN INDIA:-

The twelve jyotirlingas in India are :-

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| 1. Somanataha in Sourashtra, | 2. Mallikarjuna in Srisailam, |
| 3. Mahaakaala in Ujaain, | 4. AmarEswara in Omkaara, |
| 5. Bheemashankara in daakini, | 6. ViswEswara in Kaashi, |
| 7. Tryambaka on the Banka of Goutami, | 8. Vaidyanaatha in parali, |
| 9. NaagEsha in Daarukaavana, | 10. Rameswara in Rameswaram, |
| 11. Ghushmeswara, | 12. KEdaarEswara in the Himalaya. |

HISTORY OF THE SHIVA TEMPLE IN KAASHI- BENARES.

A Shiva temple has been mentioned in Puranas including Kashi Khanda (section) of Skanda Purana.

In 490 AD , the Kashi Vishwanath Temple was built. In 11th Century AD, Hari Chandra constructed a temple. Muhammad Ghorī destroyed it along with other temples of Varanasi during his raid in 1194.

Reconstruction of the temple started soon after. This was demolished by Qutb-ud-din Aibak. After Aibak's death the temple was again rebuilt by Hindu rajas. In 1351 it was destroyed again by Firuz Shah Tughlaq.

The temple was rebuilt in 1585 by Todar Mal, the Revenue Minister of Akbar's Court. Aurangzeb ordered its demolition in 1669 and constructed Gyanvapi Mosque, which still exists alongside the temple.

Traces of the old temple can be seen behind the mosque. It is said that the Shiv-Linga was thrown in the 'well'