

## Panchamukha linga



The Shiva linga is a heavily laden symbolic representation of the phallus or penis of this deity, and we shall deal with only a few aspects of it here. The word 'linga' is not a Sanskrit term and predates the Aryan immigrations into India (c.

1800 BCE). In other words, it is an ancient indigenous concept and image. Originally, the term meant a furrow ploughed into the ground. The meaning derived from this is 'characteristic mark', more specifically that of Shiva, the phallus. It is an ancient fertility symbol that appears in a number of forms, from ovoid river rocks to very naturalistic lingas where every part of the erect male organ is rendered. But the usual linga is more abstract: a cylinder with a rounded top. This is often placed in an oval bath with a drainage groove. This bath, *snanapita*, symbolizes the female sex, the yoni. It catches the liquids that are poured over the linga during worship. In principle, the lower part of the cylinder becomes an octagonal column, ending in a square base. The Vedic sacrificial post, to which the sacrificial animal was tied, had the same form. The axis that runs through the Buddhist stupa is also the same shape and the cylinder is crowned with three (or other uneven number of) parasols. A variety of different metaphysical theories exist about the linga in which the five aspects of Shiva play a part, such as the five elements (*panchabhuta*): earth, wind, fire, air, and water. This linga is in keeping with this cosmic approach and as a cult object is rather rare. In fact there are three prevailing types: the linga with no heads, the linga with a single head or *ekamukhalinga*, and the four-headed linga or *caturmukhalinga*. All these images symbolize the five elements, but a fifth head is seldom added.

This bronze linga is *panchamukha* and represents each of Shiva's five heads, namely Sadyojata (the 'newborn'), Aghora (the 'terrifying'), Vamadeva (the 'lord of the left side'), Tatpuruṣa ('this man') and, in the centre, Sadashiva (the 'eternally auspicious'). When these five heads appear on a linga they are usually different in appearance; Vamadeva is generally portrayed as a woman and Aghora as a demonic figure. But here there are five identical heads, an iconography more common after the fifteenth century. Each has a moustache, a third eye, a seven-leaf crown with a crescent moon in the centre, a double string of *rudraksha* seeds, a necklace of skulls and snakes for earrings. The hands beside the heads present additional iconographic details. Those next to the central head hold the trident and elephant goad. Another pair carries the sword in one hand and shows *abhayamudra* with the other. Still other pairs of hands

hold a snake and *vishvavajra*, a staff and a noose, a bell and a fruit. Between the heads are large rosettes. The bottom of the linga is banded by three rows of petals and the edge is formed by the scaly body of a snake that slithers between two heads to the top of the linga; the snake's head is broken off. Beside the central head, two more cobras are depicted. This bronze linga with its five heads and applied sections is likely the cap-shaped cover of a large stone linga.

Pratapaditya Pal describes a somewhat similar example, which he identifies as sixteenth century and coming from Himachal Pradesh.<sup>1</sup> The present example is also from Himachal Pradesh, judging by the facial features and the many details, but is undoubtedly more recent, possibly seventeenth or eighteenth century.

### [Significance of the Panchamukha Linga](#)

*When I am dormant*

*The energy lies within me*

*Atma lingaaya Nama Om*

*The flame of this energy*

*Rises into divine vision*

*Into Rudra, the divine self*

*The red glow, the hue*

*Shines forth with all divinity.*

The raw form of Rudra, in his fiery matted hair has been depicted beautifully in the Ekamukha linga of Lord Shiva at Udayagiri in the 4th cen A.D. by the Guptas. The self, raw, alone, composed with wisdom is described here. Within a sacred rocky chamber that echoes his presence I come alive within the Eka Mukha linga.



*The Prana rises within me  
I grow, I am present  
I reside everywhere  
I engulf the universe  
I cover all the directions  
I am panchamukha linga  
I am Sadashiva*



**Panchamukha, the rising Shiva grows in all directions. As I evolve He rises too within me. The self, Atma lingam is at the core - Isana\*. Isana is the root of the self, the core that holds all the energy within. The power of Isana is to reveal the energy of the self, this is the power of enlightenment, this is space, this is consciousness, this is Shiva within me.**

**To its east rises Tatpurusha, that which I am, "Tat Tvam Asi". My being rises, awakens to the world, awakens to consciousness. This is the expression of the supreme soul, of Atman that rises and is the life within us, the very presence of Iswara, He is Surya the rays of life. He is the prana I breathe, He is light, He is air.**

**To the south rises Aghora, the fire, the flames of life, the raw heat and beauty of Rudra in his fiery presence. He signifies life, he signifies dissolution or re-absorption, he signifies the end. He signifies the equilibrium that lies beyond birth and death, he signifies eternal bliss in the living fire of Shiva Rudra\*.**

**To the west rises Sadyojata, the power to create. This is the power to multiply beyond the self. This is the universal power of creation where the miracle of life is visible to us. I am alive, I am the self, I can create, I am represented by Sadayojata, I am the earth that flourishes with life, I am Brahma\* the creator.**

**To the north rises Vamadeva. Vamadeva is the beauty of the self, the poetry and the aesthetics that makes us. Vamadeva is the epitome of all the grace that we have, the presence of our beautiful nature for the world to behold. Vamadeva is the personification of love, representing the feminine form of Shiva, warmth that makes us want to take care of what we create. Vamadeva represents the Vishnu\* aspect of preservation within us. It represents sustenance with life giving waters.**

**Panchamukha Shiva Linga is a powerful symbolism, a reflection of a great reality that encompasses all supreme deities. This form represents the Universe and all its creation, its life and itself as a whole in all directions.**

The beauty of the panchamukha linga explains apparently disconnected concepts -

- 1) why the other heads of the panchamukha linga at Eklingji temple near Udaipur alone are named differently,
- 2) the placement of other deities around the Bana linga in the Panchayatana puja
- 3) the connection with Trimurthy at Elephanta and Adbhutanath Shiva\*
- 4) the meaning of panchamukha which is a supreme thought, much more than just the mere naming of 5 heads.

\* Elephanta Trimurthy has the 3 heads named as Vishnu, Brahma and Rudra Shiva

\* Adbhutanath Shiva has the 3 heads named as Vamadeva, Isana Shiva and Aghora Rudra

### Thiruanaiikka

The Lingam installed in this shrine has five faces and is known as '*Panchamukha Lingam*'. This temple is full of sculptures of rare beauty and exquisite ...

Thiruanaiikkaval is situated about 3 miles from Tiruchirapalli and about half a mile from the famous temple Sri Ranganam. The temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva and is surrounded by a beautiful grove. The Lingam is installed under a 'Jambu' tree and the tree is said to be many hundreds of years old. Thus the deity is also called Jambunathar, Jambukeswarar or Jambulingam. The consort is called Akilandeswary or Akilandanayaki. This is one of the five 'Panchabootha sthala' representing one of the five elements - water.

#### Location.

Tiruchirapalli is a city served well by road, rail and air and the temple is nearby.

The Temple

The temple complex is quite large and is made up of five enclosures. The fourth enclosure or 'praharam' contains a large mandapam supported by 800 pillars. There is also a tank (pond) surrounded by a corridor with about a hundred pillars. This enclosure is called the 'viboothi' praharam and the wall surrounding this enclosure is called the 'viboothi' wall.

### Legend.

The legend connected with the 'viboothi' wall is this. During the construction of the temple by a king a mysterious voice told him not to build the wall surrounding the fourth enclosure. After a few days an ascetic arrived on the scene and started constructing the fourth wall. At the end of the day this ascetic gave his labourers a pinch of holy ash (viboothi) as their wage. When the workers arrived at their dwellings the 'viboothi' would turn into gold. Thus the wall came to be known as 'viboothi wall' and the enclosure as 'viboothi praharam'.

### The story in sculpture

Once two minor devas quarrelled among themselves as to who was more devoted to Lord Shiva. During one of these quarrels they cursed each other and one became an elephant and the other a spider. Realising their predicament they prayed to Lord Shiva to redeem them from their curses. Lord Shiva instructed them both to go to this jungle full of 'Jambu' trees and worship the 'Lingam' that had appeared there under a 'Jambu' tree. Thus both the elephant and the spider were born in this jungle of jambu trees. The elephant brought water from the pond nearby in its trunk and washed the 'Lingam' and kept the place tidy. The spider, however, wove a web over the 'Lingam' as a canopy to prevent dry leaves and rubbish falling on the 'Lingam'. One day the elephant while tidying up the area saw the spider's web over the 'Lingam' and pulled it down. The spider was outraged at this and crawled into the trunk of the elephant and bit it. The elephant unable to stand the pain dashed its trunk against the trees and died. The spider too was killed. Lord Shiva took pity on these two creatures and gave salvation to both of them. The elephant by its ardent devotion to Lord Shiva gave this place the name Thiru+Anai+Kaa

**(Holy+elephant+jungle) which later became Thirunaikkaval or Thiruvanaikkovil as it is known now.**

**There are many festivals conducted in this temple and one of the important ones is the 'Mandala Brahmotsavam' during March/April conducted over 40 days. On the 37th day of this festival Lord Shiva dressed as a female and Goddess Parvathy as a male are taken round all five 'praharam' and this procession is called 'Pancha prahara utsavam'. There is a legend attached to this festival.**

**Once Brahma fell in love with a beautiful girl whom he created. He realised that he had committed a sin and arrived at this 'sthala' and started a penance to rid him of his sin. Lord Shiva wanted to test whether he was truly absorbed in his meditation. So he appeared in front of Brahma dressed as a beautiful woman. Brahma, however, recognised Lord Shiva and to propitiate him performed the 'Mandala Brahmotsavam' for 40 days. It is this tradition that is carried on to this day.**

### **Interesting Features**

**The Lingam in this temple is said to be an 'Appu Lingam' (Water Lingam) and when the river Kaveri or Coleroon is in spate water can be seen oozing from the Lingam. The shrine of Goddess Parvathy is facing east while Lord Shiva is facing west as if facing each other. This is to depict that Goddess Parvathy herself once worshipped Lord Shiva here and received answers to her doubts about creation. Thus this temple is also called an 'Upathesa sthala'. The priest of the Amman temple, when he performs the worship to Lord Shiva dressed as a woman, enacts this theme every noon.**

**There are many shrines in this complex dedicated to various deities. One such is the shrine for Raja Rajeswarar. The Lingam installed in this shrine has five faces and is known as 'Panchamukha Lingam'. This temple is full of sculptures of rare beauty and exquisite workmanship. The thousand-pillared mandapam as it is called is carved in the form of a chariot with wheels and horses.**

**'Ko-pooja' (cow worship) and 'Annabhishekam' (heaping of cooked rice on the deity) are a daily ritual in this temple.**



