



## JYOTIRLINGA OF LORD SHIVA REFLECTS ON SWYAMBHU

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### ABSTRACT

Jyotirlingas are formed from an ancient legend in the Shiva Purana where Lord Shiva appeared as a boundless, fiery pillar of light (Jyoti) to end a dispute between Brahma and Vishnu over supremacy, with each Linga marking a spot where this light manifested, symbolizing Shiva's infinite, formless energy and presence across the cosmos, rather than a singular creation event.

The Origin Legend (Shiva Purana): The Dispute: Lord Brahma (Creator) and Lord Vishnu (Preserver) argued about who was the supreme deity in the universe.

Shiva's Appearance: To settle the debate, Lord Shiva appeared as a massive, infinite pillar of light (Jyoti) that pierced the three worlds (heaven, earth, underworld).

The Challenge: Shiva challenged Brahma and Vishnu to find the beginning or end of this light pillar.

The Search: Vishnu transformed into a boar (Varaha) to dig down, while Brahma became a swan (Hamsa) to fly up, but neither could find the limits of the pillar.

Brahma's Deceit: Brahma lied, claiming he found the top and presented a Ketaki flower as proof, angering Shiva.

The Curses: Shiva cursed Brahma for his dishonesty, decreeing he wouldn't be worshipped, and praised Vishnu for his honesty.

The Jyotirlingas: The pillar of light became the Jyotirlinga, symbolizing Shiva's infinite nature, with 12 significant manifestations across India.

Key Aspects: "Jyoti" (Light) + "Linga" (Form): They are manifestations of Shiva as radiant pillars of light, representing cosmic energy.

Self-Manifested (Swayambhu): These aren't installed by humans but originated spontaneously as divine appearances.

Removal of Darkness: Worshipping them removes ignorance (darkness) and bestows spiritual benefits.

In essence, each Jyotirlinga is a sacred site where Shiva's infinite, formless light (Jyoti) made itself manifest to teach a profound lesson about supreme reality.

**KEYWORDS:** Somnath, Mallikarjuna, Mahakaleshwar, Omkareshwar, Kedarnath, Bhimashankar, Kashi Vishwanath, Trimbakeshwar, Vaidyanath, Nageshwar, Rameshwaram, Grishneshwar, Amarnath, Swambhu, Jyotirlinga

**Preamble:** A Jyotirlinga is a sacred shrine dedicated to Lord Shiva, representing him as a "pillar of light" (Jyoti meaning light, Linga meaning symbol). There are twelve principal Jyotirlingas in India, believed to be self-manifested (Swayambhu) divine manifestations of Shiva,

and visiting them is considered a path to spiritual liberation and purification. Each shrine holds unique myths, stories, and powerful divine energy, attracting millions of devotees annually for pilgrimage (Yatra). A Jyotirlinga (or Jyotirlingam) means the "radiant sign of

Lord Shiva," combining Sanskrit words Jyoti (light/radiance) and linga (symbol/mark) to represent Shiva as a pillar of infinite light, with twelve principal shrines in India marking his manifestations. These sacred

temples are considered Shiva's self-manifested homes, holding immense spiritual power and significance in Hinduism, often linked to legends where Shiva appeared as a column of light to test gods.



Figure-1: Lord Shiva.

### Meaning & Symbolism

- Jyoti (ज्योति): Light, radiance, flame, effulgence.
- Linga (लिङ्ग): A symbolic representation, mark, or sign of the divine, specifically Shiva.
- Together: A radiant sign or column of light, symbolizing Shiva's limitless, formless, and all-pervading divine energy.

**Origin Legend (from Shiva Purana):** Brahma and Vishnu argued over supremacy; Shiva appeared as a massive, endless pillar of light (Jyotirlinga) to test them. He challenged them to find its beginning or end; Brahma lied about finding the end, while Vishnu admitted defeat. Enraged by Brahma's falsehood, Shiva revealed himself, blessing Vishnu and cursing Brahma, establishing the Jyotirlingas as sacred sites.

**The Twelve Jyotirlingas:** There are 12 traditionally recognized Jyotirlinga shrines across India, each a powerful center of worship for Lord Shiva. Examples include Somnath, Mallikarjuna, Mahakaleshwar, Omkareshwar, Kedarnath, Bhimashankar, Kashi Vishwanath, Trimbakeshwar, Vaidyanath, Nageshwar, Rameshwaram, and Grishneshwar.

**Swayambhu** (or Svayambhu) is a Sanskrit term meaning "self-born" or "self-existent," used in Hinduism and Buddhism for deities like Lord Shiva (self-created) and

referring to a significant ancient Buddhist stupa in Kathmandu, Nepal, called Swayambhunath, the "self-arising" one. Essentially, it denotes something that comes into being naturally, without a creator. Key aspects of Mahadev's history and significance: Swayambhu: The term "Swayambhu" signifies that Shiva is self-created, not born from any other being. Eternal Existence: Mahadev is believed to have existed before the universe and will continue to exist after its dissolution.

### The 12 Dwadasha Jyotirlingas

1. **Somnath (Gujarat):** Somnath Temple is a Hindu temple, located in Prabhas Patan, Veraval, in Gujarat, India. It is one of the most sacred pilgrimage sites the Tirtha Kshetra for Hindus and is the first among the twelve jyotirlinga shrines of Shiva. Somnath refers primarily to the Somnath Temple, a highly revered Hindu pilgrimage site in Prabhas Patan, Gujarat, known as the first of the twelve Jyotirlingas dedicated to Lord Shiva, situated on the Arabian Sea coast, famous for its historical significance, resilience through destruction and rebuilding, and stunning architecture featuring a black Shiva Lingam. It's a major spiritual destination attracting pilgrims year-round, especially in cooler months (Nov-Feb).





Figure-2: Somnath Jyotirlinga [Deity, Gujarat State and Somnath Temple].

#### Key Aspects

**Location:** Prabhas Patan (near Veraval) in the Gir Somnath district, Gujarat, India, on the coast of the Arabian Sea.

**Significance:** The first of the 12 Jyotirlinga shrines of Lord Shiva, making it one of the holiest sites for Hindus.

**Temple Features:** A beautiful structure with intricate carvings, housing a large black Shiva Lingam.

**History:** Repeatedly destroyed and reconstructed, symbolizing unbroken spiritual essence.

**Pilgrimage:** A major Tirth Kshetra (pilgrimage center) with daily prayers, Aarti, and a light & sound show.

Somnath is famous for the Somnath Temple, one of India's most sacred pilgrimage sites, revered as the first of the twelve Jyotirlingas dedicated to Lord Shiva, known for its stunning architecture, resilient history of destruction and reconstruction, and its location at the Triveni Sangam (confluence of three rivers) on the Arabian Sea coast, making it a vital spot for spiritual significance and rich history.

It is unclear when the first version of the Somnath temple was built, with estimates varying between the early centuries of the 1st millennium and about the 9th century

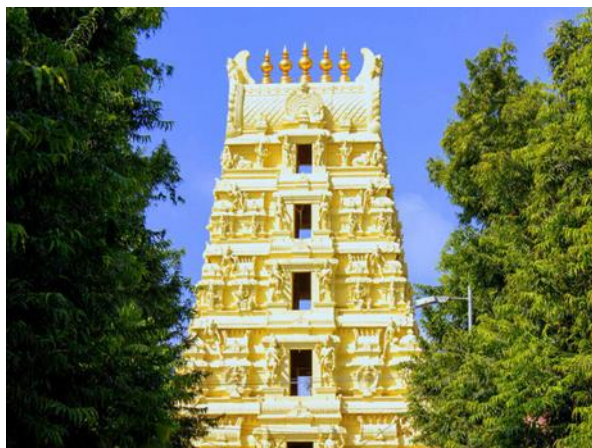
CE. Various texts, including the Mahabharata and Bhagavata Purana, mention a tirtha (pilgrimage site) at Prabhas Patan on the coastline of Saurashtra, where the later temple was, but archaeology has not found traces of an early temple, though there was a settlement there. The temple was reconstructed several times in the past after repeated destruction by multiple Muslim invaders and rulers, notably starting with an attack by Mahmud Ghazni in January 1026.

#### 2. Mallikarjuna (Srisailem, Andhra Pradesh)

Mallikarjuna Swamy Temple or Srisailem Temple is a Hindu temple dedicated to the deities Shiva and Parvati, located at Srisailem in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. It is significant to the Hindu sects of both Shaivism and Shaktism as this temple is referred to as one of the twelve Jyotirlingas of Shiva and as one of the fifty two Shakta pithas, centres of the Hindu goddess. Shiva is worshiped as Mallikarjuna and is represented by the lingam. Mallikarjuna refers primarily to the sacred Mallikarjuna Temple in Srisailem, Andhra Pradesh, a major pilgrimage site for Hindus, significant as one of the twelve Jyotirlingas of Shiva and one of the eighteen Shakti Peethas, uniquely combining both Shaivite and Shakti worship, located amidst the Nallamala Hills and the Krishna River.







**Figure-3: Mallikarjuna Jyotirlinga [Deity, Andhra Pradesh State & Mallikarjuna Temple].**

The name also refers to other significant Shiva temples, like the intricate Chalukyan-era temple in Badami, Karnataka, and the Hoysala temple in Basaralu, Mandya. Sri Bhramaramba Mallikarjuna Swamy Temple, Srisailem:

**Significance:** The only temple in India that is both a Jyotirlinga (Shiva) and a Shakti Peetha (Parvati as Bhramaramba).

**Deities:** Lord Shiva (Mallikarjuna) and Goddess Parvati (Bhramaramba).

**Legends:** Lord Shiva appeared as Arjuna, and Goddess Parvati as Mallika (jasmine), hence the name. Another legend involves Parvati as Bhramaramba (a thousand bees) slaying a demon.

**Location:** Nestled in the Nallamala Hills on the banks of the Krishna River, within a tiger reserve.

**Special Feature:** The local Chenchu tribe has special access, and all castes can enter the sanctum for worship.

**Other Notable Temples:** Mallikarjuna Temple, Badami (Karnataka): Known for its detailed Chalukyan

architecture, intricate carvings, and pillars depicting gods and mythical creatures. Mallikarjuna Temple, Basaralu (Karnataka): A Hoysala-era temple built around 1234 AD, protected by the ASI.

His consort Parvati is depicted as Bhramaramba. Mallikarjuna refers primarily to the sacred Mallikarjuna Temple in Srisailem, Andhra Pradesh, a major pilgrimage site for Hindus, significant as one of the twelve Jyotirlingas of Shiva and one of the eighteen Shakti Peethas, uniquely combining both Shaivite and Shakti worship, located amidst the Nallamala Hills and the Krishna River. The name also refers to other significant Shiva temples, like the intricate Chalukyan-era temple in Badami, Karnataka, and the Hoysala temple in Basaralu, Mandya.

### 3. Mahakaleshwar (Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh):

Mahakaleshwar Jyotirlinga is a Hindu temple dedicated to Shiva and is one of the twelve Jyotirlingas, shrines which are said to be the most sacred abodes of Shiva. It is located in the ancient city of Ujjain in the state of Madhya Pradesh, India. The temple is situated on the side of the holy river Shipra.





**Figure-4: Mahakaleshwar Jyotirlinga [Deity, Madhya Pradesh State, Bhasma Aarti & Mahakaleshwar Temple].**

The presiding deity, Shiva in the lingam form is believed to be Swayambhu, deriving currents of power (Shakti) from within itself as against the other images and lingams that are ritually established and invested with mantra-shakti. Madhya Pradesh has two Jyotirlingas, the second one, Omkareshwar Jyotirlinga, is situated about 140 km south of Mahakaleshwar Jyotirlinga. Mahakaleshwar Bhasma Aarti is a unique, sacred morning ritual at the Mahakaleshwar Temple in Ujjain, India, where the Shiva Lingam is bathed and smeared with sacred ash (Bhasma) to symbolize the cycle of life, death, and impermanence, connecting devotees to Lord Shiva's transcendental nature, featuring chanting mantras, incense, and bells, creating an intense spiritual atmosphere before sunrise, and requires advance booking and adherence to strict dress codes for attendees. Mahakaleshwar Temple's specialty lies in being one of the twelve Jyotirlingas, featuring a unique Swayambhu (self-manifested) Shiva Lingam, and hosting the famous Bhasma Aarti (ash ritual) at dawn, symbolizing the cycle of creation and death, offering devotees spiritual liberation (moksha) from worldly cycles. It's dedicated to 4. Lord Shiva as Mahakal, the ruler of time and death, making Ujjain a powerful spiritual center, especially on the banks of the Shipra River.

#### Key Specialties

**One of Twelve Jyotirlingas:** It's a highly sacred site, representing Shiva's cosmic energy.

**Swayambhu Lingam:** The idol is believed to have manifested on its own, not installed by humans.

**Bhasma Aarti:** A unique dawn ritual where the deity is anointed with sacred ash, signifying impermanence and Shiva's mastery over death.

**Lord of Time (Mahakal):** The name "Mahakal" signifies Shiva's control over time (Kaal) and death, offering liberation from rebirth.

**Spiritual Power Centre:** Ujjain, with Mahakaleshwar, is considered a major centre for spiritual learning and a place to attain moksha.

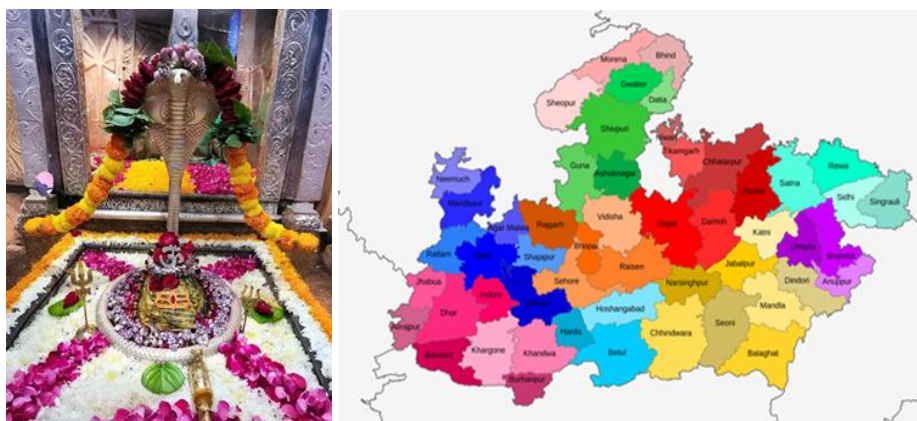
**Location:** Situated on the banks of the holy Shipra River.

#### Architectural & Cultural Aspects:

**Architecture:** Blends Maratha, Bhumija, and Chalukya styles, featuring intricate carvings.

**Rich History:** Legends say Brahma established it, and it's a significant religious site mentioned in Puranas.

**Omkareshwar (Madhya Pradesh):** Omkareshwar is a sacred Hindu pilgrimage town in Madhya Pradesh, India, famous for the Omkareshwar Jyotirlinga, one of the twelve revered shrines dedicated to Lord Shiva, situated on a riverine island shaped like the holy symbol "OM" in the Narmada River. Omkareshwar Temple is a Hindu temple dedicated to Shiva, located in Mandhata, nearby Khandwa city in Khandwa district of the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh.





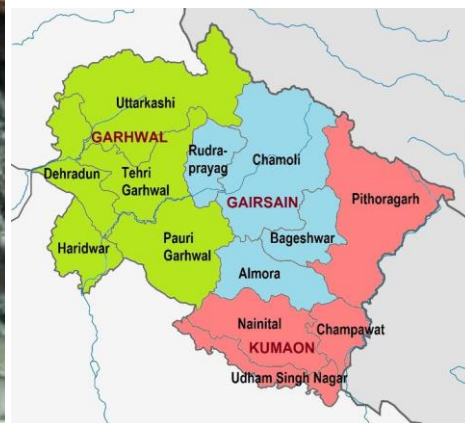


**Figure-5: Omkareshwar Jyotirlinga [Deity, Madhya Pradesh State & Omkareshwar Temple].**

It is one of the 12 revered Jyotirlinga shrines of Shiva. It is on an island called Mandhata, near Khandwa city in the Narmada River at Khandwa district in Madhya Pradesh, India; the shape of the island is said to be like the Devanagari ॐ symbol. There are two main temples of Shiva here, one to Omkareshwar (whose name means "Lord of Omkara or the Lord of the Om sound") located in the island and one to Mamleshwar (Amalleshwar) (whose name means "Immortal Lord" or "lord of the Immortals or Devas") located on the southern bank of the Narmada River on the mainland. Madhya Pradesh has

two Jyotirlingas, the second one, Mahakaleshwar Jyotirlinga, is situated about 140 km north of Omkareshwar Jyotirlinga. It's a significant spiritual site with multiple temples, considered a major religious destination for pilgrims seeking Shiva's blessings.

**5. Kedarnath (Uttarakhand):** Kedarnath is a town and Nagar Panchayat in Rudraprayag district of Uttarakhand, India, known primarily for the Kedarnath Temple. It is approximately 86.5 kilometres from Rudraprayag, the district headquarters.



**Figure-6: Kedarnath Jyotirlinga [Deity, Uttarakhand State & Kedarnath Temple].**

Kedarnath is the most remote of the four Chota Char Dham pilgrimage sites. It is located in the Himalayas, about 3,583 m (11,755 ft) above sea level near the Chorabari Glacier, which is the source of the Mandakini River. The town is flanked by snow-capped peaks, most prominently the Kedarnath Mountain. The nearest road head is at Gaurikund about 16 km away. The town suffered extensive destruction during June 2013 from the flash floods caused by torrential rains in Uttarakhand. The "real story" of Kedarnath blends ancient Hindu mythology with historical events, centering on the Pandava brothers' quest for atonement after the Mahabharata war, where Lord Shiva, disguised as a bull, left his hump at the site, forming the iconic Jyotirlinga; historically, it's a revered shrine for Lord Shiva, significant for the philosophical teachings of Adi Shankaracharya, and notable for the devastating 2013 flash floods that tested the temple's resilience.

#### Mythological Origins (Pandava Legend)

**Seeking Forgiveness:** After the Kurukshetra war, the Pandava brothers felt immense guilt for killing their kin and sought Lord Shiva for redemption.

**Shiva's Evasion:** Shiva, wishing them to undergo penance, disguised himself as a bull (Nandi) to avoid them.

**The Chase & Disappearance:** The Pandavas tracked the bull, and Bhima, the strongest brother, caught its hump as it vanished into the ground at Kedarnath.

**The Hump Lingam:** The hump remained, forming the triangular Jyotirlinga (a form of Shiva) worshipped today; the rest of Shiva's body appeared as five other shrines (Panch Kedar).

#### Historical & Spiritual Significance

**Adi Shankaracharya:** The ancient temple is linked to the philosopher Adi Shankaracharya (8th Century), who revitalized this sacred site.

**Spiritual Power:** Legends say the temple remained buried under snow for centuries, protected by divine presence, with a lamp burning continuously for 400 years.

**6. Bhimashankar (Maharashtra):** The Bhimashankar Linga refers to the sacred self-manifested (swayambhu) Shiva Linga at the ancient Bhimashankar Temple, one of the 12 revered Jyotirlingas in India, located in the lush Sahyadri hills of Maharashtra, known for its spiritual significance, intricate carvings, and surrounding natural beauty, attracting devotees seeking blessings and a connection with Lord Shiva. Bhimashankar Temple is a Hindu temple dedicated to Shiva situated in its eponymous village, Bhimashankar, in Pune district of Maharashtra.

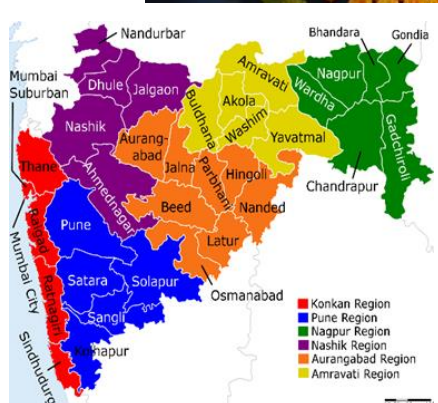


Figure-7: Bhimashankar Jyotirlinga [Deity, Maharashtra State & Bhimashankar Temple]



It is a key pilgrimage centre and contains one of the 12 Jyotirlingas. The temple's Shiva lingam is one of the five Jyotirlingas of Maharashtra. The mandir is situated on a mountain, 110 kilometers away from Pune. The temple's vicinity has rare plant and animal species. The mandir is located in Khed taluka, in the Bhimashankar forest range.

The Bhima River originates from the Bhimashankar village, and the hills of the Manmad village are present near it, there are old rock carvings of the God Bhimashankar, Bhootings and Amba-Ambika on these hills.

Yes, the Shiva Lingam is often interpreted as a phallic symbol representing Lord Shiva, signifying creation, fertility, and cosmic energy, but it also symbolizes the formless (nirguna) aspect of the divine, with some traditions seeing it as a pillar of light or a cosmic egg (Brahma Anda), distinct from a mere sexual organ; it's worshipped with the Yoni (base) as the union of Shiva and Shakti (divine energy).

#### Different Interpretations

**Phallic Symbol:** It represents Shiva as the source of creation, the "inducer" of life, and is often paired with the Yoni (symbolizing Shakti/Parvati) to show the cosmic union of masculine and feminine energies for creation.

**Symbol of Formlessness:** The Sanskrit word "Lingam" means "symbol" or "mark," pointing to something formless, representing Shiva as the infinite, formless reality.

**Cosmic Pillar/Egg:** Some texts describe it as a pillar of light (Jyotirlinga) or a cosmic egg (Brahma Anda), signifying the origin of the universe, devoid of attributes.

**Energy Containment:** Its shape is also seen as a powerful structure, like that of a nuclear reactor, designed to contain immense energy.

**Key Takeaway:** While visually resembling a phallus and functioning as a potent symbol of creation and generative power in a non-sexualized, functional sense (akin to ancient views of the body), the Lingam's primary meaning transcends a simple sexual organ, representing the abstract, formless, and infinite nature of the divine.

#### 7. Kashi Vishwanath (Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh):

Kashi Vishwanath Temple is a Hindu temple dedicated to Shiva. It is located in Vishwanath Gali, in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India. The temple is a Hindu pilgrimage site and is one of the twelve Jyotirlinga shrines.



**Figure-8: Kashi Vishwanath Jyotirlinga [Deity, Uttar Pradesh State & Kashi Vishwanath Temple].**



The presiding deity is known by the names Vishwanath and Vishweshwara (IAST: *Viśvanātha* and *Viśveśvara*), meaning Lord of the Universe. The original temple, called the Adi Vishveshwar Temple, was demolished by Mohammad of Ghor during his invasion of India. Subsequently, the temple was rebuilt by Man Singh I and Todar Mal under the emperor Akbar. According to several historical accounts, the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb ordered the demolition of the Hindu temple in 1669. Subsequently, in 1678, the Gyanvapi Mosque was built on its site, but Hindu pilgrims continued to visit the remnants of the temple. The current structure was constructed on an adjacent site by the Maratha ruler Ahilyabai Holkar of Indore in 1780.

Kashi Vishwanath Temple is famous because it houses one of the twelve Jyotirlingas, the holiest shrines to Lord Shiva, is located in the sacred city of Varanasi on the Ganges River, and holds deep mythological significance as Shiva's eternal abode, believed to grant liberation

(moksha) to devotees, attracting pilgrims and saints for centuries for its spiritual power and historical importance. The Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi, India, is a highly revered Hindu shrine and one of the 12 Jyotirlingas, dedicated to Lord Shiva, whose form here is known as Vishwanath or Vishweshwara, representing the light form of the deity, a central pilgrimage site on the banks of the Ganges River.

#### 8. Trimbakeshwar (Nashik, Maharashtra):

Trimbakeshwar Shiva Temple is an ancient Hindu temple in the town of Trimbak, in the Trimbakeshwar tehsil, in the Nashik District of Maharashtra, India, 28 km from the city of Nashik and 40 km from Nashik road. It is dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva and is one of the twelve jyotirlingas where the Hindu genealogy registers at Trimbakeshwar, Maharashtra are kept. The origin of the sacred Godavari River is near Trimbak. Several Hindu rituals are carried out in Trimbakeshwar, for that pilgrims travel from all over India.

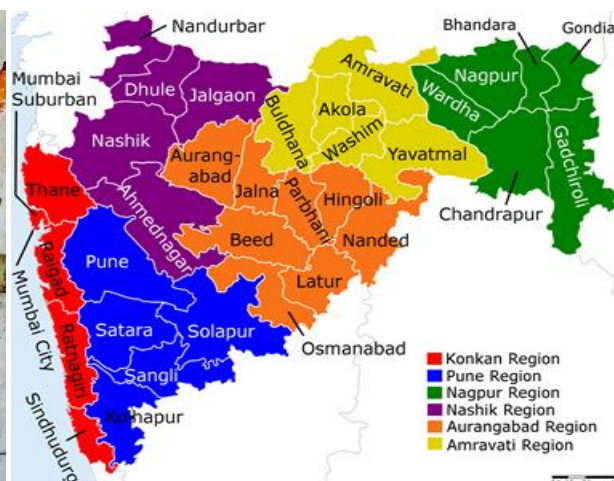


Figure-9: Trimbakeshwar Jyotirlinga (Deity, Maharashtra State & Trimbakeshwar Temple].

The Kusavarta kunda (sacred pond) in the temple premises, built by Shrimant Sardar Raosaheb Parnerkar, who was the Fadnavis of Indore State, is the source of the Godavari River, the second longest river in India. A bust of Sardar Fadnavis and his wife can be seen on the

edge of the kunda. The current temple was built by Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao after it was destroyed by Mughal ruler Aurangzeb. Trimbakeshwar is famous for its ancient Jyotirlinga temple dedicated to Lord Shiva, unique for housing the three deities—Brahma, Vishnu,

and Shiva—in one Shivalinga, and as the origin of the sacred Godavari River. It's a major pilgrimage site for specific rituals like Kaal Sarp Dosh Puja and Narayan Nagbali to resolve ancestral issues and karmic debts, drawing devotees for spiritual cleansing and liberation (moksha).

#### Key Highlights

**Jyotirlinga:** One of the twelve Jyotirlingas, featuring a three-faced Shivalinga representing the divine trinity (Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh).

**Godavari River Origin:** The sacred Kushavarta Kund within the temple complex is considered the source of the Godavari River, making dips here highly purifying.

**Spiritual Rituals:** Renowned for powerful sankalp (rituals) for Kaal Sarp Dosh, Narayan Nagbali, and Tripindi Shraddh to remove curses and aid ancestors.

**Architecture:** A beautiful black stone temple built by the Peshwas, featuring intricate carvings and a strong spiritual ambiance.

**Festivals:** A significant location for the Kumbh Mela and Mahashivratri.

**Why People Visit:** To worship the unique three-faced Shivalinga. To perform specific Pujas for astrological remedies and ancestral peace. To take holy dips in the Godavari at its source for spiritual purification. To attain moksha (liberation).

**9. Vaidyanath (Deoghar, Jharkhand):** Deoghar is home to a beautiful complex of 22 temples of which the biggest and the tallest at 72 ft. is the Temple of Baidyanath which houses one of the 12 revered Jyotirlingas in the country. Deoghar is situated at a distance of approx. 243kms from the state capital Ranchi. It is the most sacred place in Jharkhand. Baidyanath Temple (IAST: Baidyānath) is a Hindu temple dedicated to Shiva. It is located in Deoghar, in the Santhal Parganas division of the Indian state of Jharkhand. The temple complex comprises the central shrine of Baba Baidyanath along with 21 additional temples. It is significant to the Hindu sects of Shaivism as this temple is referred to as one of the twelve Jyotirlingas. Baidyanath refers to two prominent entities in India: A revered Jyotirlinga temple in Deoghar, Jharkhand, dedicated to Lord Shiva, and a historic, trusted Ayurvedic medicine company (Shree Baidyanath Ayurved Bhawan) founded in 1917, known for producing natural herbal remedies, oils, tonics, and wellness products. Both hold significant cultural and health importance, with the temple drawing pilgrims and the brand offering traditional Indian healthcare solutions. Baidyanath Temple (Baba Baidyanath Dham).

**Significance:** One of the twelve Jyotirlingas (most sacred abodes of Shiva) and also considered a Shaktipeeth (shrine of Goddess Shakti).

**Location:** Deoghar, Jharkhand, India.

**Worship:** A major pilgrimage site for Hindus, attracting devotees seeking blessings from Lord Shiva.



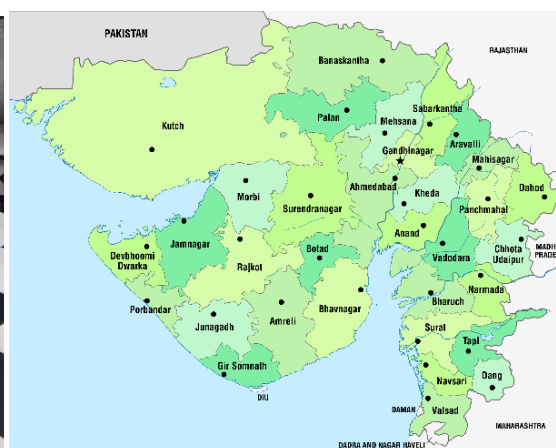
**Figure-10: Vaidyanath Jyotirlinga [Deity, Jharkhand State & Vaidyanath Temple].**



**10. Nageshwar (Dwaraka, Gujarat):** Nageshwar refers primarily to the sacred Nageshwar Jyotirlinga Temple near Dwarka, Gujarat, one of the 12 Jyotirlingas dedicated to Lord Shiva, symbolizing protection from poisons and snakes, featuring a large Shiva statue, and drawing devotees for its spiritual significance and location on the coast.

It's also associated with Jain Tirthas and potentially other local shrines, but the Dwarka temple is the most prominent site. Nageshwar Temple is a Hindu temple dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva located on Dwarka, Gujarat, India. It is one of the legendary temples mentioned in the Shiva Purana and one of the twelve Jyotirlingas. The Nageshwar Lingam is one of the 12 sacred Jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva, located near Dwarka

in Gujarat, India, known as the "Lord of Snakes," believed to protect devotees from poison and snakebites, with its temple featuring a prominent Shiva statue and a self-existent (Swayambhu) lingam often resembling a Tri-mukhi Rudraksha. This ancient shrine, situated on the Saurashtra coast, is a significant pilgrimage site, especially during festivals like Maha Shivaratri. Nageshwar refers primarily to the sacred Nageshwar Jyotirlinga Temple near Dwarka, Gujarat, one of the 12 Jyotirlingas dedicated to Lord Shiva, symbolizing protection from poisons and snakes, featuring a large Shiva statue, and drawing devotees for its spiritual significance and location on the coast. It's also associated with Jain Tirthas and potentially other local shrines, but the Dwarka temple is the most prominent site.



**Figure-11: Nageshwar Jyotirlinga [Deity, Gujarat State & Nageshwar Temple].**

**Key Aspects of Nageshwar Jyotirlinga (Dwarka):**

**Deity:** Lord Shiva (as Nageshwar/Lord of Serpents).

**Significance:** One of the 12 self-manifested (Swayambhu) Jyotirlingas, believed to grant protection from venom and harm.

**Location:** On the Saurashtra coast between Gomati Dwarka and Beyt Dwarka.

**Features:** An underground sanctum with the linga and a 25-meter-tall statue of Lord Shiva in a meditative pose.

**Stories:** Legends involve Lord Shiva slaying a demon (Daru) and establishing the linga to reside there, protecting devotees, notes this source.

**Other Mentions**

**Nageshwar Parshwanath Tirth:** A significant Jain pilgrimage site (Tirth) dedicated to Lord Parshvanatha, highlighting the term's use in other faiths too, notes this website. In essence, "Nageshwar" most commonly points to this vital Hindu pilgrimage site in Gujarat, deeply rooted in mythology and devotion

**11. Rameshwaram (Tamil Nadu):** Rameshwar (or Rameswaram) primarily refers to a significant Hindu pilgrimage town in Tamil Nadu, India, famous for the sacred Ramanathaswamy Temple, a Jyotirlinga dedicated

to Lord Shiva, located on Pamban Island. It's known for its ornate architecture, sacred bathing spots (Tirthams), and being a spiritual hub connecting to Sri Lanka, also serving as a popular destination with historical temples like the Uma Swayambhu Rameshwaram Temple in Karnataka, and is also a common Indian name for notable individuals like spymaster Rameshwaram Nath Kao or artist Rameshwaram Broota. The Rameshwaram Lingam refers to the sacred Shiva Lingam at the Ramanathaswamy Temple in Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu, one of India's 12 Jyotirlingas, installed by Lord Rama after his return from Lanka for purification from the sin of killing Ravana. It's unique because two lingams reside in the sanctum: the sand-made Ramalingam, worshipped by Rama, and the stone Vishwalingam, brought by Hanuman from Kashi, with devotees first praying to the Vishwalingam as per Rama's instruction. Devotees are

traditionally forbidden from touching the main lingams due to their sacred origins.

#### Key Features & Significance

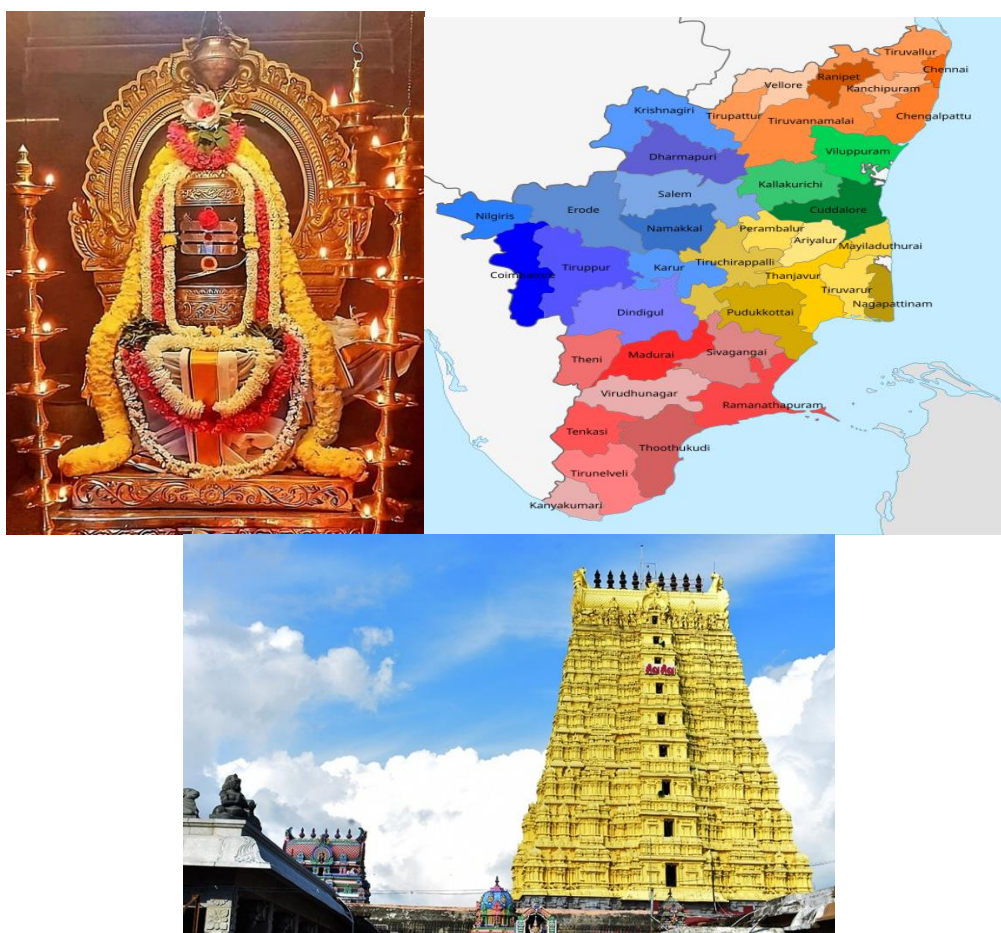
**Deities:** Dedicated to Ramanathaswamy (Shiva) and Parvatavardhini (Parvati).

**Architecture:** Famous for its incredibly long, ornate corridors with beautifully sculpted pillars, showcasing classic

Tamil style.

**Spiritual Importance:** A major pilgrimage site, believed to wash away sins and grant salvation (moksha). It's one of the twelve Jyotirlingas.

**Location:** On Pamban Island, connected to the mainland by the iconic Pamban Bridge.



**Figure-12: Rameshwaram Jyotirlinga [Deity, Tamilnadu State & Rameshwaram Temple].**

#### Visiting Information

**Timings:** Generally open from 5 AM to 1 PM and 3 PM to 9 PM.

**Dress Code:** Strict dress code applies; avoid jeans, leggings, or shorts; traditional attire like dhoti/pyjama for men and sarees/salwars for women are preferred.

**Best Time to Visit:** Winter (October-March) offers pleasant weather for sightseeing.

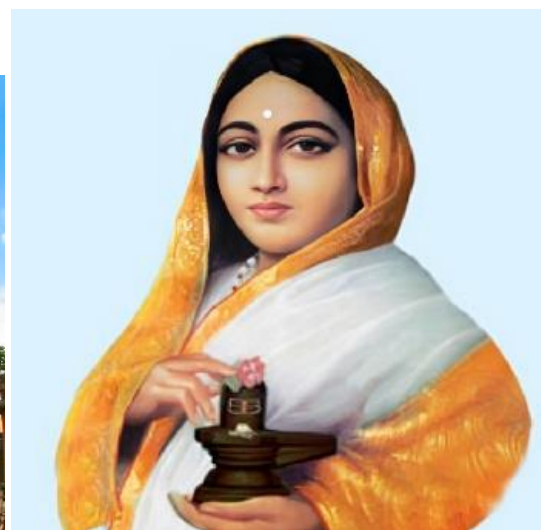
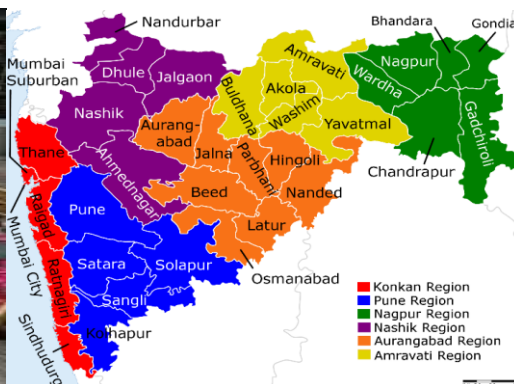
**Pilgrimage Connection:** It's considered the Treta Yuga representative among the four Dhams (Badrinath, Puri, Dwarka, Rameswaram).

**12. Grishneshwar (Aurangabad, Maharashtra):** Grishneshwar Jyotirlinga is a Hindu temple of Shiva



in Verul village of Aurangabad district, Maharashtra, India. It is one of the 12 Jyotirlinga mandirs. The mandir is a national protected site, one and a half kilometers away from the Ellora Caves, 30 kilometres (19 miles) north-west of the city

Aurangabad, and 300 kilometres (190 miles) east-northeast far from Mumbai. Grishneshwar is mentioned in the Shiva Purana, the Skanda Purana, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.



**Figure-13: Grishneshwar Jyotirlinga [Deity, Maharashtra State & Grishneshwar Temple, Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar].**

Ghushmeshwar (or Grishneshwar) refers to a significant Lord Shiva temple, considered by devotees as the 12th and final Jyotirlinga of Shiva, with two prominent locations: one near Ellora Caves in Maharashtra (Maharashtra's Grishneshwar) and another in Shiwar, Rajasthan (Rajasthan's Ghushmeshwar), both dedicated to Lord Shiva and connected to legends of a devoted woman named Ghushma, where Shiva appeared as the Jyotirlinga to bless her. Grishneshwar Jyotirlinga is famous as the twelfth and final Jyotirlinga dedicated to Lord Shiva, known for its deep spiritual significance, connection to the legend of the devoted woman Ghushma (or Kusuma) whose faith brought her son back to life, and its location near the Ellora Caves in Maharashtra, making it a major pilgrimage site. The temple, also called Ghushmeshwar, features beautiful red stone architecture with intricate carvings and is revered for granting wishes and divine blessings to true devotees.

Key aspects of its fame

The Last Jyotirlinga: Completes the sacred circuit of all 12 Jyotirlingas.

Legend of Ghushma: A tale of unwavering devotion where Lord Shiva appeared to restore her son's life, residing there as Grishneshwar.

Location: Situated in Verul village, near the famous Ellora Caves, making it a popular spiritual and historical destination.

Spiritual Significance: Believed to bless devotees with fulfillment, peace, and the granting of sincere wishes.

Architecture: Features a five-tiered spire, red stone carvings, and beautiful pillars depicting various deities and myths, noted as India's smallest Jyotirlinga temple.

Significance

- Divine Manifestation: They are believed to be spots where Lord Shiva appeared as a column of light.

- **Spiritual Cleansing:** Pilgrims believe visiting these shrines washes away sins and karmic debts.
- **Moksha (Liberation):** Completing the pilgrimage to all twelve is thought to grant spiritual liberation.
- **Energy & Presence:** Each site is considered a powerful source of Shiva's divine energy, offering blessings, peace, and strength.

**Amarnath** ice formation is a sacred, naturally formed Swayambhu (self-manifested) Shiva Linga, but it is not

counted among the traditional 12 Jyotirlingas. While Amarnath is a major pilgrimage site with a divine ice lingam, Jyotirlingas specifically refer to 12 ancient, powerful manifestations of light (Jyoti) connected to cosmic energy, with Amarnath considered a highly revered, separate holy place. Amarnath Temple is a Hindu shrine located in the Pahalgam tehsil of Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir, India.



**Figure-14: Amarnath Shivlinga, Cave & Jammu-Kashmir State.**

It is a cave situated at an altitude of 3,888 m (12,756 ft), about 168 km from Anantnag city, the district headquarters, 141 km (88 mi) from Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, reached through either Sonamarg or Pahalgam. It is an important shrine in Hinduism.

**Key Differences:** Amarnath: A naturally formed ice stalagmite, waxing and waning with the moon, considered Lord Shiva's manifestation in a cave.

**Jyotirlingas:** A specific group of 12 powerful, self-manifested (Swayambhu) divine light (Jyoti) pillars/forms, each with distinct locations and legends (e.g., Somnath, Kashi Vishwanath).

#### **Why Amarnath is Special (but not a Jyotirlinga)**

It's a powerful Swayambhu (self-born) lingam, a direct manifestation of Shiva, just like the Jyotirlingas are. It's a hugely significant pilgrimage (Yatra) for Hindus, attracting thousands annually. The cave itself holds spiritual importance as the place where Shiva revealed the secret of immortality to Parvati. So, while it shares the "Swayambhu" quality and immense sanctity, Amarnath falls outside the established list of the Twelve Jyotirlingas. Amarnath isn't a Jyotirlinga because Jyotirlingas are specific, ancient shrines representing the infinite light of Shiva, traditionally identified as 12 prominent, established temples (like Somnath, Kashi Vishwanath) with stone lingams, whereas the Amarnath Shivling is a unique, naturally formed ice stalagmite that waxes and wanes with the moon, a swayambhu (self-manifested) form of Shiva within a natural cave, not one of the designated 12 Jyotirlinga sites.

#### **Key Differences**

**Composition:** Jyotirlingas are typically stone structures, while the Amarnath lingam is ice.

**Formation:** Jyotirlingas are man-made shrines with divine presence; Amarnath's lingam forms naturally from melting snow and water drips.

**Nature:** Amarnath is revered as a Swayambhu (self-created) symbol of Shiva, a unique manifestation, not part of the traditional 12 Jyotirlinga list.

**Location:** The 12 Jyotirlingas are fixed, prominent temples across India, while Amarnath is a sacred cave in the Himalayas. In essence, Amarnath is a powerful, naturally occurring manifestation of Lord Shiva, but its temporary, ice-based form and cave setting distinguish it from the established, permanent Jyotirlinga temples.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Each Jyotirlinga represents a unique aspect of Shiva across time and space, anchoring divine energy on Earth. **Scientific Insight:** These 12 sites are located on powerful geopathic energy lines of India. Ancient sages identified them as energy centres that balance spiritual vibrations, much like chakras in the body.

**Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar** [Ahilyabai Holkar; 31 May 1725 – 13 August 1795), also spelled Ahalya Bai, was the Rajamata and later the ruling queen of Indore within the Maratha Empire], the pious Maratha queen, significantly contributed to numerous Jyotirlingas, including Somnath, Kashi Vishwanath, Grishneshwar, Trimbakeshwar, and Omkareshwar, by undertaking extensive repairs and reconstructions after their destruction by invaders. She rebuilt the old Somnath temple in 1783, and some believe the original Jyotirlinga



was housed in the temple she built there, as recorded by K.M. Munshi, a freedom fighter and VHP co-founder. Her efforts restored many sacred sites, making them accessible and glorious again for devotees.

#### Key Jyotirlingas Associated with Ahilyabai

- Somnath (Gujarat): She rebuilt the temple and established a new idol, with some believing the original Jyotirlinga was secured in her temple.
- Kashi Vishwanath (Varanasi): Reconstructed the temple after its destruction by Aurangzeb.
- Grishneshwar (Aurangabad): Renovated this Jyotirlinga as well.
- Trimbakeshwar (Nashik): Undertook major restoration work in the 18th century.
- Omkareshwar (Madhya Pradesh): Rebuilt this important site.
- Aundha Nagnath (Maharashtra): Renovated this destroyed Jyotirlinga.

Her Broader Legacy: Ahilyabai's devotion extended beyond Jyotirlingas; she also developed ghats, wells, roads (like from Kolkata to Kashi), dharmashalas (rest houses), and annakshetras (free kitchens) across India's sacred cities (Saptapuri) to support pilgrims and scholars, making her a legendary figure for her piety and public welfare.

#### REFERENCE

1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jyotirlinga>
2. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Svayambhu>