

Vaidyanath Jyothirlingam Temple, Deoghar



Vaidyanath (Bajjnath) Jyothirlingam

The name Vaidyanath adds another dimension to Lord Shiva. The term Vaidya is derived from root 'Vid' which means 'to Know' and Vaidya literally means a knowledgeable person. Shiva is also known as Param Gyani. The other meaning of the word 'Vidya' means a physician, but previously it used to mean a man thoroughly learned. Later on, the 'Vaidya' began to mean only 'a physician,' some special medicinal attributes were added to the waters of this holy place. It is held here that the water of the Chandrakoop has miraculous healing powers patients with incurable diseases get cured if they partake of this holy water for a prescribed period.

There is some controversy regarding the actual location of Vaidyanath (Bajjnath) Jyothirlingam. Three places claim that Vaidyanath (Bajjnath) Jyothirlingam is at their place. These three places are: 1. Deoghar, Jharkhand, 2. Parli, Maharashtra, and 3. Bajjnath, Himachal Pradesh.

According to Shiva Purana, (Kotirudra Samhita 28) Vaidyanath jyotirlinga is said to have been established unwittingly by the demon king Ravana, who was well known to be a devotee of Shiva. The ten-headed Ravana had gone to Kailash and had put in many years of severe penance, hoping to gain Shiva's favour and to procure a powerful *linga* to take with him to his island home of Lanka. Eventually, his religious discipline was so firm that Shiva gave him one of the twelve *jyotirlingas* as a boon, but with the provision that he could not put it down until he got back to Lanka. Seeing their enemy Ravana in possession of such a powerful *jyotirlinga* made the Gods uneasy. Scheming to make him put it down along the way, Varuna, the Lord of Waters, entered into Ravana's body so that he had to relieve himself. Ravana gave the *linga* to a cowherd to hold while he went to do so, but as the cowherd stood holding the *linga*, it became immensely heavy. He had to put it down. When Ravana returned from relieving himself, he could not lift it again, with his enormous strength. In his ardent devotion, Ravana cut off nine of his ten heads as offerings to Shiva. Even so, the *jyotirlinga* would not move. Shiva miraculously restored Ravana's heads, thus giving this place the name Vaidyanth, the "Lord of Physicians." Ravana before leaving that place constructed a large well around the Linga, called Chandrakoop, in which he poured the waters collected from all holy places. Anointing the Linga with that stream of the holy waters, Ravana left for Lanka.

Vaidyanath Jyothirlingam, Deoghar;

Sri Adi Sankaracharya in Jyothirlinga Stotra writes:

*“Poorvothare prajwalika nidhane sada vasantham
girija sametham surasuraradhitha padapadmam
srivaidyanatham thamaham namami”*

According to this Stotra this Jyothirlingam is located at prajwalika nidhane (means funeral home or Chithabhoomi) in poorvothare (means in the Northeastern part) of the country. This suggests that this Jyothirlingam is in Chidbhoomi, now known as Deoghar, Jharkhand. During ancient times Deoghar was known as Chidbhoomi in the North western part of the country. This Jyothirlingam got the name of Vaidyanath (doctor) because Lord Shiva put back all the heads of Ravana like a surgeon. Here Lord Shiva is also known as Baidyanath.

The Temple is known as Baba Dham, and it has spacious courtyard surrounded by stone walls. There are 22 temples in the same campus of different Gods and Goddesses among which Lord Shiva is empowered as being supreme. The shrines are of both old and new styles. The temple of Shiva, Baidyanath faces the east, and is 72 feet tall, and it is lotus shaped. According to religious belief this temple has been built by Vishwakarma. The top of the Lingam is slightly broken. It is believed when Ravana tried to uproot the Lingam the top of the Lingam chipped away. Devotees believe by worshipping Lord Vaidyanath one is relieved of worries and miseries in life, and also attain Moksha. Millions of people visit this temple in the month of Shravana to perform Abhisheka to the Lord with holy water of Ganga from Sultanganj.

It is believed that, Shiva first manifested himself as a Jyotirlinga on the night of the Arudra Nakshatra, thus the special reverence for the Jyotirlinga. Bhavishya Purana also narrates the existence of Baidyanath. The temple has been visited since the age of Rama. The main 'LINGAM' (Lord Shiva) is also very rare. The lingam is of a cylindrical form about 5 inches in diameter and projects about 4 inches from the centre of a large slab of basalt. It is not possible to ascertain how much of the lingam is buried. The top is broken and has uneven surface.

The same shrine of Vaidyanath is considered as one of 51 Shakti Peethas, in Deoghar, where 'heart' of Sati fell, after being broken apart by the Sudarshana Chakra of Lord Vishnu, from the body of Dakshayani (Sati), carried by distraught Shiva, at the location on which the respective temple is built. Since the heart of Sati fell here, the place is also called as Harda Peetha. Here Sati is worshipped as Jai Durga and Lord Bhairav as Vaidyanath or Baidyanath. Dakshayani was reborn as Parvati, daughter of Himavat, king of the mountains, and his wife, the Devi Mena. This Shakti Peeta is called Yoni Peeta. These Peethas are associated with Devi Bhagwat, Kubjika Tantra, Kalika Rahasyam, Mundmal Tantra and Rudrayamalam etc. These Tantras mention this holy shrine as a popular Tantrik seat for Sadhakas. Famous scholar and Tantric Gopinath Kaviraj have mentioned Baidyanath Dham, as a seat of Tantric Sadhana. The religious importance of Baidyanath Jyotirlingam is based on the facts revealed in the Puranas and Tantras.

On a normal day, the worshipping of Baidyanath Jyotirlingam begins at 4 AM. The temple doors open at this time. During 4:00 AM to 5:30 AM, the Head priest worships with Shodashopachar.