



Glory of Bharath » Bharath Darshan

Dear Sai brothers and sisters,

This month our holy pilgrimage is to the shrines of Lord Shiva adored and worshipped as Lord Dakshinamurthy.

"Om namah pranavarthaya,
Suddha jnanaika moorthaye namah
Nirmalaya prasanthaya,
Sri Dakshinamurthaye namah"



Dakshinamurthy is an aspect of Shiva as a guru (teacher) of all types of knowledge, particularly the jnana. This aspect of Shiva is his personification as the supreme or the ultimate awareness, understanding and knowledge. This form represents Shiva in his aspect as a teacher of yoga, music, and wisdom, and giving exposition on the shastras. He is worshipped as the god of wisdom, complete and rewarding meditation. Indian tradition accords a special reverence to the Guru or the teacher. Dakshinamurthy, in the Saivite system of beliefs is regarded as the ultimate Guru - the embodiment of knowledge and the destroyer of ignorance. There are only a few temples where Dakshinamurthy is the chief deity.

Mahakaleshwar

Only one of the twelve Jyotirlingas is Dakshinmurthy, The Mahakaleshwar in Ujjain. Being the only Dakshinmurthy Jyotirlinga, It holds special importance for Shaivites as a site of learning. The idol of Mahakaleshwar is known to be dakshinamurti, which means that it is facing the south. We already visited this shrine last month.



Lord Mahakaleshwar

Vaikom Mahadevar Temple

The Vaikom Mahadevar temple is one of the most celebrated Shiva temples in South India. Vaikom is located at a distance of 33km south of Ernakulam and 40 km north of Kottayam on the railroad between Ernakulam and Tiruvananthapuram. Offering of food is a form of worship here. In ancient times, feasts used to be cooked and offered to all devotees. Vaikom Mahadevar is also referred to as Annadaana Prabhu.

The Deity : Shiva - Vaikom Mahadevar manifests himself as Dakshinamurthy in the panthirathi pooja in the morning. He is worshipped as Kiraata Murthy during the Uchcha pooja at noon and as Satchitananda in the evening.



The lord being taken in procession

Legend has it that Khara (of the Khara Dhooshana demon duo) of Ramayana worshipped Shiva at Chidambaram and obtained from him three Shivalingams and journeyed holding one shivalingam on each hand and one in his mouth. He sojourned at Vaikom, and set the shivalingam on the ground and to his dismay realized that it had gotten rooted to the ground. Khara therefore installed the other two

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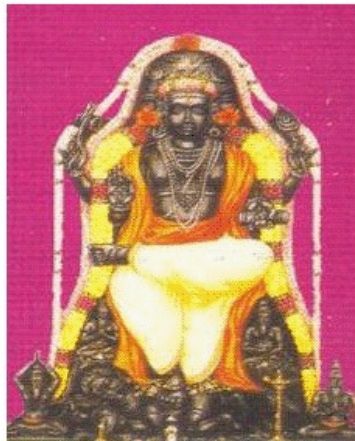
shivalingams at Ettumanur and Kaduthuruthy. He entrusted the shivalingam at Vaikom to the care of Vyagrapadar. Vaikom therefore acquired the name Vyagrapuri which ultimately became Vaikom for short. At Tripprayar, north of here (near Thrissur), Rama is held in worship as the slayer of the demon Khara.

Legend has it that Shiva appeared in front of Vyagrapadar under a peepul tree, south of the eastern gateway on the morning of Ashtami in the dark fortnight in the month of Scorpio. This incident is commemorated in the annual Vaikattu Ashtami festival.

Legend also has it that Parasurama, the incarnation of Vishnu built this temple and set up the worship protocol here.

Alangudi Temple

Abathsahayeswarar Temple at Alangudi, one of the Navagraha Temples in Tamil Nadu, is about 17 km from Kumbakonam on the way to Needamangalam, in Tiruvarur District of Tamilnadu. The main deities are Lord Abathsahayeswarar or Aranyeswara, accompanied by his consort, Ezhavarkuzhali or Umai Ammai. The temple is regarded as a Guru Sthalam (the temple of Planet Jupiter) where Lord Dakshinamurthy (The Guru or teacher form of Lord Shiva) is held in great reverence. A special feature is that Lord Guru or Brihaspati (or Brahmanaspati) is engraved on the wall and is not in the form of separate idol, reunited with Shiva. It is believed that Adi Shankaracharya and Sage Agastya had worshipped Lord Guru at Tiruvirumpoolai Abathsahayeswarar Temple, Alangudi.



Abathsahayeswarar

Legend says that once Devas and the Asuras tried to churn the celestial ocean, 'Parkadal' (sea of milk). They used the celestial snake 'Vasuki' as the rope and the mount 'Mandara' as the rod to obtain the nectar. The snake emitted deadly poison (Ala Visham) which the Lord swallowed to safeguard the universe. Hence Lord Shiva came to be called as 'Abathsahayeswarar', meaning 'savior' for having consumed the poison and the place came to be known as 'Alangudi'. Goddess Parvati is said to have been reborn on the banks of Amrita Pushkarini and later on reunited with Shiva and hence this place is known as Thirumana Mangalam. Sage Viswamitrar is believed to have worshipped Shiva here. Lord Ganesha is worshipped as 'Kalangaamal Kaatha Vinayagar' (the Lord who was firm in saving the devotees) for having murdered the ferocious 'Gajamuhasura' who was a great threat to the Devas. Kasi Aranyam and Thiruvirumpoolai are the other names of Alangudi.

Legend has it that Lord Dakshinamurthy is said to have preached the Devas who were swooned under the impact of the poison that came out of the churning of the milky ocean. He is called as Brahaspathi or Brihaspati for his excellence in education and fine arts.

Thirupanthurai Temple

It is only in Sivanandeswarar Temple in Thirupanthurai, in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, that one can see an Arthanareeswarar Dakshinamurthy. This rare depiction of the Lord and His consort can be seen on the vimanam of the temple.

This temple has an interesting past. It goes back to the tussle between Lord Brahma and Lord Muruga. Lord Muruga punished Lord Brahma for performing his duty of creation without knowing the meaning of the Pranava Mantra, 'Om'. The little genius also imprisoned the Lord of Creation and took up his duty. Learning about this, Lord Siva urged His son to restore the duty of creation to Lord Brahma. But Lord Muruga insisted that Lord Brahma tell Him the meaning of 'Om' and get back His duty. It turned out that even Lord Siva did not know the meaning of 'Om'. Lord Muruga then took the form of a guru and taught His father the meaning of 'Om' - and this is depicted in the Swamimalai Temple.

But Lord Muruga had to pay for the sin of scolding Lord Brahma, who was older to Him, and so lost the power of speech. To get back his lost speech, Lord Muruga made a Lingam and installed it at Sivanantheswarar and prayed to the Lord for mercy. After some time, Lord Muruga got back His voice. It is only in this temple that one can find Lord Muruga standing in front of Lord Siva with the 'chin' mudra. The speciality of this temple is that Guha Vinayaka and Sakshi Vinayaka bless devotees at the entrance of the temple. It is said that when Lord Muruga came to this place to perform penance, Lord Vinayaka took two forms and escorted Him safely.



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