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18 Astadasha Shakti Peethas — Holy Abodes of Shakti



he Shakti Pithas, also known as shaktipeethas, hold significant importance as sacred shrines and revered pilgrimage destinations dedicated to worshipping of Goddess Durga in various forms of Adi Shakti. The number of these shrines varies according to different Puranas, with mentions of 51, 52, 64, and 108 Shakti Pithas, among which 18 are identified as Astadasha Maha (major) in mediaeval Hindu texts.

Numerous legends offer explanations for the origin of the Shakti Peethas, with the most popular being associated with the story of the Goddess Sati's demise. Overwhelmed with grief, Lord Shiva wandered the universe with Sati's body, reminiscing about their time together. To relieve him from this immense task, Lord Vishnu used his Sudarshana Chakra to divide Sati's body into 18 parts, each of which fell on the earth, sanctifying these locations as places of worship for people.

Sri Shankari Devi Temple, Sri Lanka

Aadi Shankaracharaya's Stotram (eulogy) commences with the mention of Shankari Devi Shakthi Peeth, where it is believed that Devi Sati's groin fell. Shankari Devi is also the first form of goddess of Shakti to be worshipped in the Ashtadasha Shakti Peethas. Here, the deity is revered as Shankari Devi, while Lord Shiva is worshipped as Trikoneshwara.

This sacred site is situated on a hillock near the town of Trincomalee, located on the west coast of present-day Sri Lanka. Kamakshi Amman Temple, Tamil Nadu

As per the legends, the navel of Goddess Sati had fallen here. The Goddess here is worshipped as Kamakshi Amman. Kamakshi Devi temple is located at a distance of 75 km from the town of Chennai in the state of Tamil Nadu.

Shrunkala Devi Temple, West Bengal

Sri Srunkhala Devi temple was built on the spot and it is believed that the abdomen of Goddess Sati fell here. This temple is situated in Pandua, Hooghly district, West Bengal, and is devoted to Goddess Durga. However, if one were to visit the location today where the temple is said to have once stood, it would not be found. According to legend, Srunkhala Devi was originally believed to have been in West Bengal, but a sage named Rishyashringa might have taken the Goddess to Sringeri in Karnataka.

Chamundeshwari Temple, Karnataka The renowned Chamundeshwari Temple sits atop the Chamundi Hills in Karnataka, approximately 13 km away from the Mysore Palace. It derives its name from Goddess Durga, meaning Shakti or divine power. This sacred site holds a unique sig-

nificance as it was constructed at the location where locks of hair from Goddess Sati fell. As per an account in the Devi Purana, Mysuru was under the rule of the demon King Mahishasura, a creature with a buffalo-headed appearance. In response to the pleas of the Gods and Goddesses for kill the demon, Goddess Parvathi incarnated as Chamundeshwari and killed the monster on the summit of Chamundi Hill near Mysuru.

Jogulamba Devi Temple, Telangana

Jogulamba temple is a Shakti Peetha where Devi Sati's upper teeth fell. The temple has a history dating back to the 7th century CE, which as per the reports, was destroyed by the Bahmani Sultans in 1390 CE, and later rebuilt in 2005 in its original location, housing the original idol in the Sri Bramarambika Mallikarjuna Temple.

Bhramaramba Mallikarjuna Swamy Temple, Andhra Pradesh

The neck of Sati is believed to have fallen in the sacred site of Srisailam, making the temple renowned as Bramaramba Sakthi Pooth the sixth among the 18 Sakthi Poothas Spisailam is also the second among the Dwadasa Jvotirlingas and is believed to bestow pilgrims with rebirth and divine blessings. Various legends recount the incarnations of Shiva as Mallikarjuna and Parvathi as Bramaramba in Srisailam.

Mahalakshmi Mandir, Maharashtra

The Mahalaxmi Temple in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, India, is a revered Shakti Peetha associated with the Goddess of power, and it is believed Goddess Sati's three eyes fell here. It's one of the six places where it's believed that one's desires get fulfilled or salvation obtained, and draws devotees in large numbers from Telangana, Karnataka, and Maharashtra.

It's believed that Goddess Sati's right shoulder has fallen here, and is worshipped as Eka Veerika Devi. If we go by records, the temple is around 800 years old, where betel leaf and betel nut is offered as a prasad after grinding them in a paste. Mahakaleshwar Temple, Ujjain

It is believed that the upper lip of Goddess Devi fell here, and that the divine energy is revered as Mahakali. As per a legend, a demon named Dushana troubled the people of Avanti, and Shiva emerged from the earth to defeat the demon. Then, following the appeal of the residents of Avanti's, Lord Shiva decided to permanently reside here as Mahakaleshwara Jyotirlinga. This location is renowned as a powerful realm where Mahakali reigns as a revered force through the use of tantras and mantras.

Puruhutika Devi Temple, Andhra Pradesh

The left hand of Goddess Sati is said to have fallen in the holy place of Pithapuram, and is revered as Peethikayam Puruhutika. Situated in the village of Pithapuram, within the East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, you will find the esteemed Puruhutika Devi Temple. This temple holds a significant place as one of the Ashta Dasha Shakthi Peethas, where Devi Sati is worshipped as Puruhutika, and Lord Shiva as Kukkuteswara Swamy.

Biraja Devi Temple, Odisha

As per the Tantra Chudamani, it is believed that Sati's navel fell in the Utkala Kingdom, often referred to as Viraja Kshetra. Adi Shankara, in his Ashtadasha Shakti Peetha Stuti, identifies the goddess as Girija. In Tantra literature, the Oddiyana Peetha, located in eastern India near the Vaitarani River, derives its name from the Oddiyana, an ornament worn by women

Bhimeswara Swamy Temple, Andhra Pradesh

This temple has equal reverence for both the Lord and the Goddess. The Manikyamba Devi shrine is counted among the Ashta Shakthi Peetha, where it is said that Sati Devi's left cheek had fallen. As per the legends, the shivalingam was built here by the Sun God and that Sage Vyasa offered worship to the Lord at this sacred site.

Kamakhya Devi Temple, Guwahati

The Kamakhya Temple or Kamakhya Mandir is located in the Nilachal Hills in the capital city of Guwahati, Assam. Kamakhya Temple comes under Kamrup district. Kamakhya Temple is one of the 51 shaktipeethas, and one of the oldest and most revered too. The temple is dedicated to Kamakhya Devi or Maa Kamakhya, the goddess of desire.

It is believed that the temple is where parts of Devi Sati's corpse fell while her husband Lord Shiva performed taanday. As per religious beliefs, her genitals and womb fell where the present-day temple is located. According to the legends, the location of the fallen genitalia and the womb was not known till Kamdev, the God of love, went in search of it for his penance. After finding the parts, Kamdev was rid of his curse (given by Brahma). Thus the place came to be known as Kamakhya.

Alopi Devi Temple, Uttar Pradesh

This temple holds a distinct feature as it doesn't house any deity statues, instead, it worships a wooden carriage or doli. The name Alopi (disappeared) Bagh derives from the Hindu legend, signifying the disappearance of the Goddess Sati.

As per the Hindu belief, after Sati's demise, Lord Shiva, overwhelmed by grief, carried her lifeless body through the skies. To alleviate his suffering, Lord Vishnu hurled his Chakra at Sati's body, leading to the scattering of her remains across various sites in India, sanctifying these spots as holy pilgrimage destinations. The final part of her body fell at this location, which became known as Alopi or the place of disappearance, considered the holiest of all.

However, it's worth noting that this claim is subject to debate, as there is only one Shakti Peeth in Prayagraj, Lalita Devi temple, where it is believed that Sati's fingers fell.

Jwalamukhi Temple, Himachal Pradesh

Famed as a temple with no idols, the Jwalamukhi Temple is a popular Shakti Peetha, in the town of Jwalamukhi in Himachal Pradesh. This temple is devoted to Jwalamukhi, also known as the Goddess of Light or the Flaming Goddess. Nestled amid rolling hills, it offers panoramic views of the Dhauladhar range. In Hindu mythology, it is believed that Sati's tongue fell at this location when Lord Vishnu severed her corpse. The sacred site is also said to have been visited by the Pandavas.

Mangla Gauri Temple, Gava

This temple is one of the 18 Maha Shakti Peetha. Its current structure dates back to the 15th century, and is located in the Vaishnavite pilgrimage hub of Gaya. This shrine is devoted to Sati, the Mother Goddess. The temple worships Mangalagauri as the Goddess of benevolence. It is considered a Shakti Peeth, and is believed to be the spot where, as per the ancient Hindu scrip-









tures, a portion of Goddess Sati's body—her breast—fell.

Vishalakshi Temple, Varanasi

It is believed that Goddess Sati's earrings fell in this sacred location in Varanasi. The temple is situated near the renowned Manikarnika cremation grounds. The Vishalakshi Temple is particularly renowned for its annual temple festival on Kajali Tij, celebrated on the third day of the waning fortnight in the Hindu month of Bhadrapada (usually August).

Sharada Peeth, J&K

Sharada Peeth was one of the 18 Maha Shakti Peethas in the Subcontinent. According to legend, this is the place where the right hand of Goddess Sati fell when Lord Shiva was carrying her.