

THE PILGRIMAGE



The month of May is the month most awaited by school going students. Because it is the time to explore, experiment and experience a lot of new things, build new relationships, become an year older to enter into the next higher class etc., At the same time the biggest challenge before parents is how to positively engage the children during this period. The various options before us are:

- Enroll into the summer camp.
- Visit to the native place.
- Plan a trip to places such as Shimla, Kulu Manali, Munnar, Ooty, Kodaikanal etc.,
- Plan a visit to countries outside India etc.

Whenever we plan a visit, it goes without saying that we keep in mind the financial aspects, passport, visa, flight tickets, hotel bookings etc., But it is equally important to take care of the following aspects.

- Objective of the visit.
- Complete information about the place of visit.

These two things help us to remain focused and be able to relate everything in its true perspective. When we visit places such as Varanasi, Haridwar, Kedarnath, Badrinath etc. – how much aware are we about the historical aspects of these places? Few questions to know exactly where we stand with respect to Indian Heritage.

- Why is Ganga considered as a holy river particularly in Benares?
- Which of the following places is called Vishalanagar during Tretayug?
- A Kedarnath B. Badrinath C. Dwaraka D. Puri
- Which places in India are considered as Mokshapuris?
- Name the twelve Jyotirlingas present in India.
- Rameshwaram in Tamilnadu is one of the chardhams. Yes/No.

The list is endless. Parents have to make every effort to take their children to places of importance in India. Before that they themselves have to be fully equipped with all the information so that the objective of the visit is achieved. I am sure that such visits will inculcate in children a sense of appreciation towards the rich and varied heritage of our country. In this context, I take pride in introducing the readers to a very important place called Arunachala situated in Tamilnadu. **ARUNACHALA – AGNI LING**

In the Vedas Lord

Rudra, who subsequently transformed into the benevolent Lord Shiva, has multiple attributes and numerous titles, among which eight are significant to the conceptualization in the Shaivites tradition. Rudra's identification with Shiva was put in writing for the first time in Shvestashvatar Upanishad and later in Yajurveda linked Taittiriya Samhita.

Individual Vedas refer to Rudra, alternatively Shiva with eight different names (Sarva, Bhava, Ugra, Rudra, Bhima, Pashupati, Mahadeva and Ishana) having different qualities. Such eight attributes create the Shiva aspect of Ashtamurti meaning eightfold attributes in the

Vishnu, the divine sustainer of it, fought for primacy in the divine hierarchy, as to which one of them was the greater. Lord Siva, to teach them, took the form of a Column of Fire/Light (Tejolingam), and said that he who finds the top or bottom of this Tejolingam is supreme. Vishnu took the form of a boar and dug into the earth to find the bottom of the Column, and Brahma took the form of a swan and flew up to find the top of the Column. Both failed, as they could not find the bottom or top of the beginningless or endless Tejolingam. Thus knowing their folly, they reached the place where the Column of Effulgence stood steady, surrendered, and prayed to Lord Siva to pardon them.

Note: Please find Vishnu (boar) and Brahma (Swan) in the Lingodbhava picture.

bent before Him in prayer and out of compassion for His devotees, Siva cooled down and took the form of the Holy Hill of Arunachala. For ritualistic purpose of worship, the Lord became swayambhu Lingam, (self-born) the deity form, named Arunachaleshwara enshrined in the sanctum sanctorum of the great Temple on the eastern side of the Holy Hill. Therefore, when you are doing Giripradakshina around Holy Hill of Arunachala, you are worshipping Lord Siva Himself.

The Holy Hill of Arunachala is known as the 'Spiritual Heart of the World'. "Aruna" means 'red', bright like fire. This fire is not ordinary fire, which is only hot. This is Jnanagni (Fire of Wisdom, knowledge). It is neither hot nor cool. 'Achala'

embodiment of Sat, the reality, and hence to have contact with Him in any manner is Satsang. To think of Arunachala is Satsang, to see Arunachala is Satsang, and to live near Arunachala is Satsang. But one very special way of having Satsang with Arunachala is to do Aruna Giripradakshina', that is, to walk around the Holy Hill of Arunachal keeping it to one's right side.

From satsanga, company of good people, comes non-attachment, from non-attachment comes freedom from delusion, which leads to self-settledness. From self-settledness comes Jivan mukti.

"The word 'Pradakshina' has a typical meaning. The letter 'Pra' stands for removal of all kinds of sins; 'da' stands for fulfilling the desires; 'kshi' stands for freedom from future births; 'na' stands for giving deliverance through jnana. If by way of Pradakshina you walk one step it gives happiness in this world; two steps, it gives happiness in heaven; and three steps, it gives bliss of Satyaloka which can be attained. One should go round either in mouna (silence) or dhyana (meditation) or japa (repetition of Lord's name) or sankeertana (bhajan) and thereby think of God all the time."

It is difficult to describe the pleasure and peace derived from Giripradakshina. The body may become tired, but the mind will often automatically sink into a meditative state. Furthermore, there are a great variety of medicinal plants on and all around the Hill, whose scents, wafted by the breeze, are beneficial to health. Once you do Giripradakshina, the urge to repeat this unique experience returns again and again. That is the power and beauty of the Sacred Hill.

One place in Tiruvannamalai which everyone must visit is the Ramana Ashram which comes on the way when we go for Giripradakshina. I hope all the readers will get an opportunity to visit this holy place atleast once in their life time.

Reference:
1. Guide to Giripradakshina, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, India.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astamurti>
2. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astamurti>

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EIGHT FORMS OF SIVA STAND FOR FIVE ELEMENTS, THE SOUL, THE SUN AND THE MOON

Name of Siva	Sarva	Bhava	Ugra	Rudra	Bhima	Pashupati	Ishana	Mahadeva
Stands for	Earth	Water	Wind	Fire	Ether	Soul	Sun	Moon
One can see with naked eye	Prithvi Ling	Jal Ling	Vayu Ling	Agni Ling	Akash Ling	Yajamana Ling	Surya Ling	Chandra Ling
Place where it is present	Kancheepuram	Tiruvanaikaval	Srikalahasti	Tiruvannamalai	Chidambaram	Kathmandu	Konark	Sitakund
In which state of India	Tamilnadu	Tamilnadu	Andhra Pradesh	Tamilnadu	Tamilnadu	Nepal (Not a part of India)	Orissa	Bihar

manifestation of Lord Shiva.

Legend tells us that once, Brahma, the Lord of creation and

The Lord, who can be easily pleased by His devotees, emerged from the Column of Effulgence in all His glory.

Seeing Brahma and Vishnu

means 'Immovable Hill'. Therefore, Arunachala means the 'Hill of Wisdom'."

It is said that Arunachala is the physical