

JYOTIRLINGA



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As per the Shiva Purana, once Brahma and Vishnu had an argument in terms of supremacy of creation. To test them, Shiva pierced the three worlds as a huge endless pillar of light, the jyotirlinga. Vishnu and Brahma split their ways to downwards and upwards respectively to find the end of the light in either directions. Brahma lied that he found out the end, while Vishnu conceded his defeat. Shiva appeared as a second pillar of light and cursed Brahma that he would have no place in ceremonies while Vishnu would be worshipped till the end of eternity. The jyotirlinga is the supreme partless reality, out of which Shiva partly appears.

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The jyothirlinga shrines, thus are places where Shiva appeared as a fiery column of light. Originally there were believed to be 64 jyotirlingas while 12 of them are considered to be very auspicious and holy. Each of the twelve jyotirlinga sites take the name of the presiding deity - each considered a different manifestation of Shiva. At all these sites, the primary image is lingam representing the beginningless and endless Stambha pillar, symbolizing the infinite nature of Lord Shiva.

In most of the Hindu households we can see the kids are taught the below sloka, this gives the list of all the 12 JYOTIRLINGAs with their location.

saurAShTre somanAthaM cha shreешaile mallikArjunam | ujjayinyAM
mahAkAlam~OmkAramamaleshwaram || paralyAM vaidyanAthaM cha
DAkinyAM bheemasha~Nkaram | setubandhe tu rAmeshaM nAgeshaM
dArukAvane || vArANasyAM tu vishveshaM tryambakaM gautameetaTe |
himAlaye tu kedAraM ghrishneshaM cha shivAlaye ||

And it is believed that chanting this sloka containing the list of JYOTIRLINGAs daily will clear all the sins that are done in the past 7 Janmaas including the present..

etAni jyotirli~NgAni sAyaM prAtaH paThennaraH | saptajanmakR^itaM
pApaM smaraNena vinashyati ||

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JYOTIRLINGA 1- Saurashtra Somnath..

Shri Somnath temple enshrines the first of the 12 Aadi jyotirlings of Lord Shiva - Shri Somnath Mahadev, located on the western Saurashtra coast of the Arabian Sea, in the Verval Dist of Gujarat.

The Moon God is said to have been relieved from the curse of his father-in-law Daksha Prajapati by the blessings of the Lord.

This legendary temple known as "the Shrine Eternal" has withstood six-repeated desecrations by the Muslim invaders and rebuilt several times by Hindu kings.

This 7th existing temple is built in Chalukya style of temple architecture reflecting the skills of Gujarat's master masons. The temple's Shikara, is 150 m in height, and has an 8.2-m tall gold flag pole with a Trishul and Damru at the top. The gold Kalash at the top of the Shikara weighs 10 tons .

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Lord Somnath stands resplendently huge dressed in bright silk vastras, with gold kavacham, a gold serpent hood around -covered in huge yellow garlands against a backdrop of gold walls embellished with gems and crevices for Lord Vishnu, Parvati Devi and Brahmaji.

The temple is situated at such a place that there is no land in a straight line between Somnath seashore until Antarctica, such an inscription in Sanskrit is found on the Bāṇastambha or "Arrow Pillar" erected on the sea-protection wall. The Bāṇastambha mentions that it stands at a point on the Indian landmass that is the first point on land in the north to the South Pole at that particular longitude.

The 7pm Aarti for half an hour and the Sound & Light Show "Jai Somnath" between 8 to 9pm is a vibrantly divine spectacle for every devotee who experiences it.

Sardar Shri Vallabhbai Patel is the pioneer of the existing temple hence has a statue dedicated to him opposite the main entrance of the temple.

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JYOTIRLINGA 2 - Srisaile Mallikarjunam..

Srisaile is located in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh.

Once when princess Chandravati was doing meditation at the Kadali Vana in the hills, a Kapila cow was standing under a Bilwa tree and milk was flowing from all of its four udders and was sinking into the ground. This was cow's routine chore everyday. Chandravati dug up that area and found a Swayambhu Sivalinga, it was bright and shining like the sun rays. She prayed at this Jyotirlinga and built a huge temple there. The Lord was very pleased with her, she went to Kailash wind borne and attained Mukti.

Hiranyakashipa, Narada, Pandavas, Sri Ram have prayed the Lord in this holy shrine. Adi Shankara, Akka Mahadevi, Hemareddy Mallamma are some of the great devotees who worshipped Lord Mallikarjuna here.

Sambandhar, Appar and Sundharar have sung one padhikam each on this Lord.

Chatrapati Shivaji has worshipped the Lord here and built a tower on the right side of the temple and also opened a free-meal center.

The presiding deities, Lord Mallikarjuna Swamy is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas and Goddess Bhramaramba Devi is one of the 18 Mahasakthis. Both are self-manifested (Swayambhu) and are in one place which is very rare and only one of its kind.

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The Lord is accessible to each and every devotee and anybody can go into the sanctum sanctorum, touch him and perform Abhishekam and Archana himself to the recitation of Mantras by Archakas.

River Krishna is in the form of Patalaganga (underground spring), devotees take holy dip and go for the Darshan of this Jyotirlinga.

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JYOTIRLINGA 3 - Ujjayinyam Mahaakalam..

Mahakaaleshwar Temple is located in the banks of river Kshirpa in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh. Lord Mahakal is the guardian, patron deity and ruler of this holy city.

Legend says, a five-year old boy 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.

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The temple is a three tiered one, with Lord Mahakal at the lowest level-below the ground. At the middle (ground) level is a temple of Omkareshwar, and over it is a shrine of Nagachandreshwara. This shrine is opened only on Nagapanchami day every year for a day. At the naval point of the earth south facing is Lord Mahakal considered Dakshinamurthi, is the only Jyotirlinga of its kind. This fact has a special significance in the Tantric tradition.

The temple was renovated by various Hindu kings but a part of it was destroyed by Sultan Iltutmish, when he invaded the city during 1234 to 1235. During the 19th century, the Scindia Royal family undertook the responsibility of its restoration.

Bhasma Aarati is a grand elevating experience, one of its kind which is done only in this temple everyday between 4-6am by Naga Sadhus with sacred ash – Bhasma. Since ancient times, this bhasma used to be the fresh and burning hot ash from a funeral pyre, since Lord Shiva is believed to live in and enjoy the atmosphere of cremation ground. However, now, the temple in keeping with modern times, since the last 15 yrs, the aarti is now performed with bhasma made of cow dung (Vibhooti).

Maha Kumbh Mela at Ujjain is conducted once in 12 years, Simhastha 2016 is from 22nd April till 21st May 2016.

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JYOTIRLINGA 4 - Omkaramamaleshwaram

The fourth of the Jyotirlinga “Omkaram Amaleshwar” is situated on the mountain Mandhata and on the banks of river Narmada, in Malva, Madhya Pradesh.

In the past Narada known for his non-stop cosmic travel, visited Vindhya parvat. In his spicy way Narada told Vindhya Parvat about the greatness of Mount Meru. This made Vindhya jealous of Meru and he decided to be bigger than Meru. Vindhya worshipped Lord Shiva to become greater than Meru by practicing severe penance and worshipping parthivlinga (A linga made from physical material) along with Lord Omkareshwar for nearly six months. As a result Lord Shiva was pleased and blessed him with his desired boon of growing, but took a promise that Vindhya will never be a problem to anyone. Vindhya began to grow, but did not keep up his promise. It even obstructed the sun and the moon. All deities approached Sage Agastya who is Vindhya's Guru, for help. Agastya along with his wife came to Vindhya, and convinced him to come back to his normal size and that he would not grow until the sage and his wife returned. They never returned and Vindhya is there as it was when they left.

Contd..2

On a request of all the gods and the sages Lord Shiva made two parts of the lingas. One half is called Omkareshwara and the other Mameshwar or Amareshwar.

This sacred island and the river are shaped like "OM" and that is how it derives its name. It is a natural phenomenon. And is about 2km long and 1km wide. The devotees who go round the temple are blessed because they are doing a Parikrama of Omkara itself.

The walls of the Mameswar temple contains the inscription of the Shiva Mahima Stotra dated 1063 A.D. It is a divine blessing to have a darshan of the Lord here in Nidra between 9-9:30pm.

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JYOTIRLINGA 5 - Paralyam Vaidyanatham..

Parali is in Beed district, Maharashtra. The presiding deity Lord Vaidyanath is east facing with temple doors in the south and north directions.

There are several stories connected to this temple such as the story of Satyavan and Savitri which is believed to have taken place at Parali. Another story is that of Lord Vishnu helping the gods to obtain nectar from this region. There is also the legend from the Ramayana about Ravana halting here while on his way to Lanka with the Shivalinga. It is said that to be able to relieve himself, Ravana asked a herdsman boy to hold the Shivalinga for a while. However, the boy was unable to do so for long and placed it on earth, which is how the jyotirlinga happens to be here. The belief is that Shiva decided to reside here in the form of Vaidyanatheshwar. Even the story of Markandeyanugraha is said to have taken place at Parali.

It is believed that the temple belongs to the Yadava period that goes back to 12th or 13th century CE. There are records stating that the temple was renovated in the year 1706. The aesthetical and architectural beauty of the temple is enhanced with some ponds around the temple which too have religious significance. One of them is Harihara Teerth, the water of which is poured over the Shivalinga every Monday. This place defines the assimilation of the Shaiva and Vaishnava sects.

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JYOTIRLINGA 6-Dakinyam Bhimasankaram..

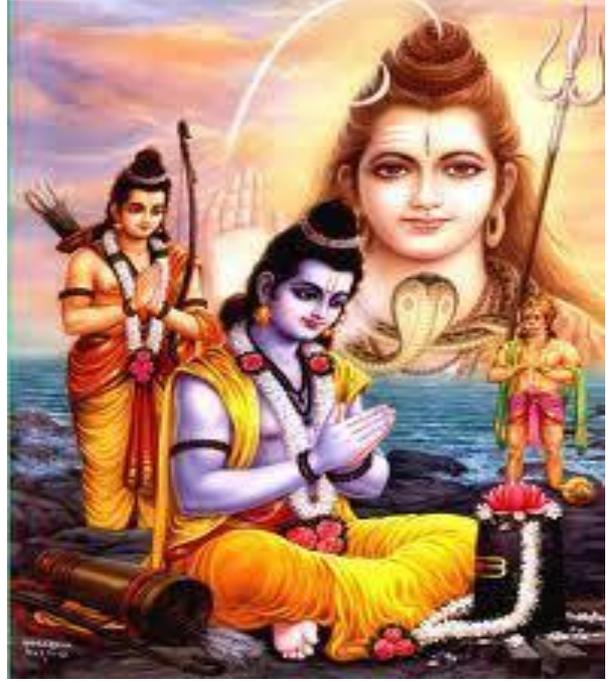
Bhimashankar Temple is on the Sahyadri hills near Pune, Maharashtra.

Eons ago in the dense forests of Dakini, on the lofty ranges of the Sahaydris lived the evil Asura by the name Bhima with his mother Karkati. The divine and the mortals were scared of him alike. But he was confronted by certain questions about his own existence which continuously tormented him. When Bhima could no longer sustain his agony and curiosity, he asked his mother to unveil the mysteries of his life. He urged his mother to tell him who his father was and why had he abandoned them in the wilderness of the forest. After much hesitation and with a lingering fear Karkati, his mother revealed to him that he was the son of the mighty Kumbhakarna, the younger brother of King Ravana of Lanka. Lord Vishnu in his incarnation as Lord Rama annihilated Kumbhakarna in the great war. This infuriated Bhima and he vowed to avenge Lord Vishnu. To achieve this he embarked on a severe penance to please Lord Brahma. The compassionate creator was pleased by the dedicated devotee and granted him immense prowess. The evil tyrant caused havoc in the three worlds. He defeated King Indra and conquered the heavens. He also defeated a staunch devotee of Lord Shiva - Kamarupeshwar and put him in the dungeons. He compelled and ordered Kamarupeshwar to worship him instead of Lord Shiva.

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When Kamarupeshwar refused to do pooja to him, tyrant Bhima raised his sword to strike the Shiva Linga, to which pooja and abhishek was being done. As soon as Bhima managed to raise his sword, Lord Shiva appeared before him in all his magnificence. Then the terrible war began. But then the holy sage Narada 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 Bhimashankara Jyotirlingam. It is believed that the sweat that poured forth from Lord Shiva's body after the battle formed the Bhimarathi River.

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JYOTIRLINGA 7- Sethubande tu Ramesham..

Rameshwaram is in Pamban Island of Ramanathapuram district in Tamilnadu.

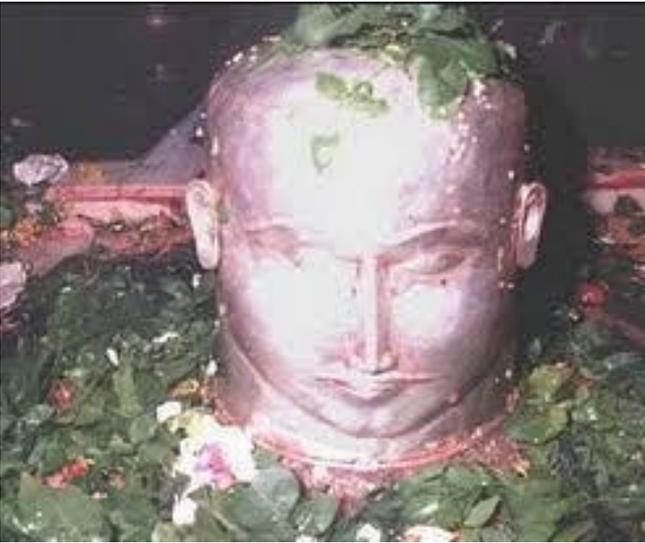
According to the Ramayana, Sri Ram, the seventh incarnation of Lord Vishnu has prayed to Lord Shiva here to expiate the sin of Brahmahatya (killing of a Brahmin) committed during his war against the demon king Ravana in Sri Lanka. Sri Ram wanted to have the largest lingam to worship Lord Shiva. He directed Hanumanji to bring the lingam from Kailash.

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Since it took longer to bring the lingam, Ma Sita built a small lingam out of the sand available in the sea shore, which is the lingam in the sanctum. The primary deity of the temple is Ramanathaswamy (Lord Shiva) in the form of lingam. There are two lingams inside the sanctum, Ramalingam - one built by Goddess Sita, from sand, residing as the main deity and Vishwalingam - the one brought by Hanumanji from Kailash. Sri Ram instructed that Vishwalingam should be worshipped first since it was brought by Hanumanji - the tradition continues even today.

There are sixty-four Tirthas (holy water bodies) in and around the island of Rameshwaram. According to Skanda Purana, twenty-four of them are important. Bathing in these Tirthas is a major aspect of the pilgrimage to Rameshwaram and is considered equivalent to penance. Twenty-two of the Tirthas are within the Ramanathaswamy temple. The number 22 indicates the 22 arrows in Lord Rama's quiver. The other two tirthas are Agni tirtha - the beach east of Ramanathaswamy Temple and Setu tirtha which is located at Dhanushkodi.

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JYOTIRLINGA 8-Nagesham Darukavane..

Aundha Nagnath temple is in Hingoli District in Maharashtra.

The present temple is said to have been built by the Yadava dynasty and dates to 13th century. The first temple is said to be from time of the Mahabharata and is believed to have been constructed by Yudhisthira.

It has been stated that this temple building was of seven-storied one before it was destroyed by Aurangzeb.

Once when Saint Namdev was rendering Bhajans in front of the temple with his senior gurus like Jñāneśvar, Visoba Khechara and few more Devotees, the temple pujari told them their singing in front of the temple is disturbing their routine pooja and prayers and asked them to go away from temple. Then all went to the back side of the temple and started singing bhajans there. But Lord Shiva , in order to be in the sight of the pining devotees and listen to bhajans, revolved the temple. It is testimonial to that miracle why Nandi is located on the back side of temple.

The temple itself is worth seeing for its unbelievably beautiful carvings. The present temple is Built in the Hemadpanti architectural style.

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The main deity is below sea level - Steps from the Lord Vishnu shrine lead below to a barely 30 square feet space and ceiling height of 3 feet to the main altar. Devotees have to crouch and sit to have darshan of the Lord and devotees can touch the Linga for doing Pooja and Abhishek.

Snakes with their hoods open are very often seen standing guard on the Nagnath Linga. Cups of milk are left for them everyday and when they drink it is yet to be known.

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JYOTIRLINGA 9-Varanasyam tu visvesham..

Vishvanath Temple is in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India on the western bank of the holy river Ganga. The main deity is known by the name Vishvanatha or Vishveshvara meaning Ruler of The Universe. The Varanasi city is also called Kashi, and hence the temple is popularly called Kashi Vishvanath Temple. The Temple is referred in Hindu Scriptures for a very long time and as a central part of worship in the Shaiva philosophy. It has been destroyed and re-constructed a number of times in the history. The last structure was demolished by Aurangzeb, who constructed a Mosque on this site. The current structure was built on an adjacent site by the Maratha monarch, Ahilya Bai Holkar of Indore in 1780.

Varanasi is the oldest surviving city of the world and the cultural capital of India. It is in the heart of this city that there stands in its fullest majesty the Kashi Vishwanath temple. Here gravitate the teeming millions of our planet to seek benediction and spiritual peace by the darshan of this Jyotirlinga which confers liberation from the bondages of maya and the inexorable entanglements of the world.

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A simple glimpse of the Jyotirlinga is a soul-cleansing experience that transforms life and puts it on the path of knowledge and bhakti. Vishweshwara Jyotirlinga has a very special and unique significance in the spiritual history of India. Tradition has it that the merits earned by the darshan of other jyotirlinga scattered in various parts of India accrue to devotee by a single visit to Kashi Vishwanath Temple. Deeply and intimately implanted in the Hindu mind, the Kashi Vishwanath Temple has been a living embodiment of our timeless cultural traditions and highest spiritual values. The Temple has been visited by all great saints- Adi Shankaracharya, Ramkrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekanand, Goswami Tulsidas, Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati, Gurunanak and several other spiritual personalities.

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JYOTIRLINGA 10-Tryambakam Gautameetate

Trimbakeshwar Temple is in the foothills of mountain Bramhagiri which is the origin of river Godavari, near Nashik, Maharashtra.

The most important feature of this temple is presence of 3 linga's each representing Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. All three resides in a hallow space within the Shiva lingam.

The temple built by Shri Nana Saheb Peshawa in 1755-1786 AD is of black stone and the Shivlingam is said to have emerged naturally-Swayambhu.

The reasons for its being so sacred are - Godavari river originates in this place, its a place of Tri-Sandhya Gayatri, the birth place of Lord Ganesha, a place of the first Nath of Nath Sampradaya consisting of Gorakhnath and others, a place where Nivrittinath was made to imbibe the holy knowledge by his Guru Gahininath, a place where Nivrittinath made his brothers and sister attain the self by his preaching. This is considered to be one of the holiest place to perform Shraadh ceremony -last rites to the departed souls like Narayan nagbali as per Nirnaya Sindhu - a religious book of our Hindu religion.

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JYOTIRLINGA 11- Himalaye tu Kedaram..

Shri Kedarnath Temple, highest among the 12 Jyotirlingas, at 11,745 ft. An 8th century magnificent temple built by the Pandavas and revived by Adi Shankaracharyaji is located in the Rudra Himalaya range amidst the stunning mountainscape of the Garhwal Himalayas at the head of the Mandakini River in Uttarakhand.

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Pandavas sought the blessings of Lord Shiva to atone their sin after the battle of Mahabharata. Lord Shiva eluded them repeatedly and while fleeing took refuge at Kedarnath in the form of a bull. On being followed, he dived into ground leaving behind his back on the surface which is the triangular shaped Jyotirlinga. Outside the temple door a large statue of the Nandi stands as guard. The inner walls of the temple sanctum are adorned with figures of various deities and scenes from Mahabharata.

A rock, believed to have saved the temple from the floods and natural catastrophe by preventing the flood waters from destroying the temple, was also being worshipped, it's called Divya Bheem Shila.

The temple is not directly accessible by road and has to be reached by a 20 km uphill trek from Gaurikund or a 5 min helicopter ride across the breathtaking Garhwal Himalayan range.

The shrine closes on the first day of Kartik (Oct-Nov) and reopens in Vaishakh (Apr-May) every year. During its closure the shrine is submerged in snow hence the deities are brought before to Ukhimath and worshipped here for next six months.

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JYOTIRLINGA 12- Grishnesham cha Shivalaye..

Grishneshwar temple is in Verul village which is about 30 km towards the west side of Aurangabad, Maharashtra and is in very close proximity to the Ellora caves. The Grishneshwar Temple is also known by several other names like Kusumeswar, Ghushmeswara and Grushmeswara.

One of the oldest legends speaks of Parvati born as a tribal woman worshipping the Lord and being united with Him here. It is said that one day, as she ground vermilion and saffron with water to apply on the parting in her hair (a symbol of the married woman), Shiva, in the form of light, appearing in her palm. This light turned into a lingam, which she called “Grishneshwar”, as it was formed by the friction (Grishna) between her finger and palm.

Another story says that once a king went hunting and killed the animals living with the Rishis and munis too. Seeing this, the irate Saints cursed the king, as a result of which, his entire body was infested with insects. Now, smitten by this curse, the king began to wander in the forest. His throat was parched because he was very thirsty. There was, alas, no water to be found anywhere. At last he found a water hole made by the hooves of a horse. Just as the king started to drink water a miracle happened, the king’s body was rid of all the insects.

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The king did severe penance (Tapa) there. Lord Brahma was pleased and appeared before him and installed Parashta Teerth there. He also created a huge and holy lake near by. This Brahma sarovar later came to be known as Shivalay. Holy water constantly springs from inside the garba griha which is on a lower level.

Restored in the 18th century by Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar, the temple is 240 x 185 ft tall. It has exquisitely sculpted carvings of Gods on its intricately inscribed interior and exterior walls.

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