

Prachin Shiv Mandir Elam Puramahadev evam Shree Daksheswar Mahadev

Ancient Shiva Temples - Elm, Puramahadev, and Shri Dakheshwar Mahadev Temples: Common Religious and Historical Beliefs

Prof. Aradhana¹, Kuldeep Pawar²

*History Department, Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut
M.A. (History)*

Table of Contents: Geographical Context, Shiva, His Origin, and Various Forms, Spiritual Significance and Philosophical Beliefs of Shiva, Origin and Importance of the Temples, Worship Practices and Festival Celebrations in the Temples

INTRODUCTION

India is renowned for its rich spiritual heritage and countless ancient temples, which have been centers of devotion and cultural significance for centuries. The ancient Shiva temples of Elm, Puramahadev, and Shri Dakheshwar Mahadev in Kankhal are among these sacred sites.

Elm's Ancient Shiva Temple:

Located in the Saharanpur division of Uttar Pradesh, the Elm Shiva Temple is known for its peace and spiritual aura. Its exact historical origins are often rooted in folklore and local legends.

Religious Beliefs (Elm Temple):

Source of Spiritual Peace: Devotees visit this temple to worship Lord Shiva and attain mental peace. It is believed that sincere prayers here fulfill devotees' wishes and spiritually empower them.

Purity and Purification: The temple premises are considered highly sacred, where rituals and ceremonies foster unity and devotion.

Puramahadev Shiva Temple:

Situated in Muzaffarnagar district, Uttar Pradesh, this temple is an ancient and revered site, believed to be linked to the Mahabharata period. Its religious beliefs have been passed down through generations.

Religious Beliefs (Puramahadev Temple):

Mythological Significance: It is believed to be the site where Lord Shiva, in extreme anger after Sati's self-immolation, performed the Tandava dance following the destruction of Daksha's yagna. This temple is thus associated with Shiva's cosmic dance and fierce form.

Ancestral Liberation and Salvation: Performing shraddha (rituals for ancestors) at Puramahadev is considered highly fruitful, believed to grant moksha (liberation) to ancestors.

Healing and Blessings: Worship here is believed to cure ailments and bestow Shiva's blessings, especially during the month of Shravan and on Mahashivratri, when large crowds gather.

Religious Beliefs (Shri Dakheshwar Mahadev Temple, Kankhal):

Sati and Daksha's Story: This temple is a witness to the mythological tale of Devi Sati's self-immolation and Lord Shiva's wrath. It is believed to be the site where Daksha Prajapati organized a grand yagna, excluding Shiva, leading to Sati's sacrifice in the yagna fire.

Connection to Shakti Peeth: While not a Shakti Peeth, its proximity and mythological connection make it highly significant. Devotees honor Sati and Shiva's eternal love and sacrifice here.

Moksha and Peace: Kankhal, where the Ganga flows, is considered a sacred place where worshipping Shiva

grants liberation and profound peace. The Shivalinga here is deemed especially powerful.

Daksha's Repentance: According to legend, Shiva beheaded Daksha but later restored him with a goat's head. Daksha sought forgiveness here, and Shiva blessed him, emphasizing themes of forgiveness, repentance, and divinity.

These three temples symbolize Lord Shiva's various divine acts and supreme power. They are not just places of worship but centers where Indian culture, spirituality, and mythological stories have thrived for centuries, inspiring faith and devotion.

Chapter 1: Ancient Shiva Temple, Elm

The ancient Shiva temple in Elm, located in the southern part of the Elm Nagar Panchayat, Muzaffarnagar district, is the oldest temple in the region.

Coordinates: Latitude 29.2751952° N, Longitude 77.2970942° E

Altitude: 28 meters above sea level

Area: 1265 square meters, with a rectangular layout

The temple's establishment is believed to date back to the 11th or 12th century, coinciding with the formation of the Elm Nagar Panchayat. It is dedicated to the lingam form of Shiva, symbolizing his universal, all-encompassing nature.

Puramahadev Temple Geographical Context:

Located in Pura village, Baghpat district, Uttar Pradesh, this temple is near the Yamuna River and is a prominent site in the region. It is approximately 522 km north of the state capital.

Shri Dakheshwar Mahadev Temple Geographical Context:

Located in Kankhal, Haridwar district, Uttarakhand, 4 km south of Haridwar and 5.2 km from Har Ki Pauri.

Coordinates: Latitude 29.921731° N, Longitude 78.146012° E

Situated near the Ganga River, it is a significant spiritual site.

The geographical settings, climate, and river proximity of the Elm, Puramahadev, and Dakheshwar temples are similar. Their origin is centered on the worship of the Shivalinga. The Dakheshwar temple is considered the oldest, followed by Elm and Puramahadev. Archaeological evidence, such as seals from the Harappan civilization depicting proto-Shiva forms (Pashupati), confirms Shiva worship predates recorded history.

Shiva's Various Names and Forms:

Shiva is known by many names, including Pashupati, Rudra, Krittivasa, and Kandin. In the Rigveda, he is called Dayanasa. His forms include:

Benevolent Forms: Pashupati, Mahadev, Bhava, Ishana

Destructive Forms: Rudra, Ugra, Sarva, Ashani

Ardhanarishvara: A combined form of Shiva and Parvati, symbolizing the union of masculine and feminine energies.

Somaskanda Statue: A Pallava-era depiction of Shiva with Parvati and Kartikeya.

Kala Statue: Represents Shiva as the conqueror of time, with his third eye symbolizing supreme knowledge.

Lord Shiva's Origin and Forms:

Shiva, one of the Hindu trinity (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva), is revered as the destroyer and transformer. His origin is described in various Puranas and scriptures, portraying him as a philosophical concept representing consciousness, transformation, and the cyclical nature of the universe.

Origin from Brahma's Anger (Rudra Avatar):

According to the Shrimad Bhagavat Purana, Shiva emerged from Brahma's anger. When Brahma created Prajapatis and they refused to further creation, Brahma's anger manifested as Rudra (Shiva). This form destroyed Daksha's yagna after Sati's self-immolation, symbolizing justice and retribution.

Key Forms of Shiva:

Nataraja: The cosmic dancer, symbolizing creation, preservation, and destruction.

Ardhanarishvara: The half-male, half-female form, representing harmony.

Gangadhara: Shiva holding the Ganga in his matted locks to control its descent to Earth, symbolizing protection and compassion.

Bhairava: A fierce form that punishes sinners and protects devotees.

Lingodbhava: Shiva as a pillar of light, proving his supremacy over Brahma and Vishnu.

Somanatha: The protector of the moon, symbolizing healing and benevolence.

Mahakala: The conqueror of time, representing immortality.

Tryambaka: The three-eyed one, with the third eye symbolizing supreme knowledge.

Shiva's Philosophical Significance:

Destruction and Renewal: Shiva's destruction is transformative, clearing the old for new creation.

Supreme Consciousness: He represents ultimate consciousness and inner peace through yoga and meditation.

Asceticism and Detachment: As the great yogi, Shiva embodies renunciation and spiritual pursuit.

Compassionate Forms: As Neelkantha and Bholenath, he is a benevolent protector.

Neelkantha: Shiva drank poison during the Samudra Manthan, saving the universe, symbolizing sacrifice.

Crescent Moon: Represents control over time and mind.

Ash-Smeared Body: Symbolizes the impermanence of life.

Trishula (Trident): Represents the three gunas (sattva, rajas, tamas) and justice.

Damru: The drum symbolizes the primal sound "Om" and the rhythm of creation.

Spiritual Importance:

Shiva is the great yogi, symbolizing detachment, meditation, and inner peace. His paradoxical nature—yogi and householder, destroyer and creator—teaches acceptance of life's contradictions for spiritual growth.

Third Eye: Represents profound consciousness and spiritual awakening.

Nirguna and Saguna: Worshiped in both formless (lingam) and embodied forms.

Compassion: As Bholenath, Shiva is easily pleased by sincere devotion, emphasizing love and humility.

Temple Architecture:

Gupta-era temples, such as the Dashavatara Temple in Deogarh, mark the evolution of the Nagara style, characterized by shikhara (spires). Sarnath was a major center for temple art, with circular sanctums transitioning to square ones.

The Dashavatara Temple is the earliest example of the Panchayatana style, with subsidiary shrines for deities like Ganesha, Shiva, and Surya. Nagara-style temples spread from the Himalayas to the Vindhyas, distinct from Dravidian and Vesara styles.

Worship Practices:

Regular Worship: Daily rituals for Lord Shiva.

Abhisheka with Ganga Water: Devotees perform jalabhisheka, especially during Shravan and Phalgun.

Special Pujas: For wish fulfillment and spiritual upliftment.

Festivals and Fairs:

Mahashivratri and Shravan: Large gatherings for jalabhisheka, with Kanwar yatras bringing Ganga water.

Phalgun Month: Devotees perform rituals for ancestors.

Every Monday: Crowds gather for worship, especially in Shravan.

Conclusion: Spiritual Significance of Ancient Shiva Temples

Indian culture and spirituality are deeply rooted in ancient temples, which are more than stone structures—they are living symbols of faith and tradition. The Elm, Puramahadev, and Daksheshwar temples embody this eternal truth.

Elm Temple: A center of peace and spiritual solace.

Puramahadev Temple: Linked to the Mahabharata and Shiva's Tandava, it is a sacred site for ancestral rituals and healing.

Daksheshwar Temple: Famous for the Sati-Daksha legend, it symbolizes forgiveness, love, and sacrifice. These temples connect devotees to their roots, inspiring faith, devotion, and spiritual growth, preserving India's rich religious and cultural heritage.

Key Concepts and Principles:

Self-Existent and Eternal Shiva: Many texts and devotees believe Shiva is unborn, without beginning or end, the eternal Adi Deva (first deity).

Vishnu Purana: Shiva appeared as a crying child in Brahma's lap, named Rudra. Another account states he emerged from Vishnu's forehead, always in a meditative state.

Shiva Purana: Sadashiva is the eternal Brahman, with Devi Durga as Prakriti. Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva (Mahadeva) emerged from their union.

Pillar of Light: When Brahma and Vishnu debated supremacy, a boundless pillar of light appeared, revealing Shiva as the supreme power.

CONCLUSION

Ancient Shiva Temples - Elm, Puramahadev, and Shri Dakheshwar Mahadev: Common Religious and Historical Beliefs

Declaration:

I declare that the research paper titled "Ancient Shiva Temples - Elm, Puramahadev, and Shri Dakheshwar Mahadev Temples: Common Religious and Historical Beliefs" has been completed through my own efforts. I hope this research will provide comprehensive support to students studying history.

REFERENCE

- [1] Rigveda, Vedic Research Mandal, Pune, 1951
- [2] Mahabharata, Gita Press, Gorakhpur, 1944
- [3] Shiva Purana, Gita Press, Gorakhpur

Additional References:

- [1] Bharati Shiv Prasad, Ghaziabad: Historical City District, Vichar Prakashan, Delhi, 1998
- [2] Varga, Raghunandan, Contribution of Muzaffarnagar District in India's Freedom Struggle