

COMMON LINK BETWEEN ALL RELIGIONS AND NATIONS

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Abstract: This Paper provides the universally accepted power that is God Shiva in the form of Shivalinga. In almost all the ancient civilizations and the major religions of the world- Judaisam, Christianity, Islam, Adi Sanatan Dharma or Aryan Religion and, perhaps, even Budhism, at some places it was, once considered as the symbol representing God whom each religion gave a different name, having some similarity with the name 'Shiva'. Ancient texts on Hatha Yoga, the Hathyoga pradeed and Gharunda Samhita, there are many verses. The whole course of history in that case would have been much different and there would have been no blots of plunder, loot, arson, rape and ravage on the invaders nor would the invaders, as said earlier, ever have had the thought of committing bloodshed and massarace of the innocent masses. Is it then a truth of little importance to which we are pointing? Haven't the battles, referred to above, been fought and much innocent blood split in the name of 'Allah' on the one hand and 'Har Har Mahadeva' on the other hand the two armies being ignorant of the fact that the word 'Allah' or Illa was used by people of India also, for addressing God as 'Mother' which really was the reason.

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Introduction:

There has been hardly any other sacred object in the world which, in the past, was worshiped as extensively on the globe as Shivalinga-the image of 'Shiva'. The worship of this image crossed the geographical boundaries of countries and the ideological boundaries of religions. In almost all the ancient civilizations and the major religions of the world- Judaisam, Christianity, Islam, Adi Sanatan Dharma or Aryan Religion and, perhaps, even Budhism, at some places it was, once considered as the symbol representing God whom each religion gave a different name, having some similarity with the name 'Shiva' in sound or meaning. This unique position has been held by no other image or idol in the past or present. It might be amazing to some to know that even those religious who had no place for idolatory, treated this image with singular exception and, even-to-day, they hold it sacred, though without knowing clearly its importance or meaning. What is, after all, the reason behind the image getting a recognition as wide as it did? No historian has given this the attention it deserves nor has anyone made enough endeavour to go into the reasons of its intra-religious links.

But, looking to such a wide acceptance, accorded to this holy symbol, one easily feels tempted to ask: "Has not the proper understanding of the significance of this object got great potentialities of giving to all nations a much-wanted sense of unity and a feeling of fraternity? By bringing into sharp focus the reason why it was worshiped and whom does it symbolize, can it not work as a common link, a religious and emotional bond and a meeting ground between all the major religions of the world and thus serve as a major uniting force and thus prove to be a discovery better than or at least equal to any other major discovery ever made? Let this two-fold truth be made a little more clear.

Worship of Shiva in various religions:

If we survey the paraphernalia of worship of various religions or go through their scriptures, we find that Shiva was once an object of worship in many religions, outside India, though the image was given varying names. For instance, the Jews used to worship Bailfego in the form of Shivalinga. Though they called 'Shivalinga' they worshiped this symbol under the name Bal. and, in this context, let it be known that, in India also, in many temples, the images of Shiva are known as Baleshwara. The Jews used to burn incense, etc. before the idol, called Bal as Shiva worshippers in India do. They worshipped it on Amavasya nights, i.e. the completely dark night of a month, even as Tantriks in India worship Shiva on dark nights or just as Shivaratri, the festival related to Shiva, is celebrated on a pitch dark night of the month of Phalgun which generally falls in February-March every year. In olden times, there was also a custom among Jews to take a stone -symbol of this shape in their hands when they took a solemn oath as a witness to the truth of their statement as some people in India took Gita in their hands in order to solemnity that they were stating the truth. Thus, it is an evidence of the fact that they considered it an image of God who is the Whole Truth.

Moreover, Abraham, who is regarded equally by Jews, Christians and Mohammedans as a messenger of God, built for his wife and son, Ishmael, the place of worship called Kaba in Mecca, where he installed a black stone which is of the form of Shivalinga.

Later, Moses, another important religious figure in the Bible, whom all the three above mentioned major religions consider as a messenger of God, had a vision of this form of God when he saw the flame of light on the Mount and talked to Him.¹ In His talk God told Moses that his name is 'I am that I am' or 'I am'. These names of God are among the names given to God in Sanskrit, their equivalent being 'Soham' or 'Swaymbhu'. Later, God said to him; my name is Jehovah which clearly seems to be a derivative of the name 'Shiva'.²

Then again, when Prophet Mohammed took possession of Kaba in Macca, all other idols were broken and removed from there but the stone-image, called Sang-a-Asvad, was allowed to remain and is still an object of regard and affection for the Mohammedans, who, during their pilgrimage to Mecca, offer their reverence to it. In fact, there is no mosque in the world, except Kaba, of which the Mohammedans make perambulations³. Many thinkers of independent opinion suggest that this is because the Sang-a-Asvad, the prototype of Shivalinga, is there that pilgrims go round the Kaba seven times, wearing a white sheet of cloth as devout Hindus in India wear a dhoti when they go round Shivalinga. This point gets added importance in conjunction with the fact that Mohammed himself installed this image where it now stands, with the assistance and co-operation of Qureshi chieftains of his time⁴.

In Adi sanatan or Aryan Religion, We find mention of Shiva in the Upanishads. The Shvetashetara Upanishad says: 'He is more minute than the minutest. In the midst of confusion, He is World Creator, by knowing Him as the Auspicious Being, one attains peace for ever'.⁵ In the Vedas, we find 'Shiv Shankalpas'⁶ which are in the form of prayers, addressed to God, so that He may grant purity and peace to the devotees. In Valmiki's Ramayana, which is considered to be the very first epic written in Sanskrit, there is mention of Shivalinga in the cantos, entitled 'Uttarkand'⁷ and 'Yuddhakand'⁸. Similarly, in Mahabharat, the part called 'Shasan Parava' is particularly devoted to the greatness of Shiva and to Pashupat Vrat, i.e. the sacred observance as a part of devotion to Shiva.

Again, the Shiv Agamas are as sacred to millions of people in India as the Vedas. The Ligayats, Vir Shaivas, Shaivites in Kashmir, and many other religious sects in India are devotees of Shiva. Then again, in ancient texts on Hatha Yoga, the Hathyoga pradeed and Gharunda Samhita, there are many verses, devoted to the adoration of Lord Shiva. Shiva's unmatched greatness is expounded in Shiva Purana, Linga Purana, Skanda Purana, Saur Purana, etc. as well and in Tantralok and other Tantras also.

Further, in the aphorisms (Sutras) of the great Sanskrit Grammarian, Panini, and also in the world-famous Indian treatise on political science, called Kautalya's Arth Shastra, there is mention of Shiva and his worship. So also it is found in Patanjali's Mahabhashya which is dated about 200 B.C.⁹

An utter neglect of this fact of Supreme importance:

From the above, it is amply clear that, in the ancient religious traditions and in the scriptures of almost all major religions of the world, this symbol or form is given a unique place of reverence. But it seems to be an almost unmitigated neglect on the part of individuals as well as institutions, devoted to research, that they have not sufficiently highlighted the real significance of this unique undercurrent of similarity in the religions of the world. Hardly is it realized that, if properly employed, this can be a factor of extreme importance in bringing about some closeness between all faiths of the world and can, over a period, change the very nature of inter-religious behavior and, thus, initiate a new era by releasing a force of cohesion in the fragmented and disintegrating society of our religion can be either a great tool of emotional integration or a terrible force of destruction and bloodshed, and this factor has inherent capabilities which no other single factor, having religious sanction, has.

There is absolutely no room for any doubt in our mind that if it were known to the followers of Mohammed, 400 or 500 years after his death, that the Sang-a-Asvad of the holy Mecca was the symbol of the same Allah as Shivalinga of Somnath, in Saurashtra and Eklinga of Udaipur and Mahakal of Ujjain and, for that matter, Vishwanath of Varansi, they would never have had even the would never have had even the thought of marching towards India with the intent of desecrating these temples, breaking the idols and looting the sacred property but, rather, they might have come here as pilgrims, for, this is the land of descent of God Shiva, or Jehovah the God of Adam, Abraham, Issac, Jacob, etc. whom the Judaic family of religions, of which Muslim religion is an important constituent member. Never. The whole course of history in that case would have been much different and there would have been no blots of plunder, loot, arson, rape and ravage on the invaders nor would the invaders, as said earlier, ever have had the thought of committing bloodshed and massacre of the innocent masses. Is it then a truth of little importance to which we are pointing? Haven't the battles, referred to above, been fought and much innocent blood split in the name of 'Allah' on the one hand and 'Har Har Mahadeva' on the other hand the two armies being ignorant of the fact that the word 'Allah' or Illa was used by people of India also, for addressing God as 'Mother' which really was the reason why Mohammedans also called God by this name, considering Him as merciful as a mother.

Symbol was an object of supreme reverence all over the globe:

Now let us have glimpses of world's religious history and see how this image was held in religious esteem in all major civilizations and countries of the world.

From the writings of Plutarch, it is clear that, in his time, the worship of Shivalinga was prevalent in Egypt. Sir William Jones says in 'Sanskrit Texts'¹⁰ that the Absolute God or Supreme Soul is venerated in Egypt in the name of Osiris and Isis which are only the modified forms of God's names in Sanskrit 'Ishwara' and 'Ish' respectively. There also used to be stone bull, before the Linga. Osiris even as we have a bull, called Nandi, in India, before Shivalaniga, in certain parts.

Hodder M. Westrop says in his work, 'Primitive Symbolism'¹¹ that Shivalinga was an object of worship of a sacred symbol in the past in Greece, Rome, Germany, France, Syria and America. It was known, in these countries, by different names, for instance, it was known in Rome and Italy as Periapus and in France as Fassinum. It is said that an image of Shiva was placed in churches, in Italy. Some people hold that the word 'Girjaghar' which is used in India for a church, is an altered form of the word 'Girija Ghar' which means 'The House of Paravati' the spouse of Shiva. They conted that the name was given to the churches because an image of Shiva was, originally, placed in all the churches! In France, in some churches as well as in museums, stone representations of Shivalinga can be seen even today as of memorials.

In Babylon, Shiva was known as Shi-un which also is a name similar to Shiva. In Syria, people in olden times, worshipped God with the name 'Sevajiya' or 'Seva' which clearly seems to be a local adaptation of the name Shiva. According to Col. Tod, Shivlinga was worshipped in Arab countries before Mohammed, under the name Lat. Of the 360 images being worshipped in Arab, the most important place was given to the images of Shiva in black stone. In this connection, it should be known that people in Western countries have also been mentioning the Shiva symbol in Somnath as 'Lat'.

In Brazil also, ruins of the emblem of Shiva have been found and some people in the Havai Islands also worshipped Shiva and offered prayers to Him to subdue natural calamities.

It is said that the worship of Shivalinga in one form or another is still in vogue in some countries such as Greece, Egypt, Japan and Ireland. In Japan, there are some Buddhist cults whose devotees place image of this form on a stand of such height that the symbol is just at the level of their eyes. They call this symbol as Chinkonseki and believe that they thus get Peace.

In the Sumerian Valley excavations, some images have been found which resemble the Shivalinga in Java, Sumatra, Thailand, Burma and Afghanistan also suggest that, in the ancient past, Shiva worship was in vogue in those countries.

Similarly, Shivlinga worship was and still is in vogue in Mauritius and Fiji also.

In India, Shivalinga is worshipped since very early times in all parts of India, from Kanya-Kumari (Cape Comrin) in the South to Amarnath in Kashmir and Kailash in Tibet (now in Communist China) in the North and from Gujrat in the West to Assam in the East. The twelve famous Jyotirlingums 'Self-luminous Lingas' are spread all over India. In Nepal, there is an ancient temple of Pashupatinath where Shiva is worshipped.

Our theme is not idolatory but 'Shivalinga as God's image':

The instance of Shiva in many other lands can be multiplied, and yet, our main concern is not image-worship or idolatory whether it be an image of Shiva or anyother deity. Our main object is to emphasise on the unique significance of the oval-shaped Person, the Supreme Soul, the God of the fathers of human race, whose image Shivlinga is. We want to assert that the significance of this is far greater than the discovery of links between Matar, and Mother in various languages, to which Maxmuller has referred in his writings because, 'Shiva' is the name of the World Father. We hold that it is of utmost importance to point out, to publicise and to inform the mankind that this is the form of Incorporeal God, the Father of all souls. Due to ignorance of this real form of God, Michaelangelo, the famous Christian Artist and Sculptor of Renaissance period has, in his attempt to show God as a Father figure, depicted Him as an old man, having a flowing Beard! The result of all this has been awful, for not only was the Supreme Soul shown as having a body but also an age and a beard all of which rather disprove the existence of God. Similar mistakes were committed in other religions and in Adi Sanatan religion so that polytheism and also atheism spread because of there having been ignorance about this universal form. If people had known in precise terms what this image symbolized, there would, perhaps, have been a feeling of brotherhood all over the world because people would then have thought that all human beings are the children of one same Father-Shiva, Shevajiya, Sibru, Baleshwara or Jehovah. The ignorance of this single fact has led to the downfall of all, for one most important truth was lost to them! But, if again, we have now the aspiration and the will to forge common link between all religions and all nations then it is this, it is this symbol of Shiva, i.e., Shivalinga, and the knowledge whose symbol it is.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, I will say that the roots of all problems lie in the individual and the solution is the will of the leaders and the people and some values which are presently missing. The solutions also have to be spiritual in nature. Oneness is the integral part of the human being, society and the universe.

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