

# The Cosmogony of Hindu Pilgrimage

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## I. Introduction.

Hindu Pilgrimage practice in India takes many forms. It is very difficult to identify any common behaviour or ideas to all pilgrim who journeying to sacred places. Two significant features which do recur consistently are sacred places and the act of journeying itself.

A large number of Hindu pilgrims from whole of the country are visiting to Varanasi/ Kashi in everyday, where is one of the most famous Hindu sacred place in India. Varanasi is holy city and city of Śiva.

Śiva is considered as a god without any form or attributes, and further stands for all knowledge. His name Śambhu is derived from *Svayambhuva* which reflects the meaning of self-born. It has been realized in ancient past that he was at the bottom of everything that is moving, he was called *Īvara* or *ī-chara* (*ī*=this, and *chara*=to move) [Pillai, 1959, p. 11]. It is the reason why various forms of Śiva are transposed in Varanasi as the form of *Īvara* (as suffix to the various forms of Śiva), and a *lingam* has been installed there to honour that form.

It's a popular saying that every piece of stone has divinity of Śiva in Kashi. This proverb clearly indicates a large number of Śiva *lingams*, and also peoples' strong belief to worship Śiva as the patron deity of the city. In the processes of humanization and sanctification all human performances are added to Lord Śiva, therefore worship of various *lingams* is associated to different motives.

There are many legends and Puranic descriptions about the origin of worship of Śiva in anthropomorphic and ithyphallic form, usually as the stylized *lingam* [Morinis, 1984, pp. 27-30].

The Śiva *lingam* consists of three parts: a square at the bottom, an octagon

in the centre, and a cylinder with special end at the top. Symbolically speaking, the square represents Brahmā, the create; the octagon represents Viṣṇu, the preserver; the round portion which vanishes at the top even without a point represents Śiva, the destructor. As so the *lingam* integrates evaluation, existence and involution, *i. e.* *śrīsthi*, *stīti*, and *saṃhāra* [Pillai, 1959, pp. 19-20]. This number three also be compared with Śiva's *triśūla*—three pronged spear, Trident. These are symbolized in the landscape of Varanasi with the three sacred segments, each having *antargriha* route and the patron deity: Viśveśvara in the centre, Omkāreśvara in the north, and Kedāreśvara in the south. It is the perception that Varanasi/ Kashi is believed to be settled on the *triśūla*.

## II. Typology of Śiva Lingams.

According to the *Skanda Purāṇa-Kāśi Khaṇḍa* (97, 261, 269, 280), there are exist 511 Śiva *lingams* in Kashi region [Sukul, 1977, p. 122]. Referring to typology in Kashi, a five-tier hierarchy of *lingams*, famous for their various niches of spiritual magnetism can be identified :

1. Self-born lingams (Svayambhuva).
2. Lingmas installed by the Hindu Planets and Gods.
3. Lingams installed by the Great Saints.
4. Lingams installed by Śiva Ganas.
5. Spatially Transposed Lingams.

The Universal personality of Śiva is represented with number five which shows wholeness. The five faces of Śiva originated out of the formless Absolute (śūnya), and they are source of the five *śaktis* and five *kalās* (energies and their subtle material manifestations) from which the world is created. Each face is connected with certain meaning of power, specific *mantra*, direction, colour and the five basic elements of the organism [Vail, 1985, p. 124, 183]. Therefore, Śiva is regarded as Panchamukha (five-headed) with different symbolic colours for different forms, and each form is installed in Varanasi separately. The merit and glories of these five forms are given in the *Linga Purāṇa* (I. 23, 18-23). Even the *mantra* to please Śiva, *pañcākshari* (Namah Śivāya), is related to the five forms thus its muttering represents the absolute entity of the whole universe.

### III. Reflection on Cosmogony.

The Puranic literature describe Varanasi as the first deity after the great cosmic dissolution (*mahāpralaya*) which later developed as resort of Lord Śiva [Parry, 1981, p. 331]. This was first perceived long ago and promoted the installation of enormous forms of Śiva as *Īvara* (the Universal Lord) in the sacred topography of Varanasi.

The concept of spatial transposition and the cosmogony of the *yātrās* (routes of pilgrimage), can be represented with model of a series of concentric circles with sansity increasing as one moves towards the centre. In totaly there are seven layers of main circles of which each is intersected at eight places by radials. The number eight signifies the eight directions, and seven, the seven layers in the atmosphere. Seven layers and eight directions intersect each other at points where shrines of Gaṇeśa in the Vināyaka are established [Sigh Rana, 1985]. This elephant-headed deity is the son of Śiva and considered as Lord of Obstacles and Gurdian of Thresholds who populary exists on doorways and temple gateways [Getty, 1936; Courtright, 1985]. According to another interpretation Gaṇeśa is considered 'leader of the army'. Moreover, he is also known as Vighneśvara, "the god who removes not only the jungle in front of the marching soldiers, but all that obstructs his devotees" [Pillai, 1959, p. 14]. With this perception the peopling and territorialization of Kashi can be highlighted. The existence of first layer of eight Vināyakas on the Panchakroshi route, *i. e.* Arka (Lolārk), Durg (Durgakund), Bhīma Chaṇḍa (Bhimchandi), Delhi, Uddaṇḍa, Pāśpāṇi, Kharva (Adi Keshva Ghat) and Siddha Vināyakas, may be interpreted as the outermost limit of the territory established through forest clearing, therefore the first ring of eight Vināyakas are lying there.

The number three, four and five are again represented with various layers of *yātrās*: three with Avimukta, Negara Pradakṣiṇā and Panchakroshi; four additionally including Antargriha (*i. e.* Viśveśvara Antargriha); five in addition to above four Brinhada Panchakroshi route. These numbers may be symbolized with trident (three prongs), four arms, and five-headed image of Śiva. This again shows that Śiva is an universal God having control over three realms, four di-

rections and five elements. It is the form of sacred topography in Varanasi/Kashi which promotes its character towards “wholeness”.

#### IV. Conclusion.

As we analysing Śiva *lingams* and searching their linkages with various types of routes of pilgrimages, Hindu's synthetic view of “expanding universe” and “universe within universe” would be projected clearly.

The nature of *expansion* is marked from the centre of the patron deity, Viśveśvara to the layers of *yātrās* surrounding him. Further in reference to *shrinking process*, one can metaphorically analyse “universe within universe”. This interactional system of expanding-shrinking reflects the polythetic character of Indian religion, what Max Müller termed as *Kathenotheism* [Eck, 1982, p. 40].

This notion is practised by the Varanasi dwellers through worshipping one supreme (Śiva) but along with all other gods together, as they are called as *bahudevapūjakas* (worshippers of so many gods together).

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#### [References]

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